

Milton School Committee Meeting Minutes
Regular Meeting
Location: Milton Access TV Studio
Date: January 2, 2019
Time: 7 pm

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

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

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm.

Approval of January 2, 2019 Agenda

The agenda was approved with no additions or deletions.

Citizen's Speak – none

Chair's Report

Topic One: DRA presentation.

Carl Franceschi and Paul Moore presented the Elementary Space Needs Study. They reminded the School Committee and the audience of the goals in their facilities assessment: to review the current usage of space at the elementary schools, determine anticipated future space needs, and to develop and evaluate both short term and long term goals.

Topic One: Review of each School's Property Plan: Next, they gave a brief review of each school's property plan. There is minimal room for expansion at each school site, but there is possibility to add modular classrooms or build on certain sites, which we will discuss further below.

Topic Two: Current school enrollment numbers, number of classrooms, and average classroom size.

Glover Elementary has 601 students and 19 classrooms (Grades 1-5). The average class size for Kindergarten is 23, and the average class size for grades 1-5 is 22.

Collicott Elementary has 661 students and 23 classrooms (Grades 1-5). The average class size for Kindergarten is 23, and the average class size for grades 1-5 is 24.

Cunningham Elementary has 595 students and 19 classrooms (Grades 1-5). The average class size for Kindergarten is 21, and the average class size for grades 1-5 is 22.

Tucker Elementary has 437 students and 15 classrooms (Grades 1-5). The average class size for Kindergarten is 21, and the average class size for grades 1-5 is 22.

Topic Three: Elementary School Enrollment Projections. The current projections estimate total enrollment numbers for Pre-K- to Grade 5 to increase to 2512 students in the year 2028. This is a 34% in student population over a twenty year span.

Topic Four: Anticipated Effects on Elementary School Class Size. The current number of elementary school classrooms in the district is 107.5. The average class size for Kindergarten is 22, and the average for Grades 1-5 is 23. In the next three years with no changes average class size will increase to 23 and 24, respectively. In the next ten years the class size will reach 24 and 25, respectively. Paul Moore reminded the group that this is just the projected *average* numbers for class size; there may be several classes in the district that wind up with many more students than this.

Short term classroom needs for 3 years → 20 (18% increase) more classrooms are needed to be added in the short term to maintain the current average class size. If nothing changes, class size will go up an average of 1 student per classroom. He reminded everyone to keep in mind that these numbers are averages and that some classes may have many more students to reflect this average.

Topic Five: Current school enrollment numbers, number of classrooms, and average classroom size Pierce Middle School. The Pierce Middle School has 64 full size classrooms. This includes 7 rooms for Art, Music, Drama Health; 4 rooms for computer STEM, and the language lab; and 8 Special Education classrooms. The average class size is 22 students.

Topic Six: Current school enrollment numbers, number of classrooms, and average classroom size, Milton High School. Milton High School has a total 74 full size classrooms including specialty classrooms (Art, Music, Drama, Technology and Vocational, Special Ed). There are 54 core classrooms. The average class size, according to MSBA guidelines, estimates the average class size to be 22.

Topic Seven: Review of Short Term Options. The list of short term options was presented:

- Make No Changes and Allow Class Sizes to Increase. This may require additional classroom aides as class sizes increase.
- Convert Remaining Art, Music, and Computer Rooms. Additional classrooms could be added by doing this. Space would need to be found for these programs so they can continue. This could add 8 new classrooms to the district, and would have some associated construction costs. The changes could be completed over the summer while buildings are unoccupied.
- Create Classrooms within Library/Media Centers. We are less reliant on hard cover books with the utilization of technology and perhaps can eliminate some books to create class space here. There will be construction costs associated with this project, and that does include consideration of fire codes, sprinklers, etc.

- Utilize Existing Underutilized Spaces in the High School, Middle School, and Cunningham Upper Floor. There are minimal underutilized spaces in the high school and middle school. There is space on the Cunningham School's upper floor, but there are concerns about young children being further away from the building exits. One option would be to move the library to that floor. If the library moves to this space, the current library could be converted into classroom spaces.
- Rent Modular Classrooms. The portable classrooms can be used as dedicated art and music rooms, or as core classrooms. This is less desirable as a permanent option but could work in the short term. These classrooms would likely be placed on playground space, which would be less desirable especially if we are increasing the population of the school.
- Rent and Renovate Offsite Space, If Available. They have no options to present for offsite spaces.
- Some combination of the above.

