

Milford Board of Education

Board Meeting Minutes
March 23, 2015

Board members present:

Michael DeGrego
John DeRosa
Suzanne DiBiase
Jennifer Federico
Laura Fucci
Susan Glennon, Chair
Anthony Piselli
C. Robert Satti, Jr.
Earl Whiskeyman

Administration present:

Dr. Elizabeth Feser
Michael Cummings
Jim Richetelli

Board members absent:

Dr. Heidi Gold-Dworkin

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Glennon called the special meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. in the City Hall Auditorium. She then asked that everyone join in the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. BOARD WORKSHOP ON ELEMENTARY REDISTRICTING

Ms. Glennon announced Dr. Gold-Dworkin would be joining the meeting via phone after Public Comment. She gave a recap of the work the Board has done over the past year. She noted the five points adopted by the Board last fall: 1. Directing administration to proceed with the reconfiguration of the elementary school to K-5 effective with the 2015-16 school year in all 8 elementary schools. 2. Directing administration to decentralize the current pre-kindergarten classes to a minimum of 3 schools effective with the 2015-16 school year, allowing administration to determine the best placement for those classrooms. 3. Directing administration to take the necessary steps to redistrict the elementary school population in order to balance school enrollment. 4. Directing administration to begin to explore and develop college and career pathway programming for the grade 6-12 continuum and to begin exploring enhanced programming for grades K-5.

Ms. Glennon reminded the Board of its One Voice policy and pointed to several of the clauses of GP-2 of the board's policies.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT ON ELEMENTARY REDISTRICTING

Pamela & John Pargin - 759 West River Street – Keep the special needs children that live in the Mathewson district at Mathewson. Change for these children is very difficult. The family lives ½ mile from Mathewson. Their son has a seizure condition and will not be able to withstand a long ride on the bus.

Laura Katz – 29 Central Avenue – She asked the Board to consider grandfathering the current fourth graders who will be placed outside of the school pairing. She also told the Board to make the decision tonight, along with the other decision's you make, so families will know where their children are going to school next year. Make a decision that the district will be able to grow with.

Approved

Sherri Franzman – 46 Somerset Lane – She told the Board her daughter and her best friend will no longer be at the same school next year. The affect the Board will have on the children is more than the families that are being redistricted. Children are being uprooted for the convenience of the PreK program. Most parents of PreK are stay at home moms and don't mind driving their children to PreK.

Joanne Poffenberger – 50 Green Street – She wondered what happened to the vision. She feels the option presented was low budget, cut corners and just, let's make it happen. The redistricting option is not a return to neighborhood schools. Her daughter will move from Meadowside to Calf Pen. Please reflect on the one choice and be sure you are making the right choice. Please keep equity throughout the district.

Circe Deitlbaum – 501 Burnt Plains Road – She has four children who will be attending MPS next year. She encouraged the Board to stay true to your word and bring parity to the district. She is also looking forward to seeing the programs taking place next year.

Jacqueline Smith – 205 Centennial Drive – Change has to happen, but is the change that is before us is not the right change. The board has not reviewed the middle and high school lines. Her fear is the Board will need to redistrict again. The same kids are being affected again and again. Keep the kids with their peers. They are not asking to remove special education from Mathewson. Keep one classroom at Mathewson. Distribute the PreK equally and option 4i would work. The kids in the system now should be the priority. PreK is optional. Put PreK in Calf Pen or somewhere else. Parents would be happy to drive their children to school. She urged the Board to keep stability for the kids.

Beth Solai – 81 Cheryl Ann Drive – She emphasized parity is the goal. If you wait and do the shuffling in a year or two, it will be those kids and those families affected. Orange Avenue has been dealing with PreK for years. It is unfair to those families. Research has proved that we need to move from west to east. It makes sense to keep preschool in as many buildings as possible. Thinking into the future, put it in place. The Board agreed to putting preschool in other schools in the fall. Think about what is best for the district and do the right thing.

Laura Scarma – 72 Lamplight Lane – She has two children at Mathewson. She believes kids are resilient. However, the Board should look at the redistricting from a business stand point. Is this the right thing for Milford?

Sara Burns – 22 Peck Street – Please consider option h. It has no long term ramifications or educational impact.

Jeff Cupsin – 140 Platt Lane – He urged the Board to stand behind the decision to decentralize the preschool program. There have been challenges, some of which involve safety. He is concerned about moving forward with a larger PreK population at Orange Avenue. There may not be enough room for the additional programs for K-5. He encouraged the Board to put PreK in other schools to add parity.

John Sawinsky – 32 Drift Drive – He has a son at Orange Avenue. He encouraged the Board to stay with their mission. More thought should have been put into the decision making.

Ms. Glennon closed Public Comment

Approved

Ms. Glennon asked for a recess at 7:37 p.m.

The meeting was called back to order at 7:56 p.m.

Ms. Glennon notified the Board that Mrs. Griffin attempted to contact Dr. Gold-Dworkin via phone at 7:38 p.m., however, the phone was unanswered. She will be marked absent.

