

Milton School Committee Meeting  
Via Remote Access  
April 29, 2020  
7pm

**Committee Present:** Sheila Varela, Chair; Dr. Elaine Craghead, Vice Chair; Margaret Eberhardt, Dr. Kevin Donahue, Ada Rosmarin, Betty White

**Staff Present:** Mary Gormley, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Karen Spaulding, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Human Resources; Dr. Glenn Pavlicek, Assistant Superintendent for Business

**(Conducted pursuant to the Executive Order dated March 12, 2020 suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, Gen. L. c. 30A §20 et seq. and 940 CMR 29.01 et seq.)**

**1. Call to Order 7:01pm**

**2. Approve April 29, 2020 Agenda**

- Under Superintendent's Report (prior to Pierce Site Council presentation), add graduation presentation by MHS Principal James Jette
- Remove Unit B Reorganization under Finance Subcommittee
- Remove Executive Session

**3. Citizen Speak (Policy BEDH-15 minutes)**

Chair Varela reviewed the procedure for remote Citizen Speak and asked people to sign in to the Chat and write their names and addresses if they wanted to speak regarding their concerns about the plan for MHS graduation. Chair Varela agreed to extend the 15 minutes for Citizen Speak to 30 minutes due to the high number of parents/guardians and students logged into the call.

Chair Varela called on the following people who had signed into the chat:

Rob Elfer (234 Lyman Rd.) has a high school senior. He is an architect and discussed the possibility of using the football field for graduation. He has been working on the layout to accommodate approximately 242 people. He stated that he would be happy to share this information with the School Committee.

Kerry McCarthy (15 Fairfax Rd.) voiced her concern that parents were not asked for input in the decisions about senior week or graduation. Some other districts are planning Thanksgiving breakfasts. She asked why this is the only option for this senior class and feels Milton can do better.

Brian Burns (198 Manning Lane) feels this plan sells kids short and we should work to provide a better plan. Seniors are facing the same daunting possibility of colleges not opening or opening remotely. He asked that we find a better way to honor what these kids have done. The time is not now to make this decision. He implored the School Committee to push it back and work with the students to come up with a better plan.

Adam Winkler (Robbins Street) feels that this decision was made too hastily. He feels there are multiple alternatives and stated the students should have been consulted.

Bernadette Bentley (43 Howe St.) - has a graduating senior and a son who graduated a few years ago. She believes it is important that the kids have the opportunity to be with friends, Teachers, and counselors for their graduation. That cannot happen now, but maybe it could later in July or August. A lot of districts are postponing – we should. Graduation is a dignified ceremony and it is not dignified to do a “drive through.” Ms. Bentley also feels parents and students should have been consulted.

Natalia Vega (26 Marilyn Rd.) is a senior and feels this plan is disheartening. She stated that the students have completed 13 years of hard work and would think the School Committee would want to go above and beyond for the class of 2020. She believes seniors should have a say in the plan.

Barbara Vega (mother 26 Marilyn Rd.) stated that 24 schools in the surrounding area are going later for graduation – we should do the same.

Sara McDonnell (60 Hilltop St.) is a senior and on behalf of her class she hopes MPS rethinks a drive through graduation. She also feels the students have worked hard for 13 years and this plan is disheartening. Students want to be able to walk across the stage.

Principal James Jette shared his presentation that outlined the plan for the MHS graduation and the reasons for devising such a plan. There will be a 10-minute Q&A after his presentation.

### **Presentation: Principal James Jette**

#### **TWO PART GRADUATION CEREMONY**

##### **Part I**

- National Anthem, Music Selection and Speeches (Recorded in advance)
- National Anthem, Music Selection and Speeches will be aired on 6/7 at 12:30pm

## **Part II**

- Caravan/Parade Style Diploma Pick up on Sunday, June 7th at 2:00pm
- Staggered times every half hour (Steady Flow)
- Diploma Distribution, Pictures and Declaration of Graduation
- Live Streaming

### **STUDENT AND FAMILY SENTIMENTS**

- Frustration
- Disappointment
- Anger
- Sense of loss
- Relief
- Understanding
- Elation