Topic Eight: Review of Long Term Options. The list of long term options was presented:

- Make No Changes. Larger class sizes would result.
- Convert Remaining Art, Music, and Computer Rooms.
- Construct New Space. There is some space to make additions at each site, but this is minimal. To add classroom space, we must also consider the effects of housing additional children – the increases in staff, parking and playground spaces that would also be needed as well. The Glover Elementary School does have some land on site that can be developed by adding a one story addition near the gym, or an addition towards the front of the school.
- Shift Fifth Graders to the Middle School. Another potential option would be to shift the 5th graders to the Pierce school. This would add 18 classrooms.
- Addition to Milton High School Site. This additional could house Pre-K or both Pre-K and Kindergarten children and function as an early education center. Another option for the space would be to add 8th grade students, and reconfigure the space from this perspective. Pierce Middle School could then house 5th, 6th, 7th grades.
- A newly constructed building for early education. This would free space in the elementary school. The town would need to determine a site for this project. This would add 20 classrooms.
- New Free-Standing Elementary School. The last option would be to consider a new free standing K-5 school. The town would need to determine a site for this project. Building a new elementary school would provide 24 new classrooms.

Topic Nine: Educational Considerations: As a review, the educational issues were outlined. The town will have to decide whether to set limits on the maximum class size, whether the centralized Pre-K and Kindergarten building is truly a desirable idea, and whether any of the potential building configurations are optimal from a programming perspective.

This concluded the DRA presentation.

Dr. Donahue opened the floor for questions.

Dr. Craghead wondered whether the older grades could use the Cunningham School upper level. This would allow the current library to be converted to classrooms and eliminate the concerns about having young children on the upper level for class. She thinks the space could be further maximized in this way.

She also asked Ms. Rosmarin whether the former library site on the Blue Hills Parkway is being considered at all by the Facilities Advisory Committee.

Ms. Rosmarin replied that this was considered. The Facilities Committee determined that the amount of classrooms to be added at this site did not justify the cost of upgrades required to bring the building to code. Only 3-4 classrooms would be added at this site.

Dr. Donahue added the maximum number of classrooms added by utilizing this space would be 4. Dr. Donahue also explained that the land at the site would have to be acquired and that it may be more desirable to maintain this as a capital asset of the town.

Dr. Pavlicek commented that years ago the cost to bring the building up to code was \$700,000.

The space would need to essentially be torn down and new construction built.

Ms. White asked for more information about modular classrooms. She wanted to know how many children do they hold and what is the process for obtaining them (are they leased, purchased, etc.).

Ms. Varela asked where on each school site the modular classrooms would be placed. This was reviewed for each site. Some considerations include making sure children have adequate access to the restrooms.

Mr. Franceschi replied that at Glover there is room for 3 modular classrooms off of the gym. This is a temporary solution. Collicott – 4 classrooms.

Dr. Donahue explained that a change must occur. Within our current student census we will need to consider a combination of options to determine the best way to proceed.

Ms. Varela thinks a temporary solution to address increasing class size would be to convert the library space, add 7 modular classrooms, and move the eighth grade.

Ms. Rosmarin asked how many classrooms could be gained from the Cunningham fourth floor.

Mr. Franceschi responded that up to five classrooms, the equivalent of one school grade, could be added. If the library was moved to the upper level, the same amount of classrooms could be gained from the current library.

Dr. Craghead pointed out the other consequences of increased enrollment at each site. For example, there will be increased demands on the use of the gym and lunch room. These items will need to be considered as we contemplate these options.

Ms. Varela pointed out that with enrollment increasing, these demands will come regardless, but that the most important factor affecting the educational experience is class size.

Ms. Rosmarin asked whether the land around Cunningham/Collicott can be used to extend the playground. Mr. Franceschi responded that this would not be easily done due to sloping on the back grounds which would need work before the space can be used. There may be some also be potential setbacks regarding whether they can use some of the land behind the school. As wetlands they may be protected legally.

