

Milford Board of Education

Board Meeting Minutes
February 17, 2015

Board members present:

Claire Casey
Michael DeGrego
John DeRosa
Suzanne DiBiase
Jennifer Federico
Susan Glennon, Chair
Dr. Heidi Gold-Dworkin
Anthony Piselli
C. Robert Satti, Jr.
Earl Whiskeyman

Administration present:

Dr. Elizabeth Feser
Michael Cummings
Jim Richetelli
Susan Kelleher

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. She then apologized to the public for the set-up of the meeting tables having the Board members backs facing the public. However, this was necessary for the Board to view the presentation. The meeting is the second of three workshops for the board to discuss the preliminary redistricting options presented by the consultant, as well as allow the public to comment on redistricting.

Ms. Glennon then gave a brief history of the Long Range Planning work the Board has done over the last two years and the items that were adopted by the Board. She reviewed the redistricting criteria that the Board voted on last year which helped guide Milone and MacBroom through the process. The criteria is:

- 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

Ms. Glennon noted that Milone and MacBroom and administration will address some questions of the public and the Board. She then turned the meeting over to Milone and MacBroom.

II. BOARD WORKSHOP ON PRELIMINARY REDISTRICTING OPTIONS

Mr. Zuba began the presentation by clarifying the movement that would occur with plans 4a, 4b and 4c. He noted that 83% - 85% retention of K-4 students who would remain in one of their current sister schools via a PowerPoint slide.

Approved

Ms. Augur reported she conferred with the City Planner regarding development in Milford. Bic Drive will have 257 units with a mix of studio and 1 bedroom apartments and Wheelers Farm Road will have 180 units of mixed one and two bedroom units.

Ms. Auger went on to explain the patterns of movement, including school capacity, the disparity of enrollment at the schools and the fact that the decline is occurring much faster on the east side opposed to the west.

Following the presentation, Mr. DeRosa asked if the schools could start with only five or six program rooms so more kids may have the potential for less movement from one school to another.

Ms. Glennon reiterated that would go against the long range planning items adopted by the Board last fall, being to return to K-5 in all eight elementary schools to allow for room to grow and expand programming and to undergo city wide redistricting to balance enrollment from west to east. Without doing that there will still be disparity in the schools. Saying now to reduce the number of program rooms is a step backwards.

Mr. DeRosa recalled the amount of programming rooms should be determined by administration and not the consultant. He recalled the Board discussed the programming rooms and having them phased in over time as the enrollment numbers decline.

Ms. Glennon said that discussion was based on the assumption that a school may close. The Board then chose to keep all of the schools open. The agreement of the Board was to bring balance and parity with program rooms to all eight elementary schools so no school would have to do without a program room that another school has room for. To diverge from that agreement would need a consensus of the Board to change course before asking Milone and MacBroom to develop a plan with only five or six program rooms.

Mr. Piselli recalled administration being supportive of the phase in approach. He does not understand the urgency to have a dedicated amount of programming classrooms to start.

Ms. Glennon explained without shifting enrollment from west to east the disparity will always be there. She reminded the Board of the work that has been done thus far. A consensus would be needed by the Board before tasking the consultants with developing a plan having only six program rooms in the schools.

Ms. Glennon asked Mrs. Griffin to call the Board members names in alphabetical order.

Casey/Federico/Glennon/Satti/Whiskeyman – No

DeRosa/DiBiase/Gold-Dworkin/Piselli – Yes

DeGrego - Abstain

Dr. Feser then gave a presentation that addressed some of the questions sent in over the past week. She told the Board the transition information would be provided to the parent community in a timely manner. She further provided information on transportation, kindergarten registration, staffing, moves and in-school moves. She committed to keeping the public abreast of the changes appropriate.

Being no further questions, Ms. Glennon moved to Public Comment.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

Christopher Thomas – 8 Argyle Road – Mr. Thomas asked the Board to instruct Milone and MacBroom to see if there are ways to keep boundaries closer to sister school districts. It appears that there has been no attempt to keep sister schools together. The public does not understand the changes to any of the options.