### **CONCERNS - LET THEM WALK!**

- Students worked hard, they deserve to walk
- Students should be able to get together; this is the last time they will be together as a class
- This is not fair – they should be able to share their experience with their friends
- The Administration just does not want to be inconvenienced during the summer
- Can you have students/parents sign an affidavit stating students are well and agree to terms
- The seniors have worked hard, they deserve a graduation

### **WHY CAN'T STUDENTS MAKE THE DECISION?**

- Students are not considering pre-existing health challenges of their peers
- Students are not privy to the health challenges of others' immediate family members
- Students are not privy to the health challenges of our faculty & students
- Individual students are not responsible for the safety and well-being of graduation participants
- Student emotions are guiding their stance
- This is a National Health Crisis - Pandemic

### **DISPELLING RUMORS**

- Students worked hard for nothing
- Administration and faculty do not care
- Students are not being honored
- Administration does not care what the students feel or think

- Why didn't you survey students and let them decide - Pandemic/National Health Crisis
- We have not considered options

### **WHY CAN'T YOU BE CREATIVE?**

- Drive In Theatres (Wellfleet, Leicester, Mendon, Northfield)
- Houghton's Pond - Renting a large Screen
- Gillette Stadium
- Blue Hills Parkway
- Brook's Field
- Later Date - July or August

### **CHALLENGES WITH A LATER DATE...**

- Safety of graduation participants - Seniors and immediate family members with compromised health conditions
- No guarantee we can gather in large crowds with the proper safety measures
- Lost opportunity for some students
- Students may be leaving for college, military and other opportunities
- We will need the appropriate screening mechanisms (Thermo Screeners, Electrostatic Sprayers, Mask, ect.)
- Fiscal Year closes out on June 30<sup>th</sup>
- We'll be planning for the re-opening of the new school year
- Summer months may "slow down" the spread but may not stop it

### **IMPORTANT DATES FOR SENIORS**

- May 1, 2020 – College Decision
- May 22, 2020 – Last day of Classes
- June 2, 2020 – Senior Awards Night
- June 3, 2020 – Boosters Banquet
- June 4, 2020 – Prom
- June 5, 2020 – Senior Breakfast
- June 7, 2020 – Graduation

### **WHY THIS DECISION NOW?**

- Governor extended the "Stay at Home" order until May 18th
- MA has the 3rd most cases in the entire country (behind NY and NJ)
- This proposal is inclusive - everyone has the option to participate
- Non Essential Businesses and Workers are still not open/working
- Even if things open up in July or August, they've announced social gathering restrictions

- Alternative to a complete Virtual Graduation
- This was the original date that all planned on and communicated that they can make it

### **CHANGES - NOT JUST MHS GRADUATION?**

- Emergency Rooms/Hospital Visits
- Hotels/Restaurants/Grocery Stores
- Non Essential Businesses - Closed
- Transportation - Restricted Hours, Restricted Travel
- Professional Sports/2020 Summer Olympics
- Disney World – 2<sup>nd</sup> time time in history of being closed
- Colleges and Universities
- Funeral/Weddings/Births

### **KEY COMPONENTS OF A GRADUATION**

- Graduation is on the same day - Outside Graduation
- Students get to hear the speeches - we have a plan to include more voices
- Students get their caps, gowns and stoles
- Diploma distribution
- Family Engagement
- The event will be streamed live for any and all spectators from any device
- The procession/recession are still in place

### **OTHERS WAYS TO HONOR STUDENTS**

- Senior Photo Banners Displayed on Canton Ave
- Senior - Family Cookout/Gathering in the Fall (If permitted by the experts)
- Honoring seniors during the Annual Thanksgiving Day Football Game
- Time Capsule - Parent Initiated and purchased

### **WHAT IS NEEDED AT THIS TIME?**

- Flexibility
- Creativity
- Understanding
- Adaptability
- Resiliency
- Perseverance

### **THANK YOU!**

- MPS Superintendent
- MPD Chief of Police

- MFD Fire Chief
- MPS School Committee
- Milton Health Director
- MHS Administration
- MHS Faculty & Staff
- MHS Custodian Staff
- MHS Student Government Advisers
- MHS Senior Class Adviser
- Milton Access Cable
- MHS Boosters
- MHS PTSFO
- Hockmeyer Photography

**Q&A:** When the Q&A began, Natalia Vega again stated that other districts are doing graduation at the end of July or August. This is her biggest request – to be more flexible. Mr. Jette responded that after receiving initial emails from both Natalia and Mrs. Vega, he did respond. Other schools may be pushing out the date, but there is no guarantee. All local principals are talking about their challenges.

