

Milton School Committee Meeting Minutes  
Regular Meeting  
Location: Cunningham Elementary  
Date: January 23, 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 7:05 pm.

**Approval of January 2, 2019 Agenda**

The agenda was approved with the deletion of Community School Fees (under item 7).

**Citizen's Speak**

Tricia Poles of 24 Victory Ave expressed her support of the following school configuration: an early childhood center consisting of pre-K to second grades; a middle school consisting of third to seventh grades; high school consisting of grades eight through twelve. She also suggested the implementation of a robust Co-op program for high school juniors and seniors as opposed to advanced placement classes. She feels this type of program will better prepare students for life after high school.

Robert Wolff of 239 Highland Street commented that the library is not sufficient to be a classroom, and that the acoustics in the room are poor. He added his view that this could be corrected with minimal cost.

**Superintendent's Report**

Superintendent Gormley introduced Principal Redden from Cunningham Elementary, and invited the School Site Council to present their information.

**Topic One: Cunningham Elementary School Site Council Presentation (Attachment).**

Principal Jonathan Redden introduced many 5<sup>th</sup> grade student members of the student council. These students provided tours of the school prior to the School Committee Meeting for the first time. The students were invited to share information about other projects they are involved in at school. Principal Redden then introduced the School Site Council members. He explained that the school body is composed 610 students from preschool to grade 5. The theme of the school is inclusion. The next slides he presented contained data regarding how the school

population has grown since 2014, and regarding how the school works to enrich and assist students to grow personally and educationally.

School Improvement Goals for the current year and through 2020 include the following: making strides in ELA by continuing to implement Reach for Reading in grades K – 5; developing skills in mathematics such as critical thinking, problem solving, decision-making and communication. In addition, teachers are working more with smaller groups of children and utilizing math coaches. Lastly, the school strives to create a school wide system of support that includes proactive strategies for defining, teaching and supporting appropriate student behaviors.

The Cunningham Experience is one of inclusion. The School Council wants every member of the Cunningham community to feel valued and welcome.

The Site Council then presented the video entitled “What Does It Mean to Be Kind”. This video was prepared as part of Inclusive Schools Week by the Cunningham Cares Club. Some of the Cunningham teachers then spoke about the pictures and shared what those moments represent: inclusive and engaging teaching strategies, effective social and emotional learning strategies, student leadership, preschool enrollment, family involvement, celebration of differences, flexible seating, and successful implementation of PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Support).

Ms. White thanked the Site Council for their presentation.

Dr. Craghead agreed, and remarked this presentation gives her a sense of the school’s operations from day to day.

Ms. Varela agreed and remarked that building an environment where students feel safe and included is crucial.

Dr. Donahue made a statement that he fully supports the PBIS initiative. He is happy that clear expectations are put forth and he knows this will continue to be successful.

Dr. Donahue deferred the remainder of the Superintendent’s Report items 4B and 4C (Draft, School Year Calendar 2019-2020 and Happenings) so the public forum could commence.

### **Milton School Committee Public Forum on Space**

Dr. Donahue explained that this forum is designed to gather community input regarding both short term and long term solutions on space.

Sara Driscoll of 24 Ferncroft Road asked if there is a way to consolidate all three preschools into one location.

Dr. Donahue responded that the preschool programs have very specific components such as special education and peer models, and while there are some discussions of moving this around, at this time doing so won't provide much dramatic relief to the space issues at this time.

Ms. Driscoll asked if the preschool is revenue driven.

Dr. Donahue replied that it is revenue neutral except for parts of the special education program.

Dr. Pavlicek explained the special needs pre-school program is free, and there are some other programs that are provided at cost.

Ms. Varela asked if everyone has reviewed all the options that are being discussed.

The short term options were placed on the projector screen for everyone to review.

