

**Milton School Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Public Participation Via Remote Access**  
**February 3, 2021**

**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 February 3, 2021 Agenda**  
Updated and approved
3. **Citizen Speak (Policy BEDH-30 Minutes)**

Chair Varela made a motion to extend Citizen Speak to 30 minutes.

Second: Ms. White

Roll Call Vote:4-0-2

Dr. Alyssa Perkins - 118 Wolcott Road

- Need to make our schools fun in Milton
- Know more about Covid
- School playgrounds are safe, open all over the state and town
- Yet our children are still deprived from playtime
- Asking to reevaluate the recess play policies for children
- Shared materials/library and renting books is not an option for the children
- With good hand washing and sanitizing this could be option for the children - asking to lessen restrictions especially around library books

Maryann Kinsella - Artwell Street

- Congratulated Superintendent Jette on his new position
- Explained to School Committee that she has had to leave her job permanently because of her son struggling with the Hybrid Model
- Feels like she cannot be the only parent in this situation

- Her son is an in-school learner, concern about his academic success and social well being
- Needs to be in school with friends
- Happy to volunteer her social work skills
- Concerned about students social well being, so important

Dr. Regine Jean-Charles - 70 Sumner Street

- Spoke on behalf of Milton Anti- Racism Coalition
- Letter sent to School Committee expressing concerns of the sudden appointment of the Superintendent
- Wanted to be clear that their concern is about the process
- Looking forward to working with Superintendent Jette
- Looking for an equitable hiring process
- Other members of the community are also concerned with the process
- Spoke out at listening sessions, need to have a rigorous hiring process
- MARC and CDM looking forward to working with School Committee and Administration on the process

Regina Murphy - 35 Alvin Avenue

- Thanked the Superintendent for implementing the new improved Hybrid Model
- At the last School Committee meeting it was mentioned that Milton would not return to school fully this year
- As a parent and with other members of the school community strongly disagree with this perspective
- Every child should be back to school this year
  - Teachers can begin vaccinations
  - Testing Programs announced by Governor Baker
  - 100 scientific papers reporting school are safe for children
- Need a plan in place to have our children back in school, understand there are space constraints
- 3ft of space is an option with mask
- Let's find the spaces and get it funded and have our students back in school by the end of March

Ellen Stoddard - 251 Canton Ave

- Speaking on behalf of Citizens for a Diverse Milton
- Support what Regine Jean Charles has to say
- Community has come out to ask for an inclusive and rigorously hiring process
- Fully support Superintendent Jette
- Felt denied the community involvement in the hiring process
- Should not be business as usual in Milton
- Need to develop stronger policies

Betsy Crowley - 22 Lawndale Road

- Struggling as a mother
- All three children are struggling for three different reasons
- Socially, emotionally and academically
- Children are concerned that will not have friends when they return to school
- Kids were well adjusted before this school year
- It is difficult on a daily basis
- Telling parents we are not returning is just ripping people apart

Jenny Mulqueen – 10 Verndale Road

- Congratulations to Superintendent Jette
- Welcomed Somaly-Prak Martin, Director of Equity
- Inclusion Task Force - 30 - 40 members in 2016
  - left the Inclusion Task Force in 2017 because of a lack clear directives and task
  - informed Superintendent Gormley and members of the School Committee that she was concerned
  - She was told she needed to be patient and that she didn't understand how the process worked
- Wondering if this current School Committee was aware of this task force
- Like to request that the quality review be transparent with the timeline, and how much is being paid so there is accountability
- What does inclusion look like? Do students feel like they belong?
- Still coming up empty, not seeing the inclusion

Mark Johnson - 204 Church Street

- Agreed it has been difficult for families
- As a new parent to Milton, felt a deep loss of trust when School Committee just decided to appoint Superintendent without notice
- Need to address the process
- Need to give people the opportunity to lend their voices
- It was disappointing
- Want to be an engaged parent
- Wants his voice to be valued and just doesn't feel that way
- Wish the committee the best of luck and hope the School Committee can work with the community to rebuild trust

Jen Shea – Wood Street

- Congratulations to Superintendent Jette

- Wanted to address that at the last meeting the community was informed that students would not be returning full time because of space issues
- Parents and the community want to know why
- If not this year, then when?
- We have an overcrowding problem, it should be on the agenda at every meeting
- Other communities are making a plan to return to school full time

#### **4. Superintendent's Report**

- a. Collicot Elementary School Site Council Presentation Link: [https://www.miltonps.org/application/files/5716/1254/8600/Collicot\\_School\\_Site\\_Council\\_Presentation\\_Feb\\_3\\_2021.pdf](https://www.miltonps.org/application/files/5716/1254/8600/Collicot_School_Site_Council_Presentation_Feb_3_2021.pdf)

The School Committee thanked the Collicot Site Council for their presentation.

#### **b. Milton High School Program of Studies - Superintendent Jette**

#### **The following additions/changes are noted in the 2021-2022 MHS Program of Studies**

- Math Department
  - Introduction to Computer Science is being renamed as Exploring Computer Science
- Visual Arts Department
  - Digital Photography is being renamed as Design Studio with Digital Photography being part of the course content
- Child Study Program-not running next year-keeping in Program of Studies for conversation after 2021-2022
- Addition of Senior Privilege as an option for seniors in good academic and behavioral standing.

Chair Varela made the motion to approve the 2021-2022 Milton High School Programs of Studies.

Second: Dr. Craghead

Roll Call Vote:6-0-0

#### **c. District Updates - Superintendent Jette**

Congratulations to MHS Senior Jazz Ensemble member Philip Phan for being selected to the 2021 All Eastern Division Jazz Ensemble. Eastern Division is composed of the finest high school musicians from Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, Maryland, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington D.C and Europe. Philip went through three rounds of auditions and an application process which started in the Fall of 2019 when Philip was selected as a member of the Massachusetts Eastern District Jazz Ensemble. He was then selected to participate in the Massachusetts All- State Jazz Ensemble in March of 2020, paving the

way for his eligibility to apply for All Eastern. Philip will represent Milton High School as the vibraphonist in the All Eastern Jazz Ensemble. He is one of 18 students who were selected to be in the Jazz Ensemble and will be participating in a “Virtual Weekend” experience March 4-6, 2021 that will include keynote speakers, master classes with professional musicians, rehearsals with a world class conductor, as well as opportunities to learn and network with colleges and universities of various types and participate in mock auditions. This experience will culminate in a virtual concert which will be premiered on April 23rd at 8:30pm.

- Food Services - served a record 12,572 meals
- Thanks to Jackie Morgan and staff
- Reminded all families about the significant shift, still have 2 cohorts
- Ask for the community cooperation during drop off and pick up
  - Please drop off on time, do not drop off early
- Model is scheduled to start Monday, February 8, 2021
  - Wanted to address the Principal of Milton High School
    - Dr. Spaulding addressed the community
      - setting up a screening committee of about 16 people
      - task will be to identify finalist
      - reached out to community groups to be involved
      - engaged in anti bias training
      - identify the criteria
      - make our way through resumes
      - identify performance task
      - meet again after vacation
      - interviews first week of March
      - meeting sessions
  - Superintendent Jette told the community that he appreciated the community calling in and speaking to the School Committee and Administration

## **5. Chair’s Report - Chair Varela**

Chair Varela made a note that she and Dr. Donahue have been in discussion regarding the Anti Racism Policies. Somaly Prak Martin will be presenting Anti Racism Policy and the MPS Hiring Policies at the February 24, 2021 School Committee Meeting.

**Open Meeting Law Violation** Thursday, January 21 from the Milton Times, Patricia Desmond

- A complaint was filed with the Attorney General's Office
  - Stating that the School Committee failed to post an item saying they planned to vote on appointing a Superintendent.
  - Complaint stated that the School Committee should post an agenda with the specific item. Appointment of Superintendent at a future meeting and then vote.

- Chari Varela reached out to General Council: Attorney Joseph Emerson regarding the next steps. Joseph Emerson stated that School Committee needs to:
  - Speak about the complaint within of 14 business days of receipt of the violation
  - Joseph Emerson would join an open School Committee meeting to openly advise the School Committee about the complaint. He would also be available to any questions School Committee may have
- Attorney Joseph Emerson joined the School Committee Meeting commented:
  - Complaint was received January 21st about the actions that were taken at the meeting on January 20, 2021
  - 14 business days to meet and review
  - distribute the complaint to other members to review
  - purpose of this meeting is to go over the options and review the complaint
  - Have the authority to delegate to respond to the complaint
  - Have the complaint, review and actions to be taken
    - remedial actions can include the request to be made to post the action again and vote again in open session
  - Or can decide that there has been no violation of the open meeting law
  - Once you make a decision is made, Ms. Desmond needs to be notified and a copy is then sent to the Attorney General's Office
  - If Ms. Desmond is not satisfied with the decision of the School Committee, she has the right to ask the Attorney General's Office to review further
  - Looking at the basis of complaint itself, it is the posting was not appropriate for the action that was taken
  - Review of the determinations of the Attorney General's Office, Open Government. Have had similar cases and were reviewed, and the finding was no violation of the open meeting law
  - Suggested the School Committee have an open discussion and reply
  - Chair Varela asked how the School Committee members feel or if there were any questions
  - Ms. Rosmarin stated that the vote naturally flowed from the conversations on January 20th and nobody really expected the vote to happen that night. It was a somewhat rare moment where all agreed and a decision was made through the conversation.
  - Ms. Eberhardt also agreed with Ms. Rosmarin. Naturally evolving conversations should not be considered a violation. Having a conversation in an open meeting as is required by law. Ms. Eberhardt stated that she did not feel the School Committee violated the open meeting law.
  - Dr. Craghead agreed with Ms. Eberhardt and Ms. Rosmarin. The agenda item said the School Committee would be discussing the process of the Superintendent and repeating the process to the community. Did not expect the flow of the conversation to go into a vote but it happened unanimously.

