

Colrain Select Board Meeting
Buckland Town Hall
17 State Street, Buckland MA
August 19, 2026

MINUTES

Present: Emily Thurber and Ben Eastman

Others Present: , Diana Parsons and Town officials and representatives from Franklin County Technical School member communities.

Meeting Purpose

The regional meeting was held at Buckland Town Hall to discuss the proposed Franklin County Technical School (FCTS) building project and potential impacts on the 19 member communities in advance of the October 6, 2026, district-wide vote. Buckland Finance Committee Chair Larry Langford facilitated the discussion. The purpose of the meeting was to review the project and proposed funding and discuss possible scenarios resulting from the October 6 vote.

Franklin County Technical School Building Project and Funding

The proposed new FCTS building has an estimated total project cost of approximately \$236.6 million. The Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) is anticipated to reimburse up to approximately \$113.8 million, leaving approximately \$122.8 million as the local district share.

The local share would be allocated among the 19 member communities using the District's existing assessment formula, based 50% on population and 50% on equalized valuation. The project costs would be reflected in the District's capital assessments rather than its operating assessment.

It was discussed that a capital expense of this magnitude would likely be funded through debt exclusions in the member communities. A debt exclusion would temporarily increase the property tax levy for the life of the debt, anticipated to be approximately 30 years.

October 6 District-Wide Vote and Potential Scenarios

The group discussed several potential outcomes of the October 6 district-wide vote.

Under the first scenario, the district-wide vote would pass and each member community would subsequently approve a debt exclusion to fund its capital assessment. Discussion included the financial circumstances of residents throughout the member communities and their ability to absorb additional property taxes.

Under a second scenario, the district-wide vote would pass, but one or more communities could subsequently fail to approve a local debt exclusion. This scenario generated considerable discussion because those communities would nevertheless face their respective capital assessments. Questions were raised regarding the options available to a municipality under those circumstances, including the potential implications and financial obligations associated with withdrawal from the District, impacts on the remaining member communities, and impacts on students attending or hoping to attend FCTS.

The third scenario considered the possibility that the October 6 district-wide vote would fail. Discussion included how voting patterns among the larger and smaller member communities could affect the district-wide result.

Municipal and Taxpayer Impacts

Participants discussed the financial impact of the project on the member communities and their residents. Information provided at the meeting included estimates of each community's annual capital assessment and estimated household tax impact.

For Colrain, the materials estimated an average annual capital assessment of approximately \$178,000. FCTS community information estimated the average annual increase for a Colrain single-family home at approximately \$190.91. Actual impacts will depend on final project costs, financing, assessed values, and tax rates.

Officials discussed the financial pressures already facing municipalities and residents and concerns regarding the ability of some taxpayers to absorb an additional property tax increase. At the same time, participants acknowledged support within the region for Franklin Tech and its vocational and technical education programs.

The general sense among those attending was that the district-wide building vote may ultimately pass, while concerns remained about the financial consequences for individual communities and taxpayers.

Public Information and Outreach

The group discussed the importance of municipalities being prepared to answer questions from residents regarding what would happen if the project passes or fails, the financial obligation of each community, and the potential consequences if a community is unable to obtain voter approval for a debt exclusion.

FCTS representatives were also undertaking outreach regarding the October 6 vote, including informational mailings to households and additional public information efforts.

Conclusion

The meeting concluded following discussion of the potential voting and financing scenarios and their implications for the 19 member communities. No votes were taken.

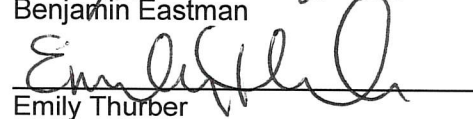
Respectfully submitted,

Accepted by the Select Board on 9/8/2026

Diana Parsons
Town Administrator

Catherine Korby - Chair


Benjamin Eastman


Emily Thurber

Documents Distributed/Referenced

Public Forum for Town Administrators: A Discussion of the Impact of the Proposed Franklin County Technical School Building Project on FCTS District Towns Pending the Vote on October 6th, August 19, 2026.

Franklin County Technical School MSBA Building Project Community Handout - October 6, 2026 Vote.
School Cost Comparisons / Apportionment of Costs.