

Milton School Committee Meeting Minutes
Via Remote Access
August 5, 2020

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** – 7:02pm
2. **Approve August 5, 2020 Agenda**
Updated and approved

Chair Varela reported that the School Committee has made formal request to the Commissioner of Education to ask for an extension on the formal vote on the Back to School Plan. The August 5th School Committee meeting will focus on the Return to School Plan and adjusted the agenda.

Chair Varela made a motion to extend Citizen Speak to 45 minutes.

Second: Dr. Donahue

Roll Call Vote:6-0-0

Chair Varela made a motion to accept all the changes made to the August 5th agenda.

Second: Ms. White

Roll Call Vote:6-0-0

3. **Superintendent's Report - Superintendant Gormley**
 - a. **Proposed Return to School Plan Presentation**
 - Ada Rosmarin, School Committee
 - Dr. Karen Spaulding, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Human Resources
 - Dr. Glenn Pavlicek , Assistant Superintendent for Business
 - Principal James Jette, Milton High School
 - Principal William Fish, Pierce Middle School
 - Principal Dr. Elaine McNeil-Girmai, Tucker Elementary

- Principal Karen McDavitt, Glover Elementary
- Principal Dr. Jonathan Redden, Cunningham Elementary
- Principal Holly Concannon, Collicot Elementary
- Susan Maselli, Director of Pupil Personnel Services
- Zeina Hamada, Director World Language
- Bill Ritchie, Director of Consolidated Facilities
- Jackie Morgan, Director of Food Services
- Kim Coughlin, Head Nurse
- Dr. Jon Pincus, Return to School Task Force Member
- Dr. Janulewicz, Return to School Task Force Member
- Dr. Walford, Return to School Task Force Member
- Dr. Dakkak, Return to School Task Force Member
- Caroline Kinsella, Town of Milton Board of Health
 - **Presentation and overview given on the Return to School Plan.**

Chair Varela thanked all who worked on and presented the Return to School Plan and asked if asked the School Committee members for comments or questions.

Dr. Craghead asked the doctors on the task force about their concern in the recent rise of positive Covid cases. What is their opinion on the rise in cases with the return to school approaching?

Dr. Janulewicz replied it is accurate that the numbers of positive cases are rising. She stated that she watches the data every day. Our state is ticking upward and it is concerning. There has been talk about going back a phase - just waiting for the Governor to make that decision.

Dr. Pincus – spoke about the return to school being safe for students and staff if we follow guidelines.

Ms. White stated that she recently read an article that the numbers can grow quickly because the virus is so contagious. She understands that children are not at as a of a risk, but the concern is that they will bring home the virus to their families.

Dr. Janulewicz also stated that she read the same article. She commented it is important to watch the trends and the data. Dr. Janulewicz stated that we need to be ahead of the numbers.

Dr. Pincus replied from the limited data given, children are less likely to be the cause of infection or get infected. Dr. Pincus stated that he was not saying the children won't, but less likely that they will become infected.

Dr. Janulewicz reported that she has tried to push DPH to release population data. Ages 0-19 should be broken down in numbers.

Dr. Walford stated that our positive numbers are growing without the schools being open. The community needs to be doing a better job following the guidelines.

Dr. Dakkak spoke about a study done in Washington, DC. The study showed that students of color are 3 to 4 times likely to be carriers of Covid. This does not mean they will be infectious, but equity is a huge issue. There is no easy decision with the return to school. The current plan is a solid plan. Community spread will also be an issue not just in school.

Ms. Eberhardt thanked the Return to School Committee for all of their work. People have the best interest of the community. The School Committee is invested in the community, to be more inclusive and a sense of belonging for all. Ms. Eberhardt asked if anyone looked at the data from the Department of Early Education and Care? It has been reopened, what the data tells us is that we can keep children in school with the right safety protocols.

Dr. Pincus stated that he has not seen the data. There is data nationally from the YMCA, hospitals and clinical studies with the effectiveness of mitigations. When eating you may need more distance from others.

Ms. Eberhardt asked about the dismissal times. Superintendent Gormley replied it is still being discussed at this time with the principals.

Chair Varela asked the doctors about the spike in numbers. Is there a spike in numbers in Milton? She believes the spike is because people are not following best practices as they were in late spring and early summer. Wearing masks and following best practices, the staff and students can come back safely. Community needs to do a better job following the rules.

Dr. Pincus agreed that the controlled environment of a school or a hospital compared to most other environments. It is really hard to change behavior; outdoor activities are much safer, concerning to hear about indoor parties and restaurants in the surrounding communities. This needs to be a community effort if we want our schools to open.

