

Milton School Committee Meeting Minutes
Milton Access Cable Studio
Public Participation via Remote Access
November 18, 2020

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

Staff Present: James Jette, 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 November 18, 2020 Agenda**
Updated and approved
3. **Citizen Speak (Policy BEDH-15 Minutes)**
Chair Varela explains the rules and expectations of Citizen Speak

Jamie Mulligan - 236 Robbins Street

- Support of Parents with the return to school for more hours
- Realize this is not easy and also realize Covid is not going away
- Frustration is that there is no long term plan
- Her 6 year old son is struggling more and more each day
- Technology is frustrating for younger children
- All levels are struggling
- Need to ask for a long term plan and understand Milton has an over enrollment issue

Kristen Kociol- 17 Standish Road

- 2 children in the MPS
- Is a nurse and has been working since the spring when others stayed home
- Need to listen to the experts
- No need to shut down a whole school for a positive and close contact cases if we are following the 6ft apart guideline
- Daughter is just sitting in an auditorium with substitutes

- We can do better than this
- Have lived with the fear of losing a child and would not jeopardize her child by sending her to school
- Experts say it is safe.
- Our children deserve better

Regina Murphy - 35 Alvin Avenue

- 2 daughters in the MPS
- Thanked School Committee and Administration for all the hard work and planning with the return to school
- Understand these are difficult times
- Here to advocate for the younger needs for our elementary school, especially kindergarten
- Young children are not equipped to learn remotely and can't learn through a computer screen
- Social and emotional aspects cannot be learned remotely
- Daughter is sad when it is not a real school day because she will be sitting alone in front of screen all day
- Spread in the elementary schools has remained low
- Urging you to give us a full return to school by January 4th
- Our youngest kids needs to be in school full time

Rachel Riccardella - One Mary Webster Lane

- Part of the Parent Return to School
- Commended Superintendent Jette for his letter to the community before the election
- Thankful to the entire Cunningham Staff and Administrators
- Important to point out that we can love our teachers and still criticize the hybrid model
- Need to invest and improve the hybrid model
- The them vs. us is harmful and unhealthy and not what we stand for
- Understand the restraints of social distancing
- Follow the science
- Should be thorough plan now and understand there will be changes, need a timeline
- Consider our petition signed by over 500 people
- Can do better together

M. Stodder - 55 Dean Road

- Here to ask to try to work together to try to work with schedules
- To receive an email at 7pm that school is closing the next day is not working for parents that need to go to work everyday
- Parents just can't drop everything because schools decided to close last minute

- Need more notice, it is difficult for working parents
 - No alternate plans, need options
 - Kids are missing too much work
 - Understand there is a need for safety, we can do a little bit better
 - Is there a plan for fixing our over enrollment?
 - May have to look into other options for education for my family
4. **Superintendent's Report** - Superintendent Jette
- Superintendent Jette welcomed three new employees joining MPS staff and Assistant Superintendent Spaulding gave an overview the following:
 - Introduction of Elementary Social Studies Curriculum Coordinator, Kimberly Kaplan (Assistant Superintendent Spaulding read Kimberly Kaplan resume to the community)

Kimberly Kaplan replied:

- Thankful and honored to have this position
- Excited and looking forward to the challenge in working with the MPS

- Introduction of Somaly Prak-Martins, newly appointed Senior Director of Educational Equity (Assistant Superintendent Spaulding read Somaly Prak-Martins resume to the community)

Somaly Prak-Martins replied:

- Thanked everyone for the warm welcome and kind words
- Thanked the parents for speaking and listening to their passion to what is happening
- Import that we stay connected and work as a team
- Very excited

- Introduction of Amy Dexter, newly appointed Assistant Superintendent for Business (Assistant Superintendent Spaulding read Amy Dexter's resume to the community)

Amy Dexter replied:

- Thanked everyone for the opportunity
- Looking forward to joining the team
- 10 years with the town and has worked with the administration
- 4 children have gone through the Milton Public Schools
- Understand the challenges that parents are facing with their children

The School Committee and Superintendent Jette welcomed all of the new employees to the Milton Public Schools.