Sarah Wardman – 39 Minuteman Drive – She lives within walking distance to Calf Pen. She was looking forward to her two girls attending the same school next year. Her children will go from walking .4 miles to school to being 1.5 miles from Orchard Hills. Her children will need to cross Pond Point. Her fourth grade daughter will go from a safe school environment to a new school. She believes the people in Milford want a community feel and stability. She does not support plan. She would like to Board refrain from supporting any of the plans presented.

Shannon Cleary – 95 Atwater Street – She lives in the Point Beach section of Milford. She currently has a daughter at Orange Avenue. She thought her children would be attending a sister school. However, one of the options lists her street in the Orchard Hills district. She prefers the children in the Point Beach area be redistricted to Calf Pen. She has been room mom in her daughter's class and has made many friendships. Therefore, she would support option 4c. She then read a letter written to Dr. Feser.

Laura Katz – 29 Central Avenue – Like many parents, her child's elementary experience will change for the second time. Her child will be moving to a brand new school for her final elementary experience. Only 13 peers in her grade at her school will move to the same school as her daughter. She also told the Board next year will be a transition year. She asked the Board to consider grandfathering fourth grade students.

Cherie Agresti – 44 Gunn Street – She echoed Mrs. Katz's comments about the elementary experience and grandfathering. She also asked the Board to charge the consultants to look at the boundaries again. She also stated that 15% of students being moved to a new school is a big group of kids; especially, if your child is one of those in the 15%.

Peter Carlson – 11 Nells Road – His child attends JFK and participates in the aftercare program. His child would be redistricted to Meadowside. Meadowside does not offer the same aftercare program. His costs would increase by \$10,000. He does not understand how the boundaries were drawn with the sliver of purple that runs down the center of Route 1 and Meadowside. His children will drive by two schools before reaching their school. He urged the Board to reconsider and develop a new option.

Chris Lambiase – 105 Morning Mist Road – Mr. Lambiase would like the Board to consider grandfathering the current fourth graders who will be in fifth grade next year. The first mistake was closing Simon Lake in an overcrowded area. Be considerate of the children who have been through the most changes.

Sherri Franzman - 46 Somerset Lane – Presentation provided has one district overcrowded by 6 students but 25% of students in District 2 will be moved out of their current school. Why do this for one small problem in one area of town? Are the consultants trying to justify their fee? She believes most people would be happier if you did nothing at this point. She does not support any of the plans presented. She challenged the Board to show a plan with North Milford students staying where they currently are.

Christine DeCarcangelo – 646 Popes Island Road - Her daughter attends Pumpkin Delight and attends the Boys and Girls Club after school. She is bussed to the Club and the cost is \$50 a year. Her daughter will attend Mathewson, an entirely new school for her last elementary year. The aftercare will cost \$2,000 that she cannot afford. She asked the Board to think about how this will affect her child when making their decision.

III. CLOSING REMARKS

Ms. Glennon asked the administration to provide the Board with information on the before and after childcare programs. Mr. Cummings told the Board administration is looking at the childcare concerns.

Ms. Glennon asked administration to think about the current fourth graders and the possibility of grandfathering them. She challenged administration to think outside the box.

Mrs. Federico asked if the middle school students who would be affected by the school change could choose which middle school they attend, maybe only for a short time. Dr. Feser advised there could be staffing issues. She would need further guidance from the Board.

Mr. DeRosa agreed fifth grade is a capstone experience. He supports looking into grandfathering the current fourth graders.

Ms. Glennon requested that any further questions be directed to Dr. Feser by Thursday.

Mr. Whiskeyman requested the programming priorities. Mr. Cummings stated dedicated art, music, two resource rooms, computer lab and a shared room (OT/PT, enrichment, band and strings). The second computer lab would be the last priority if he had to choose.

Mr. DeRosa asked what the difference is from going from seven program rooms to six?

Ms. Glennon told him that parity is the difference. She then asked Mr. DeRosa what his rationale was for the question relative to the program rooms. Was it so the students would not have to be shifted? Mr. DeRosa agreed that was his rationale. Ms. Glennon reiterated that without redistricting, the schools on the east side will still be able to grow and will have ample room whereas on the west side, the schools will not.

Being no further questions, Ms. Glennon asked for a motion to adjourn.

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Mrs. Pam Griffin
Recording Secretary

Approved

Mr. Robert Satti, Jr.
Corresponding Secretary