Mary Cantor of 51 Elton Rd, is a parent of fifth and seventh grader. She expressed her frustration that these same talks were happening when her seventh grader was in third grade. She is concerned that there are lots of options for the elementary schools but not a lot for middle school, which will experience the effects of climbing enrollment as well. She explained that she is concerned there is not more of a short term plan decided upon. She asked whether they are they looking into more modular classrooms as an immediate solution. She asked how adding modular classrooms will impact the children that have outdoor activities. She also asked what the trends for attrition are for middle school ages.

Dr. Donahue remarked that attrition is less than it has been in the past but has stabilized. A permanent solution to the space issue will require multiple millions of dollars.

Ms. Varela has been focused on the increases in high school population for quite some time and agrees that the numbers continue to grow.

Dr. Donahue reiterated the fact that the different levels of the MPS (elementary school, middle school and high school) have different needs. They have continuously asked the planners and architects to take this into account.

Dr. Pavlicek commented that historically drop off has happened between sixth and seventh grade, when many students leave the public school system for private schools. That outflow has decreased significantly and students are staying in the Milton Public Schools.

Jeanne Burns is a parent of a fifth and third grader and shares the same concerns as Mary Cantor. There is no room for additional classrooms at Collicot/Cunningham. Lunches are already overcrowded. She commented that recess is hugely overcrowded, with hundreds of

students sharing a relatively small outdoor space. She doesn't believe there is sufficient space for modular classrooms to be added; and further commented that this is a reactive versus proactive strategy. She is very concerned with class size and voiced that she will consider the option of private school based on how quickly they find a solution to this space issue.

The list of long term solutions was on the projector screen for viewing by the audience.

Dr. Donahue shared that the population of Collicot/Cunningham together is 1300 students; this is more than the high school. Dr. Donahue expressed that we essentially need one additional elementary school. He welcomed additional input on long-term solutions via email, indicating that the School Committee will need to discuss this at Town Meeting.

Ms. Varela encouraged parents to attend these meeting and urged them to provide representation at the town level to share their views.

Carlin Donovan is the parent of a sixth grader, a fourth grader, and a future kindergarten student. She is concerned about short term solutions. For example, firefighters don't have ladders long enough to reach the top of Cunningham School if student classrooms are placed. She also echoed concerns of class size. Her daughter last year had 29 students in her 5<sup>th</sup> grade class.

Dr. Donahue emphasized that no solution will be employed that is deemed as unsafe for students.

Ms. Eberhardt stated the space in question has been used for educational purposes but not for classrooms as far as she recalls.

Rachel Pozar of 7 Galen Street is the parent of both a first grader and an upcoming preschooler. She shares ramifications of having class sizes that are too large, explaining that the youngest children and children with the least resources will suffer the most. She believes the concepts of inclusion, equity, and justice should be kept in the forefront when making decisions about the space issue we face. She also stated that her first grader has a class size of 26, with only one teacher and no teacher's aide. She wondered if more teacher aides can be utilized as a short-term solution while they continue to work on long term space solutions. Lastly, she asked if the School Committee has looked at residential offerings.

Dr. Donahue said there is no school controlled parcel of land that is readily available to be made into a new school. There are definitely pieces of land for sale, but the zoning and rules associated would add to the cost.

Christina Lang of 33 Governors Road is a parent of a Collicot first grader and fourth grader. Her children are in the largest grades. She reiterated what all of the other parents have expressed.

There is no room to add any more students at the Collicot/Cunningham campus. She says her daughter barely has time to eat lunch. She said that losing the library is just too much. It is the only place in the building with A/C. She is concerned with all of the things that are being “lost” and the implication for the kids that they all saw smiling earlier in the meeting. She wonders if their happiness will continue if we keep taking things away. She also raised concerns for drop off and pick up.

Dr. Donahue thanked her for her comments and says they are very helpful.

Ms. Varela asked the parents what they think about the preschoolers and kindergarteners being moved to the high school.