Ms. Rosmarin has a question about the metrics and the DPH, why they only release wide ranges of ages 0-19. She was wondering how the doctors would advise schools as to when they need to switch models. At what point do we need to flip it?

Dr. Walford replied that there is no perfect answer. He does not think it will be one metric; it will be a combination of metrics. It won't be only one state it will depend on the community and the school systems. It has to be a combination of different factors.

Dr. Donohue said there has been discussion about models bringing early elementary settings 100% and others hybrid. Why did those models fail for MPS?

Ms. Concannon and Dr. Redden replied that it was considered as a team but spacing was an issue. Stated that MPS entertained bringing back K-2 but we do not have the space to accommodate.

Chair Varela commented if the district chooses the Hybrid Model, the district needs to also give families the remote option.

Dr. Donohue asked why did the Pierce schedule change?

Mr. Fish replied that it made sense to mirror the high school structure.

Caroline Kinsella called into the School Committee meeting to report on the numbers in Milton. Numbers have dropped in Milton, currently only have 2 cases in Milton.

Ms. Eberhardt had a question about the masks, what was the decision?

Superintendent Gormley stated that MPS purchased masks and masks will be available for students if needed. Students can wear their cloth mask – it is not required to use a MPS mask. All students, staff and faculty are required to wear a mask/face covering.

Dr. Dakkak stated that offering a training about mask usage is a great opportunity for the students. The same protections should be provided to the students that are for the staff.

Dr. Pincus stated that the school district can/should train staff and faculty about wearing masks.

Dr. Walford commented that masks are only one part of making a safer environment.

Ms. Eberhardt asked the community to reach out if they need help.

Dr. Pavlicek stated that 100,000 masks will be available.

Dr. Craghead thanked the doctors for all of their time. A parent emailed during the discussion, wanted to ask the doctors if they were planning to send their own children back to school or would they opt for remote.

Dr. Walford replied every family needs to think about their own children and how comfortable they are with the decision. He stated that he plans to send his children back to school.

Dr. Dakkak replied that her daughter will be in school in the hybrid model. She stated that every family and student will be different and need to do what is best for the safety of their family.

Dr. Pincus stated that he is comfortable sending his children back to school with the Hybrid Model.

Dr. Janulewicz stated that it is a personal decision for all families. Every family will be in a different situation medically when this decision is made. Believes that Milton Public School back to school plan is safe and has multiple layers of protection plans in place. She stated that she is watching the data and, yes, she will be sending her children back to school with the current data.

Chair Varela asked about the specials/electives, from the models at all levels. How are specials going to be taught? Chorus? Woodshop? What is the plan?

Principal Jette stated MHS will be following the DESE guidance/guidelines. Looking to utilize outdoor space, if needed to be indoors could spread out in the auditorium. Foods would need to have stations in order to separate. Shields can be placed on music stands. Still working on the plans and exploring different options. In addition to electives, we are looking at all plans with transitions. A lot of factors are still to be considered. The High School did have to eliminate Child Studies since it would not have been safe to bring younger children in with High School students. Mr. Jette also stated that MIAA has postponed sport tryouts and MHS is still waiting on guidance.

Mr. Fish stated that they will be following the DESE guidelines and agreed about using outdoor space. The experience will be different for health and wellness, introducing yoga and

mindfulness. Visual Arts cannot share supplies and equipment, we will make sure even if students are remote they will still be provided materials if needed.

Ms. Rosmarin thanked all the doctors for joining the meeting.

Chair Varela asked Nurse Coughlin about the separate room from the nurse's office?

Kim Coughlin replied that there will be a medical waiting room which will be completely separate from the nurse's room. This is suggested through DESE guidelines. These rooms will be staffed by a separate nurse to monitor symptoms and will be close to an exit. There will be windows and appropriate ventilation in the medical waiting room.

Superintendent Gormley seconded that no classroom will be used without windows.

Bill Ritchie commented that the ventilation and filters have been updated. There are 1700 windows in the district which will be maintained and updated.

Dr. Donahue asked if there would be IT support for students at home.

Principal Jette replied that even before COVID, MPS needed to increase our IT staff. He commented that AJ Melanson is working on new chrome books and WiFi accessibility for all families.

Dr. Redden agreed with Mr. Jette. We want to make sure students are at the comfort level using devices without parent support. Materials will be available to families.

Ms. Eberhardt asked about the parents who work and can't be home for remote learning. School is an educational institution and a place of care where students can go and parents work. Will any after school be provided to families, DESE needs to make that decision, is there an answer.

Chair Varela replied MPS can't be the only district struggling with this issue. DESE needs to address this issue.

Chair Varela asked Jackie Morgan about the grab and go lunches - is the breakfast available for grab and go?