Ms. Eberhardt pointed out that the district has increased by 400 students, the size of an entire school. Our current buildings are housing these students. There is no space to expand programs. If no changes are made, there is no room for vision and growth of programs within the district. The option to do nothing is not an option, in her view.

Superintendent Gormley added that increased population growth will likely increase the special Ed programming needs. This has not yet been taken into account.

Ms. White asked whether adding to the current buildings is really a plan that will meet our goals and commented that perhaps the solution is to build a new school.

Dr. Donahue asked what size property would be needed to build a new school.

Mr. Franceschi commented that ten acres is typical if building a school that houses approximately 300 students. An additional acre should be added to estimates for every 100 students. The Tucker Elementary property size is approximately 3 acres.

Ms. Varela commented that there is not a property of this size that exists in Milton. She asked how many people the early education building would hold and how long potential additions may take.

Mr. Franceschi commented that it will take approximately two years to construct either free standing building or an addition.

Once the Early Ed building is completed, move the 5th grade back to Elementary school.

Mr. Franceschi commented that the high school and middle school don't necessarily need to be expanded, but if desired additions are possible. He added that the projections for the middle and high school regarding class size are more difficult to predict due to wide variations in class size due to variety of electives and other course work.

Ms. Rosmarin asked about the estimates for early education classrooms. Responded that 22 classrooms are needed in total.

Ms. Varela pointed out that a new school requires a full staff which creates additional budgetary concerns.

Superintendent Gormley agreed, but added that there are school districts where principals rotate between more than one school.

Ms. Varela wondered whether we should add the early education school and move the 5th grade to Pierce temporarily until the early education building gets up and running.

Superintendent Gormley advocated for minimal transitions between schools.

Superintendent Gormley commented she believes the town has made a commitment to art and music programming and that these programs will suffer if they lose dedicated rooms.

Dr. Donahue also added that having these specials come into classrooms eliminates the minutes of time that both students and teachers were afforded to reset and regroup in between subjects as they moved from one classroom to another.

Ms. Varela indicated that she can see both sides of the issue. There are benefits to this building but this does create another school transition for children. She does recall however that her daughter did experience many transitions and it was not a major source of stress or conflict for them, and even now it is a faint memory.

Ms. Sheehan did previously work in a district that had an early childhood center and the parents loved it. She also commented that an early childhood center with 22 classrooms may eliminate the need for 25 additional classrooms in the long term. This is desirable.

Mr. Franceschi commented that there is potential at this site to coordinate the early learning center and the high school arrival and dismissal times so that this minimizes the effects of increased traffic on the site. This is more desirable as opposed to expanding schools that are already struggling with the effects of over population.

Ms. Eberhardt commented that while she does have mixed feelings as well, the centralized early childhood programming does appeal to her. She would not want the fifth grade to go to the Pierce, and she would not want the eighth grade at the high school either.

Dr. Donahue thanked Carl Franceschi and Paul Moore for their work. He asked the School Committee members to consider the short options that appeal most so we can start trying to make a determination. He explained that we will need to get additional information from the building inspector and additional information regarding the cost of modular classrooms.

Dr. Donahue added there are five spaces that do not impose capital costs, additional 3-9 spaces that would have conservative capital costs. That may help with space needs over the next three years, however additional spaces will be needed.

Dr. Craghead emphasized the importance of the libraries for the early grades. She doesn't feel the spaces should be diminished. Minimizing hand held books in libraries, and conversions to smaller cramped classrooms that will alter the educational experience of the students.

Old Business

None.

Citizen Speak Topic Response

N/a

Next Meeting Agenda Items

Next meeting agenda items include continued discussion regarding the DRA report, approval of vendor warrants, and limited subcommittee/advisory committee reporting. The next site visit will be to Cunningham on January 23, 2019.

Citizen Speak

N/a.

Meeting Adjourned

Dr. Donahue put forth a motion to adjourn.

Second: S. Varela

Vote: 6-0-0

The meeting was adjourned at 9:08 pm.