Kerry Curley (**Edgehill Road**) signed in to speak but could not get her microphone to work.

Chair Varela asked for comments from School Committee members.

Ms. White stated she has been dealing with this same discussion in her district in Dedham. She feels it is very risky to have an outdoor graduation. She supports Mr. Jette’s idea.

Dr. Donahue thanked Principal Jette for his presentation. He stated that these are atypical times. Right now medical professionals in places such as Boston, New York, and Washington are making life and death decisions about who receives life- saving care and who does not. He stated that this decision is not only about the class of 2020; it is about the vulnerable in our community.

Ms. Eberhardt thanked Principal Jette. She wished there was something she could say to make this situation better. The disappointment and losses are profound. Ms. Eberhardt feels that Principal Jette is making a concerted effort to honor the students and added that the School Committee is proud of the students accomplishments.

Ms. Rosmarin thanked Principal Jette and his team. She shares the sentiment of her fellow School Committee members. She hopes that soon we will have a treatment for this virus and will be able to get our lives back and do the things we love to do. Ms. Rosmarin is most sorry for the class of 2020 to have to do this alternate graduation, but the hope is to keep the entire class and the staff of MHS well.

Dr. Craghead echoes the sentiments of her fellow School Committee members as well. She empathizes with the difficult decision that Mr. Jette is dealing with and realizes it will not satisfy everyone. This allows an in-person gathering, although not ideal. For those of you who believe it should be moved to a later date, it is a lot more than just moving the date. Rhode Island just announced today there would be no groups over 50; Falmouth has canceled special events like the Road Race; Martha's Vineyard has done the same and canceled certain events through the summer. We have to consider the health and safety of all involved.

Chair Varela closed the Q&A by thanking Principal Jette and her fellow School Committee members for their comments. She understands everyone's disappointment. She reminded everyone that what is happening in Milton is happening all over the world. Chair Varela feels the leadership team has guided us through so far and would never want to put anyone in jeopardy. It is a tough balance between tradition and health and safety.

Chair Varela thanked parents/students/community members for their input at tonight's meeting and reminded them that there will be another Citizen Speak at the end of the meeting. She also reminded everyone that the School Committee does not control graduation. She would like to have a vote of support for Principal James Jette's plan for the Milton High School graduation.

Mr. Jette thanked parents/community members/students for their comments, even if they are in opposition. He also thanked those parents who did support this plan.

Chair Varela made the motion that the Milton School Committee support Principal Jette's plan for the Milton High School Class of 2020 graduation.

Second: Dr. Donahue

Roll Call Vote: 6-0-0

**4. Superintendent's Report-** Superintendent Gormley introduced Principal William Fish and asked that he introduce the Site Council members.

a. Pierce Middle School Site Council Presentation (Attachment)

- William Fish, Principal
- Sarah Pullia, Teacher Representative
- Mike Cleary, Teacher Representative
- Kristen Fraine, Teacher Representative
- Kerri Devin, Teacher Representative
- Fred McFadden, Parent Representative
- Beverly Ross-Denny, Parent Representative
- Dana Jessup, Parent Representative
- Celine Toomey, Parent Representative
- Jacqueline Slavik, Parent Representative
- Regine Jean-Charles, Parent Representative

### **Pierce Middle School Profile**

2019-2020 Enrollment: 979 students

- Grade 6: 351, Grade 7: 324, Grade 8: 304

2020-2021 Projected Enrollment: 1,043

- Grade 6: 368, Grade 7: 351, Grade 8: 324

2021-2022 Projected Enrollment: 1,082

- Grade 6: 363, Grade 7: 368, Grade 8: 351

2022-2023 Projected Enrollment: 1,129

- Grade 6: 398, Grade 7: 363, Grade 8: 368

### **Enrollments: Pierce vs. Milton HS**

	<b>Pierce</b>	<b>Milton HS</b>	<b>Difference</b>
<b>2019-2020</b>	979	1051	72
<b>2020-2021</b>	1043	1122	79
<b>2021-2022</b>	1082	1174	92
<b>2022-2023</b>	1129	1248	119

