

Milton School Committee Meeting Minutes
Public Participation via Remote Access
December 16, 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; Amy Dexter, 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 December 16, 2020 Agenda**
Updated and approved
3. **Citizen Speak (Policy BEDH-15 Minutes)**

Bonnie Bate - Pleasant Street

- Two children at Cunningham School
- Grateful for all the work that is being done with our children everyday
- Commissioner released his weekly report which included
 - DESE, many students are not receiving adequate structural support
 - Only 56% of third grade students met expectations on the 2019 MCAS
 - This was before the pandemic, this will only get worse because of remote learning
- 65 other towns in Massachusetts have brought back students full time, 4 to 5 days a week
- Learning and attention issues are more common than you think
- Some need specialize instruction
- This current hybrid model is widening the gap between those that score high and those that don't
- The longer you wait to get help with reading delays the harder it will be for the child to catch up
- 65 other towns are finding other ways to return to school full time especially for K-2 grade level
- CDC agrees that students need to be back in school
- Other towns also have overcrowding issues but are renting spaces
- Schools are reducing from 6 feet to 3 feet
- Will send you a spreadsheet of other towns who have returned

Kristen Kociol -

- At the August 26th meeting, it was said that the School Committee has the ability to vote upon the change to the models
- The science has moved quickly
- MEA president even stated back in August that this is not a political agenda, that school will return when safe, the science states that it is safe now
- It is time to renegotiate the MOA now
- Science proves it is time for the student to return safely
- Parents are applying to private school in order to have their children back in school
- Are you meeting the standards as School Committee members?
- Meetings are not happening and emails are going unanswered
- Need to move with the current science and you have the power to increase learning

4. Superintendent's Report - Superintendent Jette

a. District Updates

- Thanked everyone for their presence at the School Committee meeting
- Looking forward to hearing positive news from the schools
 - Introduced Bill Deschenes and PMS students
 - Bill Deschenes spoke about Pierce Players
 - Director of Pierce Players
 - This year they struggled with if and how to do a show
 - In the end felt an obligation to the students to have a show
 - The Pierce Players will be performing "Super, Happy, Awesome News"
 - Virtual musical
 - Fun script, to guide the actors online and they can film segments at home and can submit
 - Put all the scenes together to have available
 - Celia Frank Knight and Georgia Manning, Students from PMS
- Celia Frank Knight, 7th Grade, PMS
 - Stated that theatre has always been her passion, it has helped her come out of her shell and become a more confident person
 - Joined Pierce players in 6th grade and loved performing and was able to meet new friends including her best friend Georgia Manning who will also be speaking.
 - Pierce Players is one of her favorite things at PMS
 - So thankful for Mr. D for bringing back Pierce Players online
 - Can't wait to perform again
- Georgia Manning, 7th Grade PMS

- Always knew I wanted to joined Pierce Players because her older sister Sophia was part of the player when she was at Pierce
- Every show Georgia went to she loved and was thankful to be a part of Pierce Players now
- Always a fun activity to do every day after school
- Pierce Players is fun, a great experience and have met new friends including her best friend Celia
- Rough 7 months without theater so now so grateful that Mr. D is pulling off a production in these difficult times
- The play “Happy, Awesome News” is a play about all of us standing together and making the world a better place

Chair Varela asked when the play will be available for the public to view online/zoom. What are the plans and the dates?

Mr. Deschenes replied he was not sure on the dates yet only because nothing like this has been done before so unclear how long it will take to pull everything together. Hoping to have it ready at the end of February or beginning of March. It will be available to be streamed into homes; Mr. Deschenes stated more information to come soon.

Superintendent Jette and the School Committee thanked Pierce Players for coming and speaking at the School Committee Meeting.