- Chair Varela stated that Ms. Eberhardt went through the process with the advice of Glenn Koocher. (MASC) Glenn Koocher was able to join a School Committee meeting for a presentation and clearly stated if the School Committee had a candidate here and now, that School committee had the authority to make a vote. Chair Varela mentioned when Dr. Donahue made the motion from the flow of the conversation and it was posted on the agenda, and didn't think it was in violation.
- Dr. Donahue agreed with the members who have spoken, Glenn Koocher stated that the School Committee had the authority to make a decision and to vote during his presentation.
- Ms. White stated she agreed with all the members of the School Committee. Have been thinking about the right person for the Superintendent since August. Ms. White felt confident when Mr. Jette took the interim position. The discussion flowed into the right decision for the best leader for our district.

Chair Varela made a motion to authorize Attorney Joseph Emerson to respond to Ms. Desmond at the Milton Times that the School Committee is in disagreement with the complaint that the School Committee violated the open meeting law.

Second: Dr. Craghead

Roll Call Vote:6-0-0

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

### **a. FY22 Budget**

- meeting scheduled for February 9th, 2021 to answer questions to the Warrant Committee

### **b. Approval of Vendor Warrants**

Dr. Craghead made a motion to approve Vendor Warrant #30 payable on January 28, 2021 in the amount of \$172,461.11

Dr. Craghead made a motion to approve Vendor Warrant #31 payable on February 4, 2021 in the amount of \$370,020.03

Second: Ms. White

Roll Call Vote:6-0-0

### **c. Second Quarter Report - Assistant Superintendent Dexter**

Dr. Craghead made a motion to accept and approve the Second Quarter Report.

Second: Chair Varela

Roll Call Vote:6-0-0

## **7. Health and Wellness Advisory Committee Report - Ms. White**

- PMS, PE teacher John O’Leary presented how class are being conducted during the pandemic year for both remote and in person classes
- Offering active classes and programs for all students
- January cases were trending down, Board of Health started to vaccinated first responders and residents over 75
- Food Services, Jackie Morgan - Farm to Family boxes are being distributed to all families. Special thank you to Bill Ritchie and his team for all their help. Will continue through April due to the current grant.
- Laurie Stillman - disturbing materials on mental health in the food packets
- Ryan Madden-Winter sports were going better than expected
- Laurie Stillman forming groups to support Youth Mental Health and Social Justice

#### **8. Citizen Speak Reponses - Dr. Donahue**

- Over the past several weeks and months there has been several criticisms toward School Committee members
- Wanted to respond to the general criticism
  - witness the ramifications of the frustration of the community
  - understand the difficulties from the families
  - the deeper we get into the academic year, understand the daily contact is key for all students which is available in the current model
  - comfortable with the decision that was made
  - increasing time now in February is due to the safety, time and money
  - planning taking place to moving forward due to the members of the School Committee members and Administration
  - trying to move as fast as possible and understand the community questions our decisions
  - Best use of resources were available to help make decisions for the School District
  - Appointing a Superintendent was a community engagement process including survey, open sessions and involved for MASC
  - Returning to school full person model is not a decision that School Committee making at this time, will require a most robust process
  - Need more support and direct guidance from the state and local level
  - Space is an ongoing issue, at this time we cannot accommodate all of our students safety
  - Thanked the community for their support

#### **9. Next Meeting Agenda Items**

Updated and approved

#### **10. Executive Session**

Chair Varela moved to adjourn to go into the Executive Session not to return to the open session for the purpose of discussion negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions



or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel in accordance with Chapter 30A, Section 21(a)(2) and the approval of minutes.

Second: Ms. Rosmarin

Roll Call Vote: 6-0-0

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45pm.