Ms. Varela commented that having first through fifth grades housed in one school and having pre-K and K on the high school campus is thought to give back the elementary classrooms and the rooms for specials such as art, music, and computer science.

Marie Morse, parent of a fourth grader, asked to confirm whether the town owns the old art center and the building on Blue Hill Parkway. She asked if those properties can be considered as school sites.

Dr. Donahue responded that these properties have been considered. The land would have to be purchased if not used as a library, which would be an expense. Additionally, the property size is only half an acre, which poses concern. The East Milton Library Board of Trustees previously had no interest in selling this property. This could be a viable solution, however either building would need significant renovations or to be demolished and rebuilt before use.

Sue Aresca of 114 Granite Place is the parent of a kindergartener and commented on having an early education center. She is concerned about having multiple transitions for children.

Dr. Donahue highlighted the cost differential between having an early education center versus building a new school. He explained the difference is between \$30 million to \$50 million. That said, he noted it is important for the community to articulate their thoughts and concerns if they are leaning more toward one solution or another so the committee can make an informed decision and advocate on behalf of the MPS community.

Sara Driscoll spoke again and said when her daughter was going from elementary to middle school that they had a program in place for the upcoming sixth graders to visit the school and meet people and walk around to get familiar with their new environment. This made the experience much less stressful. She suggested that this may be of benefit if they do build the Early Education Center to help ease the transition for kindergarteners.

Regina Malley of 18 Lyman Rd is the parent of first grader and preschooler. She shared that she is the Park Commissioner and they have an issue with not enough space for programs as well. A positive consequence of having a fully equipped early education center would be that could open up more space and more programs also through the park for ages 2 – 5.

Superintendent Gormley stated that using the Cunningham Park is difficult but she is an advocate for this. The issue of crossing the street due to a lack of access to restrooms makes use of Cunningham Park a more difficult task. Superintendent Gormley will bring it up with the PTO leadership of the Collicot and Cunningham Schools.

Heidi Namis, parent of a Cunningham first and fourth grader is concerned with large class size. She asked about the costs of these options and how we will pay for them.

Dr. Donahue said a large chunk will be tax increases, but there is potential for private donations as well. Ms. Namis asked what the time frame on this would be. Dr. Donahue explained that one hopeful outcome at the upcoming Town Meeting will be to approve the establishment of a School Building Committee. With this body in place, they will work on architectural plans. He is hopeful that we would finalize these plans by spring 2020, break ground on a project in June 2020, and the construction would hopefully be completed approximately 18 months after that. He thinks within the next 8 weeks the long-term solution they are going to pursue will be decided.

Dr. Pavlicek reviewed the two options for additions to Glover in the presentation. Neither will provide the needed 25 classrooms. The early education center would provide that.

Ms. Varela again encouraged parents to be Town Meeting members.

Ms. Eberhardt pointed out that the costs associate with the early education center would be less in terms of personnel.

Jennifer Malkovich of 31 Cypress Rd is the parent of a fifth grader and asked whether there has been sufficient research on the social and developmental impact of moving a year early to middle school.

Superintendent Gormley does not believe this potential solution is a viable option because the cafeteria and gym are already at capacity at Pierce. Additionally, the fifth graders would be very isolated in that building.

Nicholas Ahearn of 49 Century Lane, a parent of a third and fourth grader, shared that he is an elementary school principal in a surrounding town. He asked whether there is MSBA funding available.

Dr. Donahue explained they would be eligible for approximately 30-35% reimbursement of funds, however based on the current timeframe it would take too long for the selection process.

Ann Conklin of 86 Cedar Terrace has two children at Collicot, and expressed that her first choice would be the construction of a new school. She expressed her concerns regarding the early childhood center, which are the same as previously discussed by other parents and includes concerns about the increased volume at pickup and drop off.

Ms. Varela explained that the high school students start way earlier than preschool and kindergarten; these students are also dismissed before preschool and kindergarten.