Kevin Black - Theatre Director at Milton High School

- Students are resilient and so dedicated to the program
- Over 30 students participating in some theater activities at the high school right now
- Working remotely on 2 small plays that will be streamed online for families
- Three students to speak tonight
 - Sydney O'Toole - Senior
 - 4th year doing theater at the high school
 - Virtual plays can bring theater to everyone in such a trouble time
 - Happy to hear that Pierce is always able to perform as well
 - Sadie Leggett, Sophomore
 - In person rehearsals were able to happen outside, 6 feet apart and with mask
 - Remote theater, the black backdrops and lights were given to all the actors, purchased web cameras
 - Costumes were what students already had in their homes or Mr. Black would drop off to our homes if needed
 - Picked shows that can be done in different ways, including all remote acting
 - We have a world and town that has a long way to go in terms inclusion of LGBT students

- This play is exactly what kind of story that needs to be shared
- Need to see to move forward, need to talk and share these stories
- William Milliken, Senior
 - Theater is so impactful to students at MPS
 - Have the opportunity to reflect on real people
 - How to make choices as actors
 - Thinking about time, place, cost, accents what the actors would be wearing
 - Influenced by social justice situations and real life experiences
 - Discussions on equality and so thankful to have the opportunity for theater
 - Excited to attend NYU in the fall for screenwriting

Kevin Black stated that they are unsure about dates due to the remote production. Will keep the community updated.

Chair Varela stated that she was really excited to see Mr. Deschenes and Mr. Black working with the students. Chair Varela remembered her daughter working and performing theater with both teachers, who are gifts to the community. Glad to hear positivity from all and looking forward to the performances. Asked Mr. Black if there will be a production in the spring as well? Mr. Black replied there are two productions taking place right now because we have so many kids that wanted to be involved. Chair Varela thanked everyone for speaking and so excited to see everyone growing up and blossoming.

Nor Hassan - Senior

- Speaking on behalf of National Honor Society
- Virtual walk/run fundraiser, \$5 per participant and money raised will go to the Food Pantry

Chair Varela asked Nor if tutoring was still happening with the National Honor Society? Nor replied yes there is online tutoring that students can sign up for online.

Superintendent Jette updated the community about Social and Emotional Learning concerns during Covid. The Social and Emotional Advisory Committee meets monthly with Co-Chairs, Adjustment Counselor [Jennie Beliveau](#) and Glover Principal [Karen McDavitt](#). Team consists of Adjustment Counselors and educators of all levels from across the district. Superintendent Jette stated that he was excited that PMS and MHS surveys are being conducted. Information will be used for intervention and next steps for students. Looking forward to using this data to support our students.

- b. Report on the Institutional Self-Evaluation/Assessment of District Performance Presentation - Dr. Spaulding and Data Specialist, Vy Vu (link to the presentation available on the MPS website)

Ms. White stated that the presentation was excellent. Asked if Superintendent Jette would elaborate on the need for more Professional Development on remote learning. Ms. White also asked about what kind of feedback was being received from staff and teachers? Superintendent Jette replied that the goal is to provide the best possible platform, skills, instruction through technology. Superintendent Jette wanted to be sure that MPS trains our teachers properly and provides them with the necessary skills.

Ms. Eberhardt thanked Superintendent Jette, Dr. Spaulding and Vy Vu for the presentation. Stated that Early Education (pre-k) can play a crucial role in breaking down barriers in learning and creating long term achievements. Ms. Eberhardt commented that this should be a conversation School Committee should be having moving forward.

Dr. Craghead thanked all for the thorough and transparent presentation. Expressed concern about the under representation of students of color enrolled in AP courses. Stated that the 10 point gap is huge and glad attention is being called to it and that it was added to the growth plan. So important to have the data, the data drives change. Dr. Craghead stated that MPS is very fortunate to have Vy Vu for our Data Analyst.

Ms. Rosmarin thanked all for the presentation, commented that she wished Vy Vu's position could be multiplied for the district because the data is so important. Also commented how important it are to look at data at a district level, teachers need to also have the tools to look at the data themselves and use the data with their instruction. Ms. Rosmarin said being on the Strategic Planning Committee makes her think about MPS needs to align and prioritized. Need to digest the findings and consolidate what is most important moving forward.