Jackie Morgan is prepared to give students breakfast to go the day before; meals will be available in advance. Feeding of the community through August 31st and looking to have the

waiver extended. Will make sure all students will have five breakfast and lunches every week.

Mr. Jette clarified different locations will be set up for the grab and go lunches and breakfast.

Dr. Pavlicek mentioned that tents may be available through parents or contacts with companies due to the fact that rentals are just too expensive. That would be just another way to get the students out of the building into the fresh air.

Ms. McDavitt mentioned that canopies may be an option as well.

Chair Varela thanked everyone for being available to speak on behalf of the Return to School Plan.

4. Finance Subcommittee Report

a. Approval of Vendor Warrants

Chair Varela made a motion to approve Vendor Warrant #5 in the amount of \$175,649.77 payable August 6, 2020.

Second: Dr. Craghead

Roll Call Vote:6-0-0

5. Citizen Speak (Policy BEDH-45 minutes)

Jamie Mulligan - 236 Robins Street

- Parent of 1st grade French Immersion student.
- Benefits from social and emotional in person learning provides.
- Understands this is difficult to make this decision.
- The models seem to be backwards that the elementary school students would receive less in person instruction.
- Hoping to see more time for the elementary students or just as much as the middle and high school students.
- Try to maximize in person learning for students.

Beverly Ross Denny – 107 Columbine Road

- Appreciates the time put into these plans.
- If you need people to help with research with the plans she would be happy to help.

- Concerned about what is the plan when students test positive, does the building just get clean and the students go back. What is the plan?

Mary Shapiro - 184 Robbins Street.

- Appreciate and respect all the work has been done.
- Understand this is a difficult decision.
- As the pandemic progresses all the guidelines are being relaxed when it comes to getting students back to school.
- Faculty is not comfortable with the relaxation of the guidelines at the state level.
- Teachers come from other communities so need to look at larger metrics just not the Milton Community.

Colleen Fogaty 23 Horton Place

- Thank all for the time and effort for these plans.
- Feel strongly about you not offering an opt in model if you chose remote.
- Concerned that they would not have live teaching.

Fara Assiraj – 41 Church Hill

- Thanked everyone for all their time and efforts.
- What have you identified with the vulnerable population?
- Have you identified the racial components, social economic challenges? Discussed health issues? Teachers and what feedback have you gathered and surveyed.
- The voices of the teachers have not been heard.
- Racial components with high needs and the remote platform.

Dyanne Crowley - Spoke on behalf of the Milton Educators.

- Some are frightened about underlying conditions and returning to school.
- Polling tells us the teachers are concerned about the windows and ventilation in classrooms.
- To be clear this is not a politically or personal issue it is a safety issue.
- Not confident at this time that any school is ready to welcome student.
- Committing to safety and training, ready to teach students.
- Stated publicly that teachers miss their students.
- This year we are nervous about the return to school due to the virus.

Ravi Jain - 53 Crown Street

- 2nd, 4th and 7th Graders
- Thanked all for their time and effort.
- Enjoyed French immersion program.
- Have flexibility to have one child be remote due to high risk factor.

- Greater danger when you get people together in doors.
- Hoping that Milton chooses the remote model.
- It will not be the same classroom for those who are looking for the socially and emotional well being.

Lela Mitchell - 35 Apple Lane

- Have children in the elementary, middle and high school.
- What are the equitable solutions for families who chose full remote?
- Need to find solutions who need support economically.

Meg and Scott Matthews - Cheever Street

- Consider the voices and needs of teachers
- Consider the message we are sending to the families if we are not listening to teachers
- Appreciate all the work gone into the plans
- Struggle with the families of safety over in person connection
- Remote plan really don't have a lot of the information to explain the plan more

Zakia Jarrett - Dyer Avenue

- Teachers believe they do not feel safe to return.
- Miss students.
- Don't want students or colleagues to die or get sick.
- All are real possibilities if we return.
- Unreasonable to expect children to follow the rules and we should expect them to under stressful conditions.
- Many adults are not wearing mask.
- Hope you can listen to the teachers.

Terry McNeil – 49 Columbine Road

- Interesting to hear from parents and teachers
- hearing that teachers are not ready to return to school
- Have four children and it is hard to work from home
- The spring was a terrible experience for learning
- If you can't have a good hybrid option that will be good for the teachers we need to consider other options
- What about keeping children back and pausing the school year?
- Don't seem to have a model that works for all.

6. Next Meeting Agenda Items

Updated and approved

7. Executive Session

Chair Varela moved to adjourn to go into Executive Session not to return to open session for the purpose of discussion of discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the Approval of Minutes.

Second: Ms. White

Roll Call Vote: 6-0-0

The meeting was adjourned at 10:58pm.