

**Milton School Committee
Public Forum on Student Assignment
Milton High School Auditorium
March 29, 2007**

Meeting called to order at 9:30 a.m.

Committee Present: Paul Hogan, Chair, Beirne Lovely, Vice-Chair, Chris Huban and Mary Kelly

Staff Present: Dr. Magdalene Giffune, Superintendent; Mary Gormley, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Personnel; Paul Hilton, Assistant Superintendent for Business

Mr. Hogan welcomed the attendees and said index cards have been passed out for anyone wishing to write down a question and microphones are available for anyone wishing to speak. The following individuals voiced their concerns regarding student assignment:

Lisa Fischer is concerned over the division in the town. She urged the School Committee to not be afraid to make a change that would be in the town's best interest and best for the children.

Janet Lynch urged the Committee to come to their conclusion based upon what is best and fair to the students of Milton.

Jessica Cherry felt it was an insult that she had not received the student assignment survey, nor had her parents. She feels she had been targeted when it came to raising money for an override, but her opinion was not heard when it came to the education of her children. She feels the School Committee should live up to its promise for 4 elementary schools with 4 principals and that neighborhood schools should remain K-5. *Dr. Giffune explained this was an electronic survey sent to those families with current grade 1-4 students whose email addresses were available. If they had sent it to everyone, the results would be too uncertain.

Beth Rooney feels that redistricting makes the most sense both logistically and in terms of parental involvement. She believes that six years of consistency is good for children.

Bob Hiss feels that the neighborhood concept would be the logical way to use these new buildings based on the way they were designed.

Joanne Trifone would like the School Committee to vote for the K-5 plan. She feels having children in one school allows for more parental involvement.

Terry Dsida stated that when listing matching teaching/learning styles as an advantage or disadvantage in these plans, we should trust that Milton teachers know what they are doing. She feels we have excellent teachers who know that the dynamics of a class change daily.

Ellen Hutchinson voiced her support for having K-5 schools and feels the buildings should be used as planned when built.

Carol Rosner urged the School Committee to take a closer look at transportation costs. She feels the geographic plan could save us money which in turn could save some teachers.

Megan Renaud feels that the K-5 neighborhood school is the best option for children. They would have the least transition and parents could be more involved.

Mary Scott inquired about the previous student assignment plan's suggestion that the Town Farm be used for Tucker School. Mr. Hogan explained this was one of the original proposals from the architect, but costs were too high and there were some questions as to how that land could be used. She referred to race being one of the non-negotiables and asked if Tucker would become an even higher percentage of a minority school under the geographic K-5 plan. Dr. Giffune replied that it would, although going forward it is believed every school will become more diverse. Dr. Giffune explained that race neutral means that race cannot be a factor in assigning children to buildings. Ms. Scott feels there is an advantage to being in close proximity to the school your children attend.

Another Milton parent (name not given), believes this School Committee has the chance to make history in the town. She would like to see the schools come together more and works with the Cultural Arts Committee and PTO's to achieve this goal. She likes the sister school plan since it promotes more diversity within the community and could possibly help test scores since teachers would be together in one building.

Julie Freking asked how many classrooms there would be using the consolidated or sister school plan. For example, how many second grade classrooms? Mr. Lovely responded by saying that under either the consolidated or sister school plan, we would have approximately 1100+ children in the school, divided by 52 classrooms (not including 2 computer rooms, 2 music rooms and 2 art rooms, with the possibility of using 1 computer room as a classroom), we would have roughly 21+ per classroom average. That includes the utilization of all kindergarten rooms. As far as how many 2nd grade classes there would be, Dr. Giffune replied there would be currently 15 sections of 1st grade that would just be moved forward. Ms. Freking believes students will fall through the cracks if you have that many in a building; a big school will lose the community feeling and make it difficult for teachers to collaborate.

Julie Thermidor moved to Milton for its diversity; however, she has found it not as diverse as she thought. She believes we should not think of schools separately; as a town we need to think of our community, our children and their education.

Questions from index cards

Q. Under the new attendance area plan 3 of the 4 elementary schools will be at mid to high 80% occupancy. Glover would be 77% occupancy. Can you explain that difference?

A. The difference is due to the co-taught classrooms at Glover. We never know that number until the end of the school year. Occupancy at Glover would increase.

Q. With the town elections only weeks away the School Committee could have 1, possibly 2 new members. These people have not been privy to all the discussions, emails, calls and information that the current members having regarding student assignment. It is understandable that the Committee does not want to give a specific date; but will the vote be made before the election?

A. There is a School Committee meeting Tuesday, April 3, 2007; however, all members will not be present. The Chair would like to have a meeting with all six members present. He is requesting that another meeting be held April 10, 2007, as early as 5:30 p.m. to discuss student assignment. Committee members will also have some discussion after this forum.

Mr. Lovely took the opportunity to voice his preference today since he will not be present at the April 3, 2007 School Committee meeting. He stated that he is not comfortable putting 1100 students in one building since it puts that building at capacity, uses a computer room as a classroom and uses kindergarten rooms for other than their original purpose. He has been involved from the beginning of this process and is proud of the four new elementary schools. He also stated that the School Committee, by a unanimous vote, voted to have four schools with four principals. After a great deal of angst, he stated he would advocate for the four schools and four principals. Although this plan may not be a perfect solution, Mr. Lovely stated he would be reluctant to support a plan that does not use the schools in the manner consistent with the educational specifications the School Committee had approved. With regard to single strands, Mr. Lovely said he would propose very clear rules and guidelines that would permit parents to request a transfer for their child if they felt their child was being deprived achievement opportunities.

Mr. Lovely, after stating his preference for the four schools and four principals, said he will now have to come back and ask for more financial support to make our schools what we expect them to be. Many people will be unhappy, but the School Committee has asked the Superintendent how she can cut \$2 million from her budget, and she has come back with some proposals. Similar to the student assignment process, it will be the School Committee who votes to approve programmatic changes.

Mr. Hogan stated this is the end of the public hearings on the student assignment. He thanked parents, Administration, John Flynn, Rick Ward and all the members of the Student Assignment Committee. Mr. Hogan appreciated Mr. Lovely stating his position today. The other members will have the same opportunity Tuesday night at the School Committee Meeting.

Ms. Kelly wanted to bring to light the capacity issues in either the sister school plan or the consolidated plan. She feels due to these capacity issues, there is no way we can consider either one. She believes the Committee has worked hard to maintain class size, and this should continue to be a priority as we move forward.

Motion made to adjourn the public hearing.

Move: B. Lovely

Second: M. Kelly

Vote: 4-0-0

The public hearing adjourned at 11:00 a.m.