Chair Varela commented that she was happy to see the Self Assessment and the Strategic Plan in place. The Strategic Plan is a living document that can be edited and tweaked. Chair Varela stated that this presentation is an excellent segway from what can you bring to the forefront to be dealt with first.

Dr. Donahue commented that this year without MCAS we can focus on our internal assessments. Commented on one interest in the French Immersion numbers, want to look at the schools the kindergarten are in, still a significant gap with different schools choosing the French Immersion. Also interested in closing the ethnicity gaps between the AP classes and SAT scores. Dr. Donahue thanked Vy Vu for her very thorough and powerful presentation.

Superintendent Jette thanked everyone for their comments and stated this data will make Milton Public Schools a stronger district.

Superintendent Jette commented that at each School Committee Meeting we start with Citizen Speak and wanted to thank parents for calling in to give critical feedback and suggestions. Wanted to let everyone know that what they say is taken very seriously, and that MPS is looking

at plans. The Commissioner just made an announcement last week for new standards for all districts to be released in a few weeks.

Superintendent Jette also reported that winter sports and tryouts have started at the high school.

5. Chair's Report - Chair Varela

a. Student Advisory Council Presentation

Anderson Korman

- Glad to see as a town and school that MPS is taking the right steps to be more inclusive

b. Update on Superintendent Search Process - Ms. Eberhardt

- Updated that community that the survey has closed
- Received a 71 page report from Mr. Koocher
- Set a record of number of responses received
- Trying to find out how to pull out the data
- Will be sharing with the community at the January 6th School Committee Meeting
- Listen sessions will be planned and set up for the community, dates TBT
- Shows a great investment from the community
- Thanked the community for their involvement

6. Finance Subcommittee Report - Dr. Craghead

a. FY22 Budget Proposal

- Have been working on FY22 budget the entire fall
- Presented to the Warrant Committee and thanked them for their time and patience
- Requested the following positions needed: Elementary Reading Specialist, Middle School One Guidance Counselor, Special Education Teacher at the High School and two full time nurses for the district
- Looking at the Tier II asks over the next few days, which will probably include more teachers
- Lots of needs throughout the district

b. Approval of Vendor Warrants

Dr. Craghead made a motion to approve Vendor Warrant #23 in the amount of \$410,608.09 payable on December 10, 2020.

Second: Chair Varela

Vote: 6-0-0

Dr. Craghead made a motion to approve Vendor Warrant #24 in the amount of \$605,595.57 payable on December 17, 2020.

Second: Chair Varela
Vote: 5-0-1

7. Facilities Advisory Committee Report - Dr. Donahue

- The committee met last week and spoke about routine capital request
- Discussed funding for short term space needs
- Converting space on the top floor of the Collicot/Cunningham School (in discussion)

Chair Varela asked Superintendent Jette to look into the line item budget from early spring. Discussed what could be done to address the over enrollment issues even before Covid hit in March. The Fire Department reported it would not be safe for students to be on the 4th floor of Cunningham all day. Chair Varela commented that it could be approved for teachers' space. Also asked about Capital and funding, where it would come from? Talked about an option of rolling partitions in the gymnasium. The enrollment issue is not going away, it is being addressed. For the Capital request it is funding given for one time long term use.

Assistant Superintendent Dexter replied that yes, the Capital Project would be \$25,000 or more with a useful life of five years or more. The Capital Improvement Planning committee would make the recommendation to the Warrant Committee and Select Board then to Town Meeting for approval.

Dr. Donahue also reported that if and when MPS builds a new school, how would the space be chosen, really need to look at what a modern elementary school space looks like, utilizing all the space.

Chair Varela discussed the partitions and could be an option for space once we are over Covid.

8. Approval of Minutes

Chair Varela made a motion to approve the Milton School Committee minutes dated November 18, 2020.

Second: Ms. White
Vote: 6-0-0

9. 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

Meeting adjourned at 8:35pm