

Milford Board of Education

Board Meeting Minutes
February 11, 2015

Board members present:

Claire Casey
Michael DeGrego
John DeRosa
Suzanne DiBiase
Jennifer Federico
Susan Glennon, Chair
Earl Whiskeyman

Administration present:

Dr. Elizabeth Feser
Michael Cummings
Wendy Kopazna
Jim Richetelli
Susan Kelleher

Board members absent:

Anthony Piselli
C. Robert Satti, Jr.
Dr. Heidi Gold-Dworkin

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Glennon called the special meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Jonathan Law High School Auditorium. She then asked that everyone join in the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance. Following the pledge, Ms. Glennon announced Mr. Piselli, Mr. Satti and Dr. Gold-Dworkin would not be in attendance due to being ill or a previous commitment. She then apologized to the public for the set-up of the meeting tables having the Board members backs facing the public. However, it was necessary for the Board to view the presentation. There are two more workshops planned on redistricting, with an anticipated vote being made by the Board in March.

Ms. Glennon turned the meeting over the Mr. Zuba and Ms. Augur of Milone and MacBroom for a redistricting presentation.

II. BOARD WORKSHOP ON PRELIMINARY REDISTRICTING OPTIONS

Mr. Zuba and Ms. Augur narrated a PowerPoint presentation which began with the Board's preferred criteria used in developing the redistricting options presented. The preferred criteria are:

- Adhere to natural boundaries and keep neighborhoods together to the greatest extent feasible
- Balance enrollments to ensure parity in available resources; across schools
- Minimize student travel time and transportation costs
- Mitigate impact on students already redistricted and remain cognizant of and sensitive to those families
- Avoid unequal distribution of redistricting burden

They indicated some challenges in achieving all of the criteria and explained they will guide the process. They reviewed the various elements that attributed to the new proposed boundary lines being established. For example, differences in building sizes and where the elementary buildings are located in relation to one another; desire to add 2 program rooms to the 7 already in existence, decentralizing the PreK program in at

least three buildings and the desire to increase over time; the shift from west to east to bring parity to all schools while balancing the enrollment.

Mr. Zuba explained there were many initial iterations. Board class size guidelines of 20 students at the K-2 level and 24 for 3-5 were followed, as well as enrollment projections. Test runs showed desire of 9 program rooms could not immediately be met. This standard was modified to show the 7 program rooms currently existing with the goal to phase in the additional 2. This resulted in option 4 being what he considered the best fit for Milford. He then reviewed the tweaks recommended which led to the final three options, 4a, 4b and 4c. Maps were provided to show the changes and Mr. Zuba and Ms. Auger walked the Board through a detailed review of each option.

Mr. Zuba noted that the Board may want to consider changes to the middle school boundaries in the future to avoid splitting small numbers of students from their peers at grade 6. He noted the Long Range Planning Committee's desire to see direct feeders for middle school.

Mr. Zuba concluded the presentation by providing an email address where the public can send questions to.

Following the presentation, Ms. Glennon asked the Board members if there were any questions.

Mr. Whiskeyman raised a concern about the planned building of apartments on Bic Drive. Mr. Zuba told the Board the planned developments were taken in consideration when determining the boundaries. However, the moratorium in place would prevent further building.

Ms. Glennon indicated the moratorium had been lifted, and she had seen the apartments to be built on Bic Drive would be only studio and small one bedroom units. Mr. Zuba indicated he would follow up with Planning and Zoning for clarification on future building. The Board will be updated at the next meeting.

Mrs. Federico asked if the redistricting plan was more of a temporary fix or permanent. Mr. Zuba explained the plan presented would be a long term plan. Many things are considered when determining a redistricting plan. Birth rates, housing, how much development can be done in a town, the age of the residents, etc. It was his understanding the board wanted a plan that would work for the long term.

Mrs. Federico also wanted to know if the current walkers will remain walkers. Ms. Augur referenced the final tweaks that were made to address those students. She believes most will remain walkers with a few that may need to be transported.

The consultants further said that the options built on each other. Therefore 4c would be the preferred option. You would have better efficiency of staff, parity in the schools, and better use of the facility space using the 4c option.

Mr. DeRosa asked if PreK would be in four schools under the current options. He was told the options provided would allow room for PreK in four buildings. Mr. DeRosa indicated that was important to him and he thanked them for following through on that.

Mrs. Federico asked how the options of 137 teachers planned compares to the teachers currently used. Mr. Cummings told her the district currently uses 130. However, the final number will be dependent on the final classes needed based on the redistricting plan that is implemented.

Mrs. Federico requested the average class size for each grade at each school.

Ms. Glennon asked the consultants how much effect the physical location of the schools played in the iterations. Ms. Augur explained the location was very difficult in planning the boundaries. For example, Mathewson and Orange Avenue, Meadowside and Pumpkin Delight, Calf Pen and Orchard Hills are very close to each other.

Mr. Zuba explained the many hard boundaries that governed what could be done. For example, Route 1, Interstate 95, ponds etc. as well as the location of the schools. The initial plan began with nine program rooms in each elementary school for art, music, science, physical therapy and other specialties, and putting PreK in four schools would not fit even with eight elementary schools. This led to the decision to look at beginning with seven with the plan to have a phase in approach.

Dr. Feser further explained the complexity in determining the boundaries presented. Six years ago a school on the west side of town was closed and the elementary schools were paired making them sister schools. The current redistricting is looking at the schools individually. She gave an example as to why you may need more classes with spreading the grades over more schools. It is all dependent upon where the students reside and what grades they fall in. Plus with something like Band, you will now have it in eight schools rather than only four. She reconfirmed it is a very complex process.

Ms. Glennon thanked Dr. Feser and Milone and MacBroom. She reminded the Board of the upcoming meetings, February 17th and the Committee of the Whole meeting on February 23rd, which would both be dedicated to redistricting with time for public comment.

III. ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Federico made a motion to adjourn. Mr. DeRosa seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Mrs. Pam Griffin
Recording Secretary

Mrs. Jennifer Federico
Corresponding Secretary