District Wide Updates - Superintendent Jette

1. Individual Listening Sessions for Remote Families
2. PTO Listening Sessions
3. MPS Pride Day, November 24, 2020
4. COVID-19 Updates
 - Wanted to be clear that there is no switching of the plans, all plans were presented in the summer and voted on in the summer
 - All plans were emailed in the summer
 - All plans were submitted to DESE
 - Conferences are coming up
 - Asking for patience with the return
 - Sent out surveys all summer
 - All have worked all summer to plan
 - Opened September 16th, and now on our 43rd day of school
 - Still learning how to adapt and pivot in a moment's notice
 - There are space issues with building capacity
 - Plan in place
 - Adding filters into more classrooms
 - We have a plan and you may not agree with the plan and timeline but we are meeting
 - Have been clear with parents that it may not just be students it may be challenges with staff supervising classrooms
 - MHS classes had a number of positive cases in a short period of time which caused the closure of the High School
 - Positive cases in Milton are rising
 - Direct guidance given to community, but when it came to schools there was very little guidance
 - Very little availability of substitute teachers, we only hire qualified substitute teachers that the students deserve
 - Pleased to be in the trenches with the faculty and staff of the Milton Public Schools
 - Agree we need to work together
 - Hear the parents and value interpersonal relationships
 - Limited space even before the pandemic
 - Milton rises to the occasion
 - Communicating with PTO community
 - We are checking in with families and looking for feedback, it is a collected effort
 - Need transportation
 - Nurses and Principals are working nights and weekends
 - Not complaining, just asking for understanding
 - Modifying and looking at plans
 - Continue to move in the Hybrid Model
 - Need to consider health and safety of students, faculty and staff

- Let's work together, if there are issues please come to us
- We need to be role models for our students
- Committed to students and education
- Challenging times for everyone
- Friday, November 20th - Covid testing will be provided in our Field House to the Milton Community (10am-2pm)
- Testing could happen when requested going forward
- Anticipating up to 400 people
- November 24th, asking everyone to wear Red and White to support MPS Pride Day
- Milton needs to be strong for each other

5. **Chair's Report** - Chair Varela

- a. Update on Superintendent Search - Ms. Eberhardt
- Working with MASC, Glenn Koocher
 - List of sample surveys from other communities
 - School Committee Member Rosmarin and Erin Hardy from the MARC Group helped with variety of questions for the survey
 - Superintendent search questions - survey
 - Survey for the community to review and rate
 - Skills and qualities
 - Educational leaderships
 - Inclusion and diverse staff
 - Leaderships skills
 - Next steps: Survey first, listening sessions in January, then come back with data and information to share with the community
 - Then discuss the process

Chair Varela

- Goal is to send out to the community on Friday, November 20th or no later than the weekend
- There will be emails, links on the website, post on social media and in Milton Times
- Many avenues for everyone to take the survey
- Due date by December 4th
- Listening sessions on January 12th and 14th
- Will come back and as a School Committee will make more concrete decisions on the process
- Glenn Koocher laid out many options to be used
- Want to hear from the staff and community members
- Thanked Ms. Eberhardt for all of her hard work and Ms. Rosmarin for her input

Ms. Rosmarin

- Thanked Ms. Eberhardt for taking the lead
- Thanked MASC for working with School Committee
- MASC will do the analysis for MPS

Ms. White

- Asked about the cost of working with an outside firm, did Glenn Koocher give an estimate?
- Ms. Eberhardt replied yes Glenn Koocher said it could cost up to \$10,000-\$45,000

Dr. Donahue

- Extended list of issues, hoping you receive better data using the method of ranking
- Should receive better data this way
- Commend Superintendent Jette for sitting through the search process

Ms. Eberhardt

- Including the community will better determine our process

6. **Finance Subcommittee Report** - Dr. Craghead

a. FY22 Budget

- 2- 2.3 million roll over
- last year was 2 million
- out of district placement is up this year
- waiting for Administration to make decisions of the priorities needed

b. Transportation Fees

Dr. Craghead made a motion to approve that for FY21 only, bus fees will be reduced from the current \$275 per student with a family maximum of \$550 to the following:

- Elementary students, \$150
- Middle and High School students, \$90
- Family Maximum, \$300

Second: Ms. White

Vote: 6-0-0

c. Equity Audit Contract

Dr. Craghead made a motion to award the contract for the provision of Equity Audit and systematic implementation in the amount of \$50,000 to Cambridge Education, LLC.

Second: Ms. White

Vote: 6-0-0

d. Approval of Vendor Warrants

Dr. Craghead made a motion to approve Vendor Warrant #19 payable 11/12/20 in the amount of \$130,612.66.

Dr. Craghead made a motion to approve Vendor Warrant #19A payable 11/12/20 in the amount of \$27,052.13 (Refunds only).

Dr. Craghead made a motion to approve Vendor Warrant #20 payable 11/19/20 in the amount of \$455,048.73

Dr. Craghead made a motion to approve Vendor Warrant #20A payable 11/19/20 in the amount of \$7,080.00 (Refunds only)

Second: Ms. White

Vote: 6-0-0

7. **Health & Wellness Advisory Committee Update** - Ms. White

- Jackie Morgan gave an update on the Food Service Program
- Extended Program to September 2021
- Milton is an open site for outside communities
- Families are comfortable with school lunches instead of going to the supermarkets
- Mental Health Awareness
- Purchased videos from Ivy Watts
- Prescription take back program with Milton Police
- Webinars throughout the summer
- Laurie Stillman reported starting youth group program in Milton
- James Jette reported Adjustment Counselors working with students and families
- Discussions on communications with families without overloading information
- Superintendent Jette reported about Pride Day in Milton, being proud members of the Milton Community/Schools

8. **Approval of Minutes**

Chair Varela made a motion to approve the Milton School committee Minutes dated October 21, 2020.