Ms. Glennon asked the members if there were any clarifications needed before moving to the vote.

Mrs. Federico asked for an update on the childcare programs.

Mr. Richetelli gave an explanation of the three programs offered to students in Milford Public Schools. They are: Boys and Girls Club, YMCA and a program managed by Patti Sabin at Pumpkin and JFK. The Boys and Girls Club is open to families at a cost of \$50 a year for membership. The Club is a drop in center, not a licensed before and aftercare program. The program relies on fundraising and grants. Two buses are used to transport children from Pumpkin and JFK to the Club. Durham bus company donates them. If plan 4c is passed nineteen children, who participate in the program, would be moved out of the Pumpkin and JFK district. Administration will arrange to transport those children to the Club for one year only.

The second program offered to students is Milford Public Schools before and aftercare, which is located at Pumpkin and JFK. It began at Simon Lake Elementary. Mr. Richetelli reported 23 students using this program would be moved to Meadowside and four to Mathewson if option 4c is approved. The district will transport those children, who are currently in that program, and their siblings, back to the program for the 2015-16 school year. The cost to the district is estimated at \$12,000 - \$15,000.

Mr. Richetelli reported the administration is working with the YMCA, about their fee structures, to close the gap in pricing.

Ms. Glennon thanked Mr. Richetelli for the update. She reminded the Board there is agreement to review before and aftercare programs at a future Committee of the Whole meeting.

Mr. DeRosa asked the Board to look at the possibility of another option. He would like to incorporate the removed option of 4i with what he called 4j, but with Gunn Street and Lamplight going to Orange Avenue. Leave one self-contained class at Mathewson and move the other 2. Move two PreK classes from JFK to somewhere else. This will allow for PreK at three schools which the Board voted on October 2014. He asked for consideration because it would save some disruption to north Milford and the Beaverbrook and Caswell Cove. He asked the Board for discussion on the item.

Ms. Glennon pointed out it seemed this proposal is no different than what was taken off the table at the last meeting. The data shows it would delay putting preschool at JFK for five years. In addition, JFK would not be able to add program rooms. She also addressed the fifth grade grandfathering that would be eliminated for the Milford Point Road corridor and Fort Trumbull beach area. Those families are being displaced from their current schools too. Some were displaced when Simon Lake closed. Balancing enrollment is the priority of the redistricting. Mathewson would have two hundred more students than some other schools.

Approved

Ms. Glennon asked Dr. Feser what the ramifications were if you moved the preschool out of JFK.

Dr. Feser deferred to Mrs. Kennedy in Mrs. Kelleher's absence.

Mrs. Kennedy gave a brief description of the PreK classes and their placement in the schools.

A Board discussion ensued.

Mr. DeRosa requested that the Board at least ask administration to look at his proposed plan 4j. He feels the Board should start with the least amount of resources and build up.

Ms. Glennon called upon the Board members for a consensus. Those in favor of having administration look at the option were: DeGrego, DeRosa, DiBiase, and Piselli. Those not in favor were: Casey, Federico, Glennon, Satti and Whiskeyman.

Mr. Whiskeyman asked for an update on grandfathering.

Mr. Richetelli reported 29 students would be grandfathered at JFK, however, it would delay the PreK at JFK for one year. Mathewson and Meadowside have 34 students moving onto Orange Avenue and/or Calf Pen. Those 34 students can be accommodated at Meadowside. If no change to the proposed option of 4c, Minuteman Drive would have five students moving outside of the pairing to Orchard Hills. Those students can be grandfathered into Calf Pen easily. In addition, MPS would provide transportation costing from \$12,000 - \$15,000 for the students to be transported.

Mrs. Federico asked for a recess. Ms. Glennon called for a five minute recess at 8:57 p.m.

The meeting was called back to order at 9:02 p.m.

Ms. Glennon called for a motion.

Mr. Satti made a motion that the Board direct administration to carry out redistricting plan 4C as developed by Milone and MacBroom, and presented to the Milford Board of Education on February 11, 2015, with the modification of 4D Minuteman Drive. Mrs. Federico seconded.

Mr. Satti stated the public had been heard. The decision being made tonight is difficult. The purpose of the plan is to help all of the children and spread equality across the city. It makes every building equal for all students. This plan puts it into place.

Mrs. Federico said this is the best plan that supports what the Board adopted last fall. It allows for more programs to be added. Future boards won't have to redistrict in the near future.

By a roll call vote of 6-3 N (DeGrego/DeRosa/Piselli), the motion passed.

Ms. Glennon called for a second motion.

Approved

Mr. Satti made a motion that the Board direct administration to carry out the grandfathering for the current 4th grade students who are redistricted outside of their current pairing of schools. Ms. DiBiase seconded. By a roll call vote of 6-3 N (DeGrego/DeRosa/Piselli), the motion passed.

Ms. Glennon called for a motion to adjourn.

III. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:07 p.m.

Mrs. Pam Griffin
Recording Secretary

Mr. Robert Satti
Corresponding Secretary