

Milton School Committee Meeting Minutes  
Meeting via Zoom  
February 16, 2022

Committee Present: Chair; Margaret Eberhardt, Vice Chair; Ada Rosmarin Dr. Elizabeth Carroll, Dr. Elaine Craghead, Beverly Ross Denny, and Betty White

Staff Present: James Jette, Superintendent of Schools; Janet Sheehan, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Human Resources; Amy Dexter, Assistant Superintendent for Business

**1. Call to Order - 7:00pm**

**2. Approval of Agenda**

Chair Eberhardt made a motion to approve the February 16, 2022 School Committee Agenda.

Second: Ms. Rosmarin

Roll Call Vote: 6-0-0

**3. Superintendent's Report - Superintendent Jette**

- Tucker Elementary School Site Council Presentation,  
[https://www.miltonps.org/application/files/8816/4608/0982/Tucker\\_School\\_Presentation\\_SIP\\_2022.pdf](https://www.miltonps.org/application/files/8816/4608/0982/Tucker_School_Presentation_SIP_2022.pdf)

Site Council Members

- Dr. Elaine McNeil Girmai, Principal
- Kirsten Driscoll, Assistant Principal/ELA & Math Curriculum Coordinator
- Merry McGrory, Teacher Representative
- Caitlin Deptula, Teacher Representative
- Lateefah Franck, Parent Representative
- Emily Speck, Parent Representative
- Lisa Gilbert-Smith, Parent Representative
- Kerry Hurley, Parent Representative
- Stacey Solomon, Community Representative

Dr. Craghead

- Love the organization around “Driven”
- Live up to the goals
- Tucker did well through Covid
- Tight community at Tucker
- Admire the your approach to students including the physical activities, while still focusing on academics and social & emotional learning

- Hoping the newsletter could be sent to all of School Committee
- Commented on the Restorative Justice Program for younger students; it is great and absolutely necessary that you start at the elementary level
  - Does not come out of left field when students are exposed in Middle and High School
  - Make interactions so much better and richer
- Statistics of the students that are new to Tucker is really powerful
- It is challenge and an opportunity for new programming

Ms. White

- Thanked all for the wonderful presentation and to see all the hard work that is going on at Tucker
- Asked about the After the Bell activities and initiatives and whether or not you specifically invite students that need interventions or it is open to anyone to participate?
- Liked offering supplies to all students, wondering how you are funding, is it from PTO or Community.
- Would like to visit Tucker on the days you offer Restorative Justice Class, would love to see what that is like

Dr. Elaine McNeil-Girmai replied:

- Would love to have Ms. White join the class
- To answer the question about supplies, it is a combination from PTO and throughout the year last year Tucker had a supply reup that we put out to the whole community
  - Had a lot of supplies remaining from last year
  - Anonymous donor who works at Children's Hospital
    - usually does a drive through Children's Hospital for supplies for Tucker
- Participation around After the Bell is a mix, a lot of the enrichment is just through signing up
  - low fee for 6 weeks but always a scholarship option so nobody is turned away
  - few are based on data that are invitation only
  - vast majority is open to everyone

Ms. Ross Denny

- Proud Tucker Tiger Mom
- Ever since Dr. Elaine McNeil-Girmai came to the district she has brought so much pride to the families that school and has turned the school around
- Created a wonderful culture, feel welcome in the school
- How have the 49% of new students impacted the culture of the school
  - have the students become more integrated into the system you have
- Thank you, you are amazing and so is your faculty

- Hope you take great pride in what you have done

Dr. Elaine McNeil-Girmai replied:

- Seamless transition for the most part, PTO funded so many robust opportunities last year that Tucker had community circles
- Kept the rhythm of the school
- Recording morning messages, help maintain connection

Kirsten Driscoll

- Appears to be easy for the students accumulate, kids enjoy being with other kids
- Impressed with how well family members and parents have accumulated with other families
  - Attribute that to our Tucker families and PTO who do a amazing job getting new members and outreach
  - Diversity Committee is huge because that is part of the PTO work that they do
  - Encourage families to join information sessions and join committees
  - Grateful to all Tucker families in welcoming families

Ms. Rosmarin

- Thanked Tucker team for their wonderful presentation
- Pleased to hear how you are applying lessons learned
- Changed the normal to the new normal
- Participation in parent/teacher conferences have gone up
- Tonight you have 300 people watching your presentation
- Being involved in the Strategic Plan, happy to see your involvement before it has even been approved
- Thrilled to see how aligned Tucker is with the Strategic Plan

Dr. Carroll

- Thanked everyone for the great presentation
- Impressed with your speaking to this new normal, should be doing the same as a district
- Think creatively about trying new things and how you are modeling that for the kids
- Excited to see the gains in the data, result of the hard work done day in and out of the teachers
- Thankful and proud to be proud of the Tucker family
- Thank you for all that you do

Dr. Elaine McNeil-Girmai

- Thanks to the faculty, they are in the trenches day in and out

- **District Updates**

- i. The Milton Coalition, Margaret Carels and Stormy Leung, Youth Risk Behavior Survey and Youth Health Survey - Survey link available on MPS website

Dr. Craghead

- The work that the Coalition does is so important and beneficial to this town
- Thank you, appreciate you going through the fact sheets and giving the students and parents to option to participate
- Would like to encourage parents to have your student take this survey, because as Ms. Carels has said it is crucial to see what the Coalition and schools are doing
- Lets us know what areas we need to work on

Chair Eberhardt

- Thanked Margaret Carels and Stormy Leung for presenting
- Asked if the survey questions would be available for parents to preview before the survey is given

Stormy Leung

- Replied yes, the questionnaires are being finalized at the moment
- Physical copies of the surveys will be available in the front office of the schools
- Parents and guardians are welcome to look through the survey

Chair Eberhardt

- Replied great, that is part of our policy so just wanted to confirm that the questions would be available

#### **4. Citizen Speak (Policy BEDH-15 Minutes)**

Dr. Elissa Perkins - 118 Wolcott Road

- One child at Tucker and one child at Pierce
- Emergency Medicine Physician, background in epidemiology of infectious diseases
- Here tonight to speak about the safety of lifting the mask mandate in the Milton Public Schools at the time DESE allows us to do so on March 1, 2022
- Being as cautious as possible using every measure possible to keep safe to be open made a lot of sense earlier in the pandemic
- Now at this point, we have so many more tools in place that are affective
- Make sense to peel back like the mask and keep others in place like the vaccines
- Done a good job as a community to get vaccinated
- Have medications available
- Testing can be done

- Metrics of the mask are not useful
- No evidence based metrics which we can base policy
- Certainly should not be making decision on mask based on case rates
- Manage the situation in front of us and being available to pivot when necessary
- Imperative that we remove these mask mandates

Regina Murphy - 35 Alvin Avenue

- 3rd and 1st grader at Collicot
- Read the first paragraph of a memorandum issued by Governor Charlie Baker and the Department of Education on February 9, 2022
- This statement tells us that the state has intensively review Covid data, analyzed the school related metrics and consulted with medical experts
- Based on this analysis DESE has determined that it is safe to make mask optional on February 28, 2022 for all schools across the state
- Questioned what other metrics or medical expertise are you bringing to the table to warrant dismissing DESE guidance to extend the mask mandate in the town of Milton
- Attended the Policy Subcommittee on Monday- there was no data or metrics discussed when the recommendation was made to push the mask mandate to March 14th
- This is unacceptable
- Would expect to see a mountain of data to support this decision
- There was no discussion at the Policy Subcommittee on Monday about the negative mental health impact due to the ongoing Covid restrictions
- Her first grader asks every day when can she stop wearing a mask, says that mask makes school hard and that she can't see her friends and teacher
- Kids have done everything we have asked
- Enough is enough, it is time to move on
- 721 Milton residents have signed the petition to follow the DESE guidelines and end the mask mandate on February 28th
- Almost every town surrounding Milton has dropped their mask mandate including Quincy
- Please, on behalf of the families and children of Milton let's make mask optional

Allison Gagnon -

- Understand that Citizen Speak is optional
- Couldn't help to feel as a parent disappointed that people who make decisions for our children do not want to hear from parents
- School Committee has handled the news of maskless with such negative and fear
- Instead of celebrating and moving forward like other towns you have divided this town between, mask vs. non mask
- DESE, metrics and Governor Baker have given data and guidance to make mask optional
- Failed to mention in the Policy Subcommittee about the mental health and education for our own children
- Parents are paying tutoring and speech, children have not seen a mouth mimic in over two years
- When was the last time any of you were in the classroom, have you talked to any students about how they feel about learning in a mask

- You should have to answer to our children
- Why don't you have their best interest
- The mask are contributing to loneliness and isolation, we have a mental health crisis
- Bullying of mask vs. non mask
- Where is the training of teachers
- You have failed these children
- We as parents will do anything for our children, they deserve better

Dr. Regine Jean Charles - Sumner Street

- Parent of two Pierce Middle School students and two Tucker students
- Proud member of the Milton Anti-Racist Coalition
- Thank all of you, filled with pride watching this School Committee Meeting
- Thankful for the Tucker Presentation
- Encourage all the School Committee members to remember to keep equity at the center of everything you do
- Many of us in this town support you for what you do
- Appreciate and thankful for the work you do

Chair Eberhardt

- Thanked all who spoke tonight at Citizen Speak

## 5. Policy Subcommittee Report - Dr. Carroll

- Overview/Presentation given by Superintendent Jette and Director of Nursing Kimberly Coughlin

Dr. Carroll

- Thanked Superintendent Jette and Director of Nursing Kim Coughlin for the presentation

Dr. Craghead

- Noticed on the vaccination slide up, the faculty rates were shown. Wanted to confirm that this was just the two doses and not the boosters

Kim Coughlin replied yes.

Ms. Ross Denny

- In the slides shared of Covid positive rates, the spike we saw in the December/January rates, were we at the 80% vaccination rate for our students

Kim Coughlin replied just at the High School level, Pierce followed at the end of December.

Ms. Rosmarin

- Thank Kim Coughlin for all that she has done for us over the past two years
- Leadership has been extraordinary
- Questioned the DPH guidance if you are not vaccinated you should wear a mask indoors but DESE says if you have 80% people in the building are vaccinated you don't need to wear the mask
- What does that mean for MPS

Kim Coughlin

- Not meant to be conflicting
- Just recommendation if high risk
- Recommended if not vaccinated should continue to where mask
- You should choose to wear a mask if you meet that requirement

Cora Redmond - Student Representative

- Had a question about the case numbers in the presentation
- That first week we returned from December break, had about 300 cases
- Was that from the first week or the two weeks we returned to school

Kim Coughlin

- That was two weeks of reporting, it was the Wednesday, prior to break, all of break and the first few days we returned
- majority of the cases were reported while on break
  - **Policy EBCA, Face Coverings** - Dr. Carroll

Dr. Carroll

- Policy Subcommittee met on Monday, February 14th
- Received a version of that presentation given by Superintendent Jette and Director of Nursing Kim Coughlin
- Back and forth with questions and discussion that led to a recommendation to discuss this evening as a full School Committee moving toward a vote on how to move forward after the State Mask Mandate expires on February 28, 2022, when mask policy reverts back to local districts
- Before I submit the recommendation to discuss, wanted to acknowledge our context
- Wanted to thank the community for their approximately 250 emails sharing their strong views, we have read them all even though we were not able to respond to them all
- We are aware of the petition as well
- Regret the timing of last week's announcement with our scheduled meeting that we didn't hold a community forum for the community to share their views with us, that is what we ideally been able to do

- Through the emails, text and conversations, a few things about our community have been clear
  - Many people have communicated compelling reasons that they feel it is not yet time for mask to be optional
  - The majority of the people who have emailed us, do feel we should follow the Commissioner and Governors timeline and stop mandating mask on February 28th
  - Many are clearly ready for this change and there are others who are not
  - We as a School Committee have been reading all the messages and engaging in conversations with people, including medical and public health professionals
  - Worry people are lacking empathy for members of our community
  - People have been sharing heart wrenching stories for both sides
  - Experts have discussed how letting go of Pandemic restrictions is harder than putting them in place
  - We have to navigate this together
  - The recommendation that came out of Policy meeting is that MPS transition for mask being optional for all grades on March 14, 2022, two weeks beyond when the state mandate is lifted
  - The goal was to avoid removing that mitigation layer of the mask mandate at the same time as everyone coming back together after break
  - Want to make the transition as smooth and successful as possible
  - Another element of recommendation was for the Policy Subcommittee to reconvene the week of March 7th to confirm the plan to forward

Dr. Craghead made a motion to open the discussion of the mask mandate.

Second: Ms. White

Ms. White

- Spent the last couple of weeks reading emails
- People feel strongly about this issue, both sides of the issue
- It has been a long difficult two years
- Hard on the community, families and the children
- Retired now, but did work in a school system last year and wore a mask for 8hrs a day
- It was complicated and not easy
- During this time we have had a toolbox to deal with
- Vaccines have been effective
- Still have to deal with the spread
- We have schools that are overcrowded
- Concerned about the possibility of spread right after returning from the break/vacation



- What if we think about a compromise of the date, instead of the March 14th date we think about have it be a week instead of two weeks, last day of mask would be March 4th
- Faculty and students still have the right to wear mask it will be optional

Ms. Ross Denny

- Thanked Dr. Carroll for her reflection from both sides
- Do appreciate people writing, calling and texting their opinion and insight
- Research that the Policy Committee shared is specific of what happens after breaks
- Support the two week delay in moving towards mask optional
- A Lot of people can make a good decision when it comes to their family and their family circumstances, we have the responsibility for 4,400 students and 700 adults
- As the data show, the breaks are coming back not well
- Surprised when the spike happened in December even with the vaccination rates
- We want our students to return to normal
- Want to talk about the bullying, appreciated the fact that one of the members of citizen speak described this new tension in town between the mask vs. unmask
- We are one community, if there is a reason why somebody is wearing a mask it is their right and they should not be bullied
- Did receive an email from a teacher stating that if a student is bullied for wearing a mask we should address it as bullying
- Students and faculty should be able to come to school and feel safe in their environment
- Make sure we create a safe space for student to feel comfortable

Cora Redmond - 10th grade Student Representative for School Committee

- Thank you for putting in for the two week delay
- For a lot of people it helps to reduce our anxiety around this decision
- Continue to use all the mitigation measures we have
  - air purifiers - needs to be consistent

Ms. Rosmarin

- Thanked the community for writing, read all of the emails that have come in
- Agree with Dr. Carroll, the timing of the announcement so close to School Vacation week, took away our opportunity to have a community forum
- Think the practice we put into place, found a convenient time for all three members of Policy Subcommittee and we were able to schedule a meeting
- The value of having two meetings and having an initial conversation, we had some time between meetings to reflect, receive more information and hear from more people
- The opportunity to have two different meetings strengthened our process
- Goals we share are still

- Safety
- Wellness
- Equity for all our children, staff and families
- Keep schools open
- Address the unfinished learning
- Address the social and emotional mental health challenges our students face
- Protect the high risk members of our schools and of our community
- That includes our young children under the age of 5 (including our preschoolers), that are not able to be vaccinated yet
- Student with special needs, seniors community members, low and moderate income families who struggled financially, black and brown neighbors
- Appreciate the movement on doubling down on the ventilation and windows remaining open
- N95 masks are available for students that choose to wear them
- Wanted to build on the safe and supportive schools

#### Dr. Craghead

- Agreed with Ms. Ross Denny
- Thanked Cora Redmond for speaking up about the mitigation factors
- Would absolutely make sure it is clear and emphasized in this policy
  - Windows are open
  - Ventilation
  - Air purifier remain on
  -
- Policy Subcommittee met on Monday at 7am, we were not trying to hide anything by having the meeting at that time
- All the emails have been read, read from both sides of the issues
- Even the opinions of the members of the leading field of Epidemiology have disagreed
- Thank all who have wrote to School Committee, sharing their stories and their difficulties
- As said on Monday at the Policy Subcommittee Meeting the two week window is prudent
- Will do anything to promote the safety and equity for all students

#### Chair Eberhardt

- Thanked the Policy Subcommittee, Superintendent Jette and Nurse Coughlin for arranging on Monday
- You are all being very kind to our fellow citizens about the emails that were sent to us
- Many emails were respectful and thoughtful, contained shared personal stories
- There were also many emails that were hurtful, rude, and disrespectful
- In the 6 years on the School Committee, have never been so disheartened

- At a loss of words of the way people spoke to us this week and have posted on social media
- We are all members of this community
- Recognize this is a hard decision
- We don't know what the future holds
- DESE needs to educate and not just post on their website
- Teach in a classroom and wear a mask everything, know what it is like
- Respect people need time, need a little cushion to feel comfortable
- Ok moving the date to March 7 but respect the vote whatever it may be
- Respect the compromise
- Need to be mindful of people and not mock what people need

Ms. Rosmarin

- Also willing to consider the compromise of the March 7th date

Dr. Carroll

- Read a statement
- Struggled so much since the meeting on Monday
- Taken in a lot of information over the past few days
- Recognize we are coming to a transition point in the pandemics
- Mask will become optional when safe but also could return if another variant surge
- Read quotes from Dr. Carroll Allen
- Our diversity is our strength in Milton
- Beginning to have more frank discussion as a district
- Believe policy making should be shaped by evidence and values
- Raised with a strong value to care about the most vulnerable among us
- Weighing the unknown cost and benefits of creative a short delay of making mask optional
- Understand we don't know for sure if there will be a spike
- Biggest concern is that we need to support one another as a community
- Consider one or two week delay reasonable
- Want to make sure the transition is as smooth as possible
- Think we should move forward with mask being optional if not on February 28th then by March 7th with the following stipulations
  - Continue to encourage those not vaccinated to get vaccinated
  - Test kits will be made available to take home before break and can voluntary take on Sunday, February 27th before returning to school
  - Families testing program, should all be participating in this program
  - MPS will provide free mask
  - Mask optional, and will be fully supported

- Will not tolerate bullying
- Teachers have the option to continue to wear mask
- Double down on the consistency of the ventilation as a mitigation strategies
- Air purifiers are on all day
- Windows should be cracked open
- If your child is not vaccinated they should wear a mask
- All individuals who test positive will remain in a mask 6-10 days after returning to school
- A lot of people will be disappointed, feel badly
- Need to keep this issue from tearing our community apart
- Believe we should do the one week delay to March 7th

Ms. Ross Denny

- There is nothing we are talking about today, that is worth making someone feel that the community is going to be polarized
- We have read all the emails
- Dr. Carroll has done the research, read your emails, volunteered her time and she deserved more than to feel threatened by the community she wishes to serve
- Anyone who has threatened inadvertently, should be ashamed of themselves
- We all have to be respectful
- Milton is a wonderful town
- Wish the best for all of your families, people need to leave their kids out of it

Dr. Carroll

- Just wanted to be clear that she was not feeling intimidated into evolving a decision about this
- Generally trying to stay open to learning, many are doing in their own ways
- It is complicated, we are all coming at it differently even though we share the same values

Ms. White made a motion to extend the mask mandate policy to March 4, 2022, with the return to be mask optional on March 7, 2022.

Ms. Ross Denny

- Still believes in the two week delay of March 14th

Dr. Craghead

- agreed with Ms. Ross Denny, in favor of the two week delay to March 14th
- Respect what was said

Second: Chair Eberhardt  
Roll Call Vote: 4-2-0

**6. Chair's Report - Chair Eberhardt**

- Mid-Cycle Review of District/Superintendent - Presentation link on MPS website
- Looking at the overview of how we are doing
- All will have to be discussed in open meeting

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

- Approval of Vendor Warrants

Dr. Craghead

- Had a meeting yesterday and went over the 3rd and 4th quarter reports from FY21
- Next meeting will have the discuss the 1st and 2nd quarter reports from FY22
- Update on APRA
- Consider the substitute pay - need to be comparable to other district
- Next meeting will discuss fee increases

Dr. Craghead made a motion to approve Vendor Warrant #33 payable on 2/10/2022 in the amount of \$369,921.75.

Dr. Craghead made a motion to approve Vendor Warrant #34 payable on 2/17/2022 in the amount of \$497,495.53

Second: Dr. Carroll  
Roll Call Vote: 5-0-1

**8. Facilities Advisory Committee Report - Ms. Rosmarin**

Ms. Rosmarin

- Quick highlight - had a presentation by an engineer (Ms. Vernandez) came to speak with us about a project they are working on
- construct storm water system on MPS school property behind Cunningham/Collicot school
- Long way to go, meeting with neighbors
- Encourage them to meet with more, put together some information
- Environmentally it's a good project, educational opportunities for our students
- School Committee will need to approve the project since it is on school land

**9. Approval of Minutes**

- February 2, 2022

Chair Eberhardt made a motion to approve the School Committee minutes dated February 2, 2022.

Second: Dr. Craghead

Roll Call Vote: 6-0-0

#### **10. Old Business**

None

#### **11. Next Meeting Agenda Items**

Updated

Chair Eberhardt made a motion to adjourn from the School Committee meeting.

Second: Dr. Craghead

Roll Call Vote: 6-0-0

Meeting adjourned at 10:20pm.