### **2019 MCAS DATA HIGHLIGHTS: SUCCESSES**

- The percentage of grade 6 students meeting/exceeding expectations in ELA increased from 66% in 2018 to 77% in 2019
- The percentage of grade 7 students meeting/exceeding expectations in ELA increased from 48% in 2018 to 67% in 2019
- The percentage of grade 8 students meeting/exceeding expectations in math has steadily increased from 60% in 2017 to 64% in 2018 to 67% in 2019
- The percentage of grade 8 students exceeding expectations was at a recent high (13%) compared to 9% in 2018 and 5% in 2017

### **2019 MCAS DATA HIGHLIGHTS: OPPORTUNITIES**

- Focus on continuous improvement
- Patterns and trends: On average, about two-thirds of students are exceeding or meeting expectations
  - How do we continue to grow?



- What about the one-third of students who are not meeting expectations?
- High needs sub-groups
- Strategies
  - ELA curriculum review, adoption and implementation
  - Math curriculum

## **2019-2020 SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS**

### **Four Focus Areas:**

- 1:1 Computing
- Master Schedule
- Supporting Transitions to Grade 6
- ELA Curriculum Review

### **FOCUS AREA #1: 1:1 COMPUTING**

#### **Making the case for 1:1**

- Elementary Schools: Chromebook carts in all classrooms
- Milton HS: Bring Your Own Device (BYOD)
- Pierce: Limited access to technology; 12 Chromebook carts (about 300 devices for nearly 1,000 students)

### **FOCUS AREA #1: 1:1 COMPUTING**

#### **Benefits of 1:1**

- Improved student achievement through personalized learning experiences
- Student-centered learning
- Instructional practices: project-based learning, providing students with multiple modes for demonstrating learning, on-the-spot formative assessment data

### **FOCUS AREA #1: 1:1 COMPUTING**

#### **Professional Development for Teachers**

- February and March early release days
- Google Docs/Drive, Google Classroom, OTUS 101
- Identifying teachers' needs (ongoing)

### **FOCUS AREA #2: MASTER SCHEDULE**

#### **Challenges of Current Master Schedule**

Overcrowding in cafeteria

- Stagnant periods/meeting times
- Length of periods
- Absence of downtime for students or an advisory program

### **FOCUS AREA #2: MASTER SCHEDULE**

#### **Core Components of a New Schedule**

- Four lunches
- Rotating schedule
- Extended instructional periods
- Flex time

## **FOCUS AREA #2: MASTER SCHEDULE**

### **Flex Time**

- The purpose of flex time is to give our students some time during the day to reflect, regenerate and refocus in order to be ready to learn in a classroom setting
- Student choice for flex time: homework, relax/rest quietly, makeup work, organize the materials, quiet activities on the chromebook, draw, read, listen to music
- Flex time as the eventual structure for an advisory program

## **FOCUS AREA #3: SUPPORTING TRANSITIONS**

### **Current Structures**

- 5th Grade Information Night (spring)
- 5th Grade Visits to Pierce/Step Up Day (spring)
- Welcome to Middle School Camp (summer)
- 6th Grade Families Night (Before opening of school)

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## **FOCUS AREA #3: SUPPORTING TRANSITIONS**

### **Leveraging Opportunities to Support the Transition: Teachers**

- Current work of 6th grade teachers
- 6th grade teachers observing 5th grade classes

## **FOCUS AREA #3: SUPPORTING TRANSITIONS**

### **Leveraging Opportunities to Support the Transition: Students**

- Welcome to Middle School camp
- Providing student schedules, locker assignment, etc. in the summer
- Rethinking the first few weeks of school
- Explicitly teaching executive functioning and organizational strategies

## **FOCUS AREA #3: SUPPORTING TRANSITIONS**

### **Leveraging Opportunities to Support the Transition: Parents/Guardians**

- Replicating “Parent University” for 6th grade parents/guardians
- Focus areas
  - Plus Portals and Google Classroom
  - Executive functioning and organization
  - Subject-specific information
  - Understanding MCAS performance
- Rethinking Open House