Second: Ms. Rosmarin

Vote: 5-0-1

Dr. Craghead was absent during the October 21, 2020 meeting.

9. Citizen Speak (Policy BEDH-15 Minutes)

Regine Jean Charles - 70 Sumner Street

- 2 Pierce and 2 Tucker Students
- Welcomed and congratulated Somaly, excited to work with her and meeting her in person

Stevie Coldwell - Harold Street

- New to Milton
- Appreciate the conservative approach from the schools and the School Committee during this pandemic
- Milton was Hybrid before other communities even considered the model
- Happy with the option to choose between Hybrid/Remote models, won't be able to please everyone but this gave the community the option to chose
- Care and thought went into the plan with the return to school
- Was able to switch models and appreciate that option
- Support with plan and appreciate the hard work to keep the community safe

Elissa Perkins - 118 Wolcott Road

- Infectious Disease Specialist
- MPS Policies in place not grounded in science
- Need to make better decisions based on positive cases
- Important to look at the close cases
- Since there are 6ft apart policies in place in the classes, shutting down the entire school should not be an option

Jen Shea - 53 Wood Street

- Part of the group of parents that support return to school safely
- Over 600 members and have a petition over 500 signatures
- Commend the effort of the Administrators and teachers for creating a nurturing environment for our children, but our children need more time in school
- Many emails have been sent to the School Committee and Administration, Milton Public Schools are not following CDC guidelines
- Causing students to quarantine and shutting down schools by creating the terms close contact of a close contact (which is a term created by MPS)
- Everyone has different views than MPS, doctors and Board of Health disagree with quarantining a class due to a parent of a close contact
- Can do a better job with contact tracing, like seating charts
- Suicide is now an issue due to quarantine and shutting down of schools

Kerry Curley - Pleasant Street

- Assured Superintendent Jette that he is supported and loved by the community
- Admitted to being the sign bandit running around putting out the Return to School signs around town
- Don't feel that racial injustice needs to keep coming up and feels bad about it
- Racial injustice should not be part of the conversation, why are we bringing racial injustice up when we talk about returning to school
- Not a racist, I ask that you not bring race into the return to school decisions

Winston Daley - Eliot Street

- Wanted to address the racial injustice comment
- You cannot discuss the pandemic without talking about race and racial injustice
- Black and brown families have been mostly affected by Covid and this pandemic
- The idea of going back to school cannot be discussed without bringing up the impact of the black and brown community in Milton
- To the 600 parents in the group, do you have any black and brown parents, this does not affect you
- Look at the racial breakdown, look at numbers
- We all want our kids back at school but we are in a global pandemic, race is a factor

Reply to Citizen Speak:

Ms. Eberhardt

- Thanked all the parents for speaking and sharing their experiences
- Heartbreaking to know how worried parents are for their children
- So much uncertainty
- School Committee is listening
- Superintendent and Administrators are working hard
- Commend the district for working so hard
- Race is a part of everything, we need to do better in our community and our country
- Need to make a equitable society
- Thanked Winston Daley for speaking and sharing his thoughts
- Feel for the parents and there really just are not any answers

Dr. Craghead

- Wanted to echo Ms. Eberhardt's comments
- Can relate to how the parents are feeling
- Not only about the education but the socialization
- Even if changes are not happening now, we are listening and reading your emails
- Many of us are going through the same thing you are

- Thanked Winston Daley for his words

Dr. Donahue

- What has been learned over the past 6 to 9 months is that if you think that gender and race are not issues, than you have a privilege point of view
- These issues that people have to deal with on a daily basis others do not
- Thanked all the parents for advocating for their children, very helpful to receive the critical and supportive feedback
- Three general criticism and feedback from parents
 - parents would like additional in school time for elementary and high need students
 - look at our Policies with close contacts
 - look at our contact tracing

School Committee will continue to look at those issues

Chair Varela

- We are hearing the community
- School Committee will be looking to improve, but it will not happen before January as Superintendent Jette stated
- When and if the changes occur, it will be shared with the community
- Superintendent Jette has been communicating with families
- Contact tracing issue can hopefully be improved upon with communication
- We hear you, we are living it with you, we are parents as well
- Lots of moving pieces, and a lot of work is being done but we have to ask for patience
- We are in a health and racial pandemic
- School Committee is taking steps to improve and working the best we can
- Please be mindful and thoughtful about your Thanksgiving plans and be safe

10. Next Meeting Agenda Items

Updated and approved

Chair Varela made a motion to adjourn from the School Committee Meeting.

Second: Dr. Craghead

Vote: 6-0-0