

MEDFIELD SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Workshop

June 21, 2023

Warren Conference Center

PRESENT: Timothy Knight - Chair
Michelle Kirkby - Vice Chair
Leo Brehm - Recording Secretary
Kristin Simonini - Financial Secretary
Will Horne - Member at Large

ALSO PRESENT: Dr. Jeffrey Marsden - Superintendent of Schools
Michael LaFrancesca - Director of Finance and Operations
Andrea Moores - Secretary

The School Committee returned to open session at 1:09 pm. Mr. Knight gave a brief overview of the topics to be discussed and the format of the workshop.

The following agenda topics were discussed by the Committee:

Social Emotional Learning - Mobile Phones and Social Media:

The Committee members discussed the following in regards mobile phones and social media:

- Mr. Brehm shared his insight and experiences as a network manager.
- Dr. Marsden informed the Committee of the current cell phone policies at the middle and high school.
- Mr. Horne shared his experiences managing cell phone use in his classroom and stressed the importance of educators having administrative support to implement any cell phone policy established.
- Dr. Marsden explained that the state is focusing on the district's implementation of policies to limit cell phone use in schools. He expects to be notified of this grant funding later this summer.

Dr. Marsden left the Workshop at 1:35 pm.

The Committee was in agreement that as a Committee they would like to work with Dr. Marsden and the Leadership Team and support the District to develop policies/procedures to address cell phone use in the classrooms. The following action items were established as a result of this discussion:

- Request for administration to review existing language in Handbook around Cell Phone/Social Media policies to see if there are opportunities to either make the language stronger or ensure that the existing policies are being enforced in a consistent manner across the school.
- Explore PTO, School-Wide or Community sponsored committees focused on education and best practices to help students, parents, and teachers navigate this issue.
- Explore grants to implement measures to control device usage.

Strategic Plan - Measurement Framework and Communications Strategy

The Committee discussed the following regarding the communication of the strategic plan along with ongoing communication focused on the implementation and performance of the plan:

- Ms. Simonini suggested a public presentation of the strategic plan to the community prior to the July 24th meeting in order for the community to have the opportunity to ask questions and receive answers prior to a School Committee vote.

- Mr. Brehm suggested that the Committee present the plan to the community on July 24th, vote in August, or hold a zoom listening session for the community prior to the vote.
- Mr. Knight suggested holding office hours but was concerned about the timing.
- Mr. Horne was in support of holding a meeting prior to the 24th.
- The consensus was to schedule a formal meeting prior to the July 24th meeting and check with Dr. Marsden on dates before scheduling.
- Ms. Simonini made the suggestion to set the meeting dates for discussions pertaining to the strategic plan.
- Ms. Kirkby shared that a communication dashboard will be established to track progress of the Strategic Plan along with ongoing communication focused on the implementation and performance of the plan.

The Committee would like to target finding a solution by Spring of 2024 so that planning can occur for implementation; with the understanding that if there are issues amongst the community or administration based on the discussion of a reasonable solution, the timing will be delayed.

School Start Times

The Committee had a discussion about adjusting the school start times so high school students can start school at a later time:

- Ms. Kirkby shared some of her initial baseline research. She does not think a full year is needed to understand that later start times are best for adolescents.
- Ms. Simoni stated that understanding pros and cons is crucial.
- Mr. Brehm suggested an open campus for high school with a study hall first period so kids can come in later and also said that the high school schedule needs to be considered.
- Mr. Horne supports a later start time but is concerned about impact on staff. He also stated that it is best practice not to disrupt the high school schedule.
- Mr. La Francesca shared that districts who have had success with adjusting their start times have done over a two year period which allows enough time for union negotiations, and the many logistics that are needed in order to successfully implement later start times. He explained that it would be more realistic to implement new start times in fiscal year 2026 in order to give parents and staff the time to make the needed changes in order to accommodate new start times.
- