

**Milton School Committee Meeting
August 13, 2018
Minutes**

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

Staff Present: Mary Gormley, Superintendent; Janet Sheehan, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Human Resources; and Dr. Glenn Pavlicek, Assistant Superintendent for Business

Dr. Donahue called the meeting to order at 7pm and approved the agenda of August 13, 2018.

There were no edits to this evening's agenda and no one present for Citizen Speak.

Milton School Committee Public Forum regarding Space and Enrollment Issues

Kathleen Potter, parent of 3 children who successfully graduated from the Milton Public Schools spoke of her involvement when her children were young and she was part of the campaigning for the new school buildings. She stressed the need for parents to become involved and form advocacy groups to get the word out to voters.

Meg Dietrich stated she had been at the previous forum where making classrooms in the Collicot/Cunningham library or renovating the 4th floor space at Cunningham were discussed. She asked if any other options had been presented.

Ms. Rosmarin replied that the Facilities Advisory Committee has generated a list of both short-term and long-term possibilities and all of these will be reviewed with the architects once the RFQ is issued. Short-term possibilities include using art/music/computer labs as classrooms; using other non-classroom space such as libraries and 4th floor at Cunningham; increasing class size (although no one wants to do that); and renting existing space in Milton which does not seem workable. Other options such as modular classrooms were discussed, but they are just as expensive as new construction. Another possibility would be to eliminate some of our non-mandatory program offerings such as the preschool program (although no one wants to do that either); and moving 5th grade to Pierce. Ms. Rosmarin explained that some of the more long-term/permanent solutions would be building a 5th elementary school; building an Early Education Center; expanding existing elementary buildings; or acquiring some pre-existing building in town to renovate to meet our needs. The School Committee will review all options and ask for community input.

Ms. Varela added that we are doing the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) and putting everything out on the table and looking at the cost of all options. At the end of the day, it is all about the money. The School Committee does want to form a joint committee with the Selectmen and other town departments at this time as space is an issue across town. The RFQ will tell us what we can do short term, but we do have to work collaboratively for long-term solutions.

A community member (Glover parent) asked if we have exhausted all creative solutions. Perhaps we should revisit the space at parochial schools as their enrollment is down. Ms. White replied that last

spring the Facilities Advisory Committee did that. Both St. Mary's and St. Agatha's were called and we were told they had no space. Ms. Varela stated that perhaps we could revisit this and ask again.

A community member (Monica) asked if information regarding the RFQ was posted on the website. Dr. Donahue replied that the RFQ is in the process of being drafted and is not public yet. Enrollment data is available on the website under SC Presentations (NESDEC presentation).

Amanda Dear questioned the trend of NESDEC's data. Dr. Pavlicek replied that NESDEC conducted a 10-year study of enrollment projections which indicates K-5 enrollment in the public schools from last year through fiscal 2024 is up by 250 students. Enrollment then plateaus. As we ran this year's enrollment, we see an increase from last year of 102 students across the system, and we are not finished enrolling for the fall. This is pretty much what NESDEC predicted for this year.

Dr. Pavlicek explained that NESDEC used to project how many children were born five years ago in a community and then project the percentage of those who would enroll in kindergarten at the public schools. That projection used to be 92% or so. Last fall the percentage was 130%. NESDEC has changed its methodology on how it projects – they now take into consideration the number of building permits issued; new construction; trends in housing sales, etc. Milton is a unique community in that we are seeing a considerable growth trend with people moving into town. Lexington is similar.

A community member asked if the School Committee had reached out to other communities like Lexington who may be experiencing similar issues. Dr. Donahue replied that we can certainly look at peer communities. To his knowledge, the other communities that Milton compares itself to are not experiencing the same problem. When asked what the exact problem is that we are trying to solve, Ms. Varela emphasized that we need is more space.

Dr. Pavlicek explained that when the schools were built, they were built for 14 units. Collicot and Glover had 4 classes of each grade; Cunningham and Tucker had 3 classes of each grade. The trend for the last three years is that we are starting to bubble at 16 classes per grade. Physically, we do not have enough classrooms. It just does not fit unless you are going to put more children in a classroom

Superintendent Gormley spoke of the importance of class size, particularly at the kindergarten level. Also, when people move in to Milton they are told that if class size is full at their neighborhood school, they will be placed in one of the other three elementary schools. Transportation is provided and people are appreciative that we consider class size.

Committee members agreed that as we go through this process, we will be making decisions in the best interest of the children. Several Committee members spoke of their experience during the previous building project. Parents, guardians and community members were encouraged to continue advocating, become Town Meeting members and educate themselves on the budget.

A community member asked when the RFQ would go out. Ms. Rosmarin replied that we are looking to get that done in early fall and get it out. There will be a special Town Meeting in January or February 2019. The hope is to have results of our study ready by then along with a proposal. If that does not

happen, it will be May Town Meeting. Ms. Varela reminded the viewers that nothing is a done deal until the voters say YES. That is why it is critical to advocate.

Looking ahead, a community member asked where students will go for the 2019-2020 school year. She asked that when we are discussing increasing class size, that we also talk about the increase of staff (aides in classes). Ms. Rosmarin replied that this will all be part of the conversation. We are a long way from making a decision with regard to class size.

Dr. Craghead stressed that increasing caps in classrooms would not be what the Committee would like to do. There is still some available space by using music rooms, computer labs, etc. There are other options that do not involve increasing class size. It was agreed that there were many items on the list that Ms. Rosmarin discussed earlier that this group would be opposed to and that would only be done as a last resort.

At the request of a community member, Dr. Pavlick explained the breakdown of the last tax increase and override and reviewed how funds are spent.

Dr. Donahue thanked everyone for coming to this forum. Ms. Varela encouraged the community to pay attention to when the School Committee is visiting the different schools this year. They hope to have open discussions at these meetings.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Gormley introduced Ms. Ellen Lohan as the new Elementary Science Coordinator. Superintendent Gormley reviewed Ms. Lohan's background and experience and stated that the Screening Committee agreed that she was the strongest candidate. Ms. Lohan thanked Superintendent Gormley, Assistant Superintendent Janet Sheehan and previous Coordinator, Linda Stefanik, for making sure she had everything she needed to start her new position. All School Committee members welcomed and congratulated Ms. Lohan on her new position.

Happenings

Superintendent Gormley reported that it has been a very fast summer in the Milton Public Schools. There were over 1,000 students in summer programs. A special thank you was extended to custodians and Consolidated Facilities workers who have worked hard all summer. Superintendent Gormley thanked Principals, Assistant Superintendent Janet Sheehan and Human Resource Specialist Laurie Dunn for their work in hiring our new staff. Thanks to Curry College President Ken Quigley, our new teachers will meet next week and be given a mentor. Curry College is kind enough to host that luncheon for our new teachers.

Superintendent Gormley encouraged all parents/guardians to go to the website for dates of Open Houses; Transportation updates; School Lunch Program information; Community Schools Program information, etc. She also mentioned that all students entering grades 6 and 9 must re-register. Student assignments will not be posted until registration is complete.

Superintendent Gormley recognized Assistant Superintendent Dr. Pavlicek for the work he has done with Transportation. She stated that Dr. Pavlicek has re-vamped all bus routes. Dr. Pavlicek reviewed the transportation requirements and reported that at this time Milton High School and Pierce Middle School buses are full. Bus routes will be posted within the next few days, and bus passes will be mailed out next week. Bus passes show the am and pm bus number and stop. Committee members thanked Dr. Pavlicek for his work. Superintendent Gormley reported that Rachel Schewe will be taking over Transportation and will be handling all calls and emails.

Chair's Report

Approval of School Handbooks

Ms. Eberhardt thanked Principals, Committee members and Charlene Roche for their work with the student handbooks. Ms. Eberhardt reminded the public that new policies regarding digital access have been added to all handbooks this year. She encouraged parents/guardians to read the handbook with their students. This year all elementary families have one handbook and families will receive separate information from their particular school. Parents are expected to sign off on the back of the handbook stating that they have read and understand the policies.

Superintendent Gormley thanked Ms. Eberhardt for her involvement in the school handbooks. The handbooks are also shared with legal counsel for their review and approval.

Dr. Donahue made the motion to approve the 2018-2019 Elementary School Handbook.

Second: S. Varela

Vote: 6-0-0

Dr. Donahue made the motion to approve the 2018-2019 Pierce Middle School Handbook.

Second: E. White

Vote: 6-0-0

Dr. Donahue made the motion to approve the 2018-2019 Milton High School Handbook.

Second: S. Varela

Vote: 6-0-0

Alternate School Committee Meeting Format

Ms. Varela and Ms. White drafted a calendar showing the alternate format of School Committee meetings that had been discussed at the retreat. The draft shows meetings at individual schools that would be more of a forum type discussion. Site Councils could do presentations at their schools and then a forum could be held. Ms. Varela explained that the School Committee could give updates regarding enrollment/space, finance/budget, and athletics. Prior to the meeting at a particular site, we could reach out and get a better feel of what they would like to address. We could also have a Q & A session. Ms. Varela noted that in the past the School Committee tried to schedule all Site Council presentations at the beginning of the year. She feels that if we were to reach out to principals and have Site Councils come to Finance to give budget information, the School Committee presentations could be more spread out.