Dr. Craghead noted that there is a cap already on pre-K students, and there is already a waitlist.

Dr. Donahue said they are not looking to expand the amount of pre-K students other than what is already required. Looking into benefits of a charter school was brought up, but availability of space would still be an issue. Dr. Donahue said it was something worth looking into.

Tim O'Hara of Lafayette St, father of two children at Collicot, thinks adding pre-K and kindergarten to the high school site is a great idea because of the services available to their age group.

A parent from the audience asked what they should do if they have additional questions after this meeting.

Dr. Donahue said the forums will continue and he encourages involvement and participation. He also reminded parents to be present at Town Meeting as well.

Superintendent Gormley also said they will speak to their technology director to ask about the possibility of creating an interactive website for parents to share their feedback, concerns and questions. The audience was told that they can email School Committee members with their questions and concerns, but they should keep in mind that School Committee members will not be allowed to engage in a back and forth dialogue because that does violate open meeting laws. Superintendent Gormley and her staff can correspond, however, without being in violation of these laws.

Kelly G. of Lyman Road, expressed security concerns with having pre-K and K on the high school campus; she would like to know what measures would be taken to ensure the safety of the younger students.

Dr. Donahue explained that while the students would be housed on the same campus there would be no connecting space, but noted her concern.

He then remarked upon how productive this forum has been, and emphasized his desire to ensure that the School Committee represents all of the views of the community effectively

### **Superintendent's Report**

#### Topic Two: Draft, School Year Calendar 2019-2020 (Attachment) (Vote).

Dr. Craghead inquired as to the rationale behind having an early release day the same week as Veterans Day.

Dr. Pavlicek responded that it is required by contract.

**Dr. Donahue moved to approve School Year Calendar 2019-2020.**

**Second: Ms. Varela**

**Vote: 6-0-0**

#### Topic Three: Happenings

Superintendent Gormley reminded the audience that the district had their Pre-K Information Night and there was a great turnout, with 125 parents and guardians present. Tomorrow, January 24, 2019, the Kindergarten Information Night will be held. Fifth Grade Information Night will be held on March 4, 2019. The popular STEM Information Night will be held on March 11, 2019. Lastly, the Pierce Movie Night is January 25, 2019, and the Fifth grade Growth and Development Night will be held on February 5, 2019.

### **Chair's Report**

Dr. Donahue called attention to the revised School Committee Calendar. The Town Election was previously inaccurate in the packet and the correct date is April 30, 2019.

The next School Committee meetings are February 6, 2019, and February 27, 2019, which is also the week of the special town meeting. Dr. Donahue will organize some dates for Town Hall meeting this week and he will email those dates to the School Committee members.

### **Finance Subcommittee Report**

Dr. Craghead presented the Finance Subcommittee Report.

She sent the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter report to School Committee members last week for their review and asked whether anyone had any questions regarding the report. No one expressed any questions or concerns.



**Dr. Craghead moved to approve the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Report as presented.**

**Second: Ms. Varela**

**Vote: 6-0-0**

Dr. Craghead reported that there was renewed discussion regarding the athletic fees and the implementation of new summer school fees.

It was previously voted upon to cut all athletic fees from \$300 to \$150. During the discussion prior to the vote, only the fees for high school students were reviewed. At the time of the vote, the middle school athletic fees were not addressed. Middle school athletic fees, as a result of the School Committee vote, were decreased from \$50 to \$25. In light of the fact that the \$50 fee barely covers the costs associated with athletics for the middle school students, the Finance Subcommittee voted to recommend the School Committee revert the middle school athletic fees back to \$50, effective the 2019-2020 academic school year.