**FOCUS AREA #4: ELA CURRICULUM REVIEW**

**Overview of the Curriculum Review Process**

- Partnership with Dr. Nonie Lesaux
- Interdisciplinary team, grade 4-8
- September to December
  - Data analysis - MCAS & Lexia
  - Analysis of existing curriculum
  - Classroom observations and data collection

**FOCUS AREA #4: ELA CURRICULUM REVIEW**

**Where We Are**

- Working largely with narrative text and limited amount of text, overall
- Writing class and ELA instruction largely independent of one another
- Strong ability to connect discussion to themes of diversity
- Majority of tasks have students stating facts, engaging in recall, summarizing information; making connections to other facts and concepts
- Engagement and other key features of the learning environment showroom for growth and increases

**Where We Need to Go**

- Units of study with varied text sets to analyze topics from multiple angles and with multiple genres and modalities, capitalizing on connecting discussion to themes of diversity
- Strong connections across reading and academic language work—written and oral
- Higher cognitive press – putting new ideas and information together, etc.
- Students engage in collaborative, conceptual cycles of learning; higher levels of engagement, time on task, and processes, routines for active learning
- Vertical alignment through protocols and routines, and practices

**FOCUS AREA #4: ELA CURRICULUM REVIEW**

**Curriculum SelectionVarela**

- My Perspectives
- Amplify
- Wit & Wisdom

- Expeditionary Learning

#### **FOCUS AREA #4: ELA CURRICULUM REVIEW**

##### **Implementation Timeline**

- Curriculum selection: Spring 2020
- Onboarding for ELA teachers: Spring 2020 & Summer 2020
- Implementation: Fall 2020
- Ongoing professional development for ELA teachers

#### **OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE SIP GOALS**

##### **Future School Improvement Plan Goals:**

- Negotiating enrollments
- Professional development strategy around 1:1 computing
- Review & evaluation of new master schedule
- Implementation and refinement of transition strategies
- ELA curriculum implementation
- Diversity committee goals (e.g., closing participation gap)

At the conclusion of the Pierce Site Council presentation, Chair Varela asked Committee members for their feedback.

Ms. White complimented Principal Fish and Site Council members. She appreciated the mention of the cafeteria experience/crowding and the consideration of the developmental needs of students with regard to the flexibility of schedule/transitioning to middle school. She also is interested in how the 5th graders will transition.

Ms. Rosmarin thanked the Site Council and Principal Fish for the great ideas. She was fascinated with how they found more minutes/day with regard to the proposed flexible schedule. She also was appreciative of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers visiting 5<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms.

Dr. Donahue was thrilled that the 1:1 Chromebooks at Pierce happened just in time before this crisis. He is interested to see in the next few years how it pans out/replacement cost, etc. He also thinks the whole idea of 6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers visiting 5<sup>th</sup> grade is great. Dr. Donahue asked if a block schedule similar to the high school was ever considered. Principal Fish replied that the Site Council considered several options but a true block schedule is not developmentally appropriate for the middle school age.

Ms. Eberhardt stated the presentation was wonderful. She believes the SEL considerations are crucial for success. The Parent University is also a great event. Ms. Eberhardt also voiced her curiosity regarding the ELA curriculum.

Dr. Craghead loves that the changes in the ELA curriculum are data driven. She was impressed that 70 classroom observations were done to review the curriculum.

Chair Varela echoed the sentiments of her fellow School Committee members. She is glad we had the opportunity to offer the 1-1 devices to Pierce students and is proud that Pierce took on the initiative of changing the schedule.

Superintendent Gormley thanked Principal Fish and the Site Council for such an outstanding Presentation.

**b. School Closure Update and Happenings**

Will invite the Food Service Director, Educational Technology Director, new Assistant Principals to Upcoming meetings. The next meeting will include an update on Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade enrollment.

**5. Chair's Report**

**a. South Shore Educational Collaborative Representative**

**South Shore Educational Collaborative Information to be reported periodically to school committees, as required by Chapter 43, Accountability and Oversight of Collaboratives**

At each board meeting, the information below will be provided to board members to share with their school committee.

Significant changes/updates in programs, activities, services, budgets and property (provided each meeting).