Ms. White stated that she would like to have the forums a little more topic focused. For example, when we meet with the High School, they could spend more time talking about athletics. She was surprised at a recent Finance Subcommittee meeting just how much it costs to run an athletic program.

Dr. Craghead thanked both Ms. Varela and Ms. White for putting this calendar together. She loves the idea of having Site Councils present at their schools. She does agree with Ms. White that topics should be more focused.

Dr. Donahue stated that having one or two topics would allow us to remain within the scope of our discussion. The benefit of Citizen Speak is that we do not have dialogue with the public on contentious issues. We will have to safeguard that process. Ms. Rosmarin suggested checking with the principals as far as what topics may be important to the PTO and Site Council. The agenda items would be relative to the particular school community. Ms. White stated that the last two forums have been for space and enrollment. We advertised and posted them early. We could do the same so people are aware of agenda items. We want everyone to feel welcome attending all school presentations.

Superintendent Gormley stated that Central Office will draft the new meeting calendar.

Finance Subcommittee Report

Dr. Craghead reported that at the last meeting Athletic Director Ryan Madden presented a three-tiered proposal regarding the restructuring of athletic fees. Finance Subcommittee will continue to discuss this proposal.

The 4th Quarter Report was approved by Finance. Prior to School Committee approval, Dr. Craghead requested that Assistant Superintendent Dr. Pavlicek give a brief summary. In addition to summarizing the 4th Quarter Report, Assistant Superintendent Dr. Pavlicek informed the School Committee that the End of the Year Report must be filed with the state by October 1st. Lisa McDonough is working on this report, and she has been involved with some training since DESE changed the way this report is completed. The End of the Year Report will be ready for a School Committee vote by the end of September.

Dr. Craghead made the motion to approve the 4th Quarter Report as submitted.

Second: E. White

Vote: 6-0-0

Dr. Craghead made the motion to approve two vendor warrants:

- Vendor Warrant # 3 dated July 26, 2018 in the amount of \$148,326.34
- Vendor Warrant #5 dated August 9, 2018 in the amount of \$246,625.07

Second: S. Varela

Vote: 6-0-0

Policy Subcommittee Report

Ms. Eberhardt stated that most of the policies on tonight's agenda are being updated as a result of the Pregnancy Fairness Act. She requested using the expedited approval process for all of tonight's policies. Both Superintendent Gormley and Dr. Donahue agreed.

Ms. Eberhardt made the motion to approve Policy AC, Nondiscrimination Policy as revised.

Second: S. Varela

Vote: 6-0-0

Ms. Eberhardt reported that Policy GBEBD, Online Fundraising and Solicitations-Crowdfunding is a new policy. There had been concern at the state level regarding crowdfunding (i.e. GoFundMe, Kickstart, etc.). MASC put some structure on this by saying that all crowdfunding must be approved by the principal and in some instances by the Superintendent. The Committee discussed that this policy is for teachers and it will protect them from unintentionally violating state ethics (which could be a \$10,000 fine). Teachers cannot directly solicit the parents of their students.

Ms. Eberhardt made a motion to approve Policy GBEBD, Online Fundraising and Solicitations-Crowdfunding.

Second: S. Varela

Vote: 6-0-0

Minor edits were made to Policy JFB, School Choice, as the result of the Pregnancy Fairness Act.

Ms. Eberhardt made the motion to approve Policy JFB, School Choice as revised.

Second: E. Craghead

6-0-0

Ms. Eberhardt explained that Policy GCF, Professional Hiring Policy was reviewed based on feedback as to how positions are posted in the district and how people are hired. Ms. Eberhardt reviewed the edits made. We also included the revised language as the result of the Pregnancy Fairness Act.

Ms. Eberhard made a motion to approve Policy GCF, Professional Hiring Policy.

Second: S. Varela

6-0-0

Ms. Eberhard reported that the only change to Policy IJOA, Field Trip Policy was the addition of #6 on page 2 under Final Approval Requests which states an estimated number of students participating in the field trip would be needed for the final approval process.

Ms. Eberhardt made a motion to approve Policy IJOA, Field Trip Policy as revised.
Second: E. White
Vote: 6-0-0

Dr. Donahue thanked Ms. Eberhardt for her work on these policies.

With no further items on the agenda, Dr. Donahue made the motion to adjourn.
Second: S. Varela
Vote: 6-0-0