**Dr. Craghead made a motion to restore the middle school athletic fee of \$50 per sport, to take effect during the 2019-2020 academic school year.**

**Second: Ms. Varela**

**Vote: 6-0-0**

The Finance Subcommittee also reviewed summer school fees for Milton Summer Enrichment. Last year they did not take in enough tuition dollars to cover the operational costs of the summer school programs. The proposed increases are as follows:

- 1 Course - \$175 to \$185
- 2 Courses - \$350 to \$360
- 3 Courses \$525 to \$535
- 4 Courses - \$600 to \$635
- The Family max would be \$1500, which is the same as previous years.
- Pre-K - \$650 to \$660

**Dr. Craghead made a motion to approve the new summer school fees as above.**

**Second: Ms. Eberhardt**

**Vote: 6-0-0**

## **Facilities Advisory Report**

At this time there is nothing to report given the extended discussion during the public forum.

## **Strategic Planning Advisory Committee Report**

Ms. Rosmarin presented the Strategic Planning Advisory Committee Report. The committee had their second quarterly meeting to discuss their strategic planning goals. Members reported the progress of their assigned tasks and there were some changes made to the language in some of the specific goal statements. They will be shared via email with the School Committee members. The one area of consensus was to focus more on special education programs. The committee plans to reach out to new Special Education Director, Susan Maselli, to discuss ways to meet this goal.

## **Policy Subcommittee Report**

Ms. Eberhardt presented the Policy Subcommittee

### Topic One: First reading, Policy IFC, Diversity Policy (Attachment)

Ms. Eberhardt explained that this policy is still being drafted and will not be voted at this time. The School Committee members were presented with a draft that includes markups for changes that the committee recommends. The School Committee was asked to review the document and provide any comments or suggestions for edits.

Topic Two: Policy JICG, Tobacco Use by Students (Attachment) (Vote). Ms. Eberhardt explained that it is no longer necessary to include this policy in the handbook because this topic is now addressed in depth within a more comprehensive policy regarding all student substance abuse. Dr. Donahue clarified for the viewing public that the updated policy does continue to prohibit the use of substances by students while of school trips, sporting events, or other school related events that held off of school premises, and tobacco use by visitors on the school property.

**Ms. Eberhardt made a motion to strike Policy JICG, Tobacco Use by Students, from the handbook.**

**Second: Dr. Craghead**

**Vote: 6-0-0**

### Topic Three: Policy LBA, Charms Collaborative Policy (Attachment) (Vote)

This collaborative no longer exists, so therefore this policy is no longer applicable.

**Ms. Eberhardt made a motion to strike Policy LBA, Charms Collaborative, from the handbook.**

**Second: Ms. Varela**

**Vote: 6-0-0**

### **Approval of Minutes**

Ms. Varela noted that there are other teams that made it to tournament level that were not yet reported on in the Superintendent's Report. Ms. Gormley will follow up on this so everyone is included.

Ms. Rosmarin noted on page 6 of the November minutes the verbiage should be facility strategic goal or facility goal, not facility advisory. In addition the vote should have been unanimous.

**Dr. Donahue made a motion to approve the School Committee minutes of November 29, 2018 and December 12, 2018 as amended.**

**Second: Ms. Varela**

**Vote: 6-0-0**

### **Old Business**

None

### **Citizen Speak Topic Response**

None

### **Next Meeting Agenda Items**

The next School Committee meeting will include the forum at Tucker Elementary School, as well as a Health and Wellness Committee update.

### **Citizen Speak**

**None**

Dr. Donahue requested a moment of silence for Mary Schofield who was in the Milton Public School system for many years and passed away. She began her career in 1961 as a teacher at the Pierce Elementary School. In 1964 she became the principal of the Glover Elementary school. She was promoted in 1983 to Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Personnel.

She retired in 1992, but did serve many times as the interim Assistant Superintendent when needed. She created an amazing legacy within the school district and was a mentor to many.

Dr. Donahue also extended gratitude to custodial department and DPW for their assistance with the recent winter weather.

### **Meeting Adjourned**

**Dr. Donahue moved to adjourn the meeting.**

**Second: Ms. Varela**

**Vote: 6-0-0**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:54 pm.