Notification of application for real estate mortgages and leases (when necessary).

A copy of any capital plan approved by the board (when necessary).

By January 1st a copy of the approved annual report and financial audit. By April 30th, the board shall approve the annual budget and tuition rate for the upcoming fiscal year.

By May 15" a vote of the school committee needs to be taken to appoint the superintendent or a school committee member as a board member for the upcoming fiscal year.

Within 60 days of appointment the board member must complete the DESE required online training (once every six years).

Chair Varela informed the Committee that an annual vote must be taken by May 15<sup>th</sup> to appoint the Superintendent to be the representative for the Board of Directors at the South Shore Educational Collaborative.

Chair Varela made the motion to appoint Superintendent Mary Gormley as the designated Board Member for the South Shore Educational Collaborative for the upcoming fiscal year.

Second: Ms. White

Roll Call Vote: 6-0-0

**b. Report out on Unit D Ratification**

Unit D Ratification – Dr. Craghead reported out to the School Committee that the Unit D contract has been ratified.

- Transportation should be ready for a vote at the next meeting.
- The MHS Site Council will be a “State of the State” report rather than the typical Site Council Presentation.

**c. Revised School Committee Calendar**

Updated and approved

**6. Finance Subcommittee Report**

**a. FY20 and FY21 Budgets**

Dr. Craghead reported that the Select Board voted to approve up to \$1 million from the stabilization fund to help close the gap and free cash will be used. We are probably not getting the four new positions that have been approved or the extra bus. Revenue funding is still up in the air – there is no absolute number. It is looking OK for FY20; various services and utilities are down.

**b. Approval of Vendor Warrants**

Dr. Craghead made the motion to approve Vendor Warrant #41 dated April 9, 2020 in the amount of \$192,078.65.

Dr. Craghead made the motion to approve Vendor Warrant #43 dated April 23, 2020 in the amount of \$253,610.89.

Second: Ms. Eberhardt

Roll Call Vote: 5-0-1

**7. School Building Committee Report**

Ms. Rosmarin was pleased to report that the SOI and supporting information was submitted to the School Building Authority on April 29th. It was unanimously approved by the Select Board. This process takes time and anticipates hearing back some time in December or early January.

**8. Approval of Minutes**

Chair Varela made the motion to approve the minutes of the April 1, 2020 School Committee Meeting.

Second: Dr. Craghead

Roll Call Vote: 6-0-0

**9. Old Business**

None

**10. Citizen Speak Topic Response**

Kerry Curley (Edgehill Road) stated that after listening to the meeting, it is impressive what goes on in the background. She has a senior at MHS and does not understand why we have to make the decision about graduation now. She feels we are jumping the gun and doesn't agree with the decision.

Kevin Swanton – signed in to speak but did not come through.

Aaron Richer – signed in to speak but did not come through.

Lily Fallon and father Tim Fallon (93 Carey Ave.) thanked everyone for their time and efforts. Mr. Fallon is struggling with the plan for graduation. He questioned what we had to lose by not making the decision now and working with community members/students, etc. to come up with a better plan. If that did not work, we could have the caravan at a later date.

Aaron Richer (41 Ferncroft Rd.) has a senior daughter and feels the drive through graduation plan is missing the big picture. Some colleges are letting students walk in December. Students will be home from college and there will be more wide-spread testing available then. There needs to be something more. He found the current tone of the responses stubborn and uninspiring.

Brian Fox (67 Frothingham Rd.) stated that difficult times require difficult decisions. Students should have been consulted and involved in the process. Some are 18 and adults. Some towns are conducting surveys about graduation. Mr. Fox feels that no matter when graduation is held, students will gather.

Kerry Curley once again spoke to ask if this decision was due to financial concerns, people will definitely donate – we can make this happen.

At the conclusion, Principal Jette spoke again. He stated that this decision was not a financial decision or a decision about the venue. It was also not a decision made lightly. Mr. Jette did speak with the senior student government representatives. Parents and students have emailed and he is responding to people.

**11.           Next Meeting Agenda Items**  
Updated and Approved

Chair Varela moved to adjourn the School Committee Meeting.

Second:               Ms. White

Roll Call Vote:               6-0-0

The meeting was adjourned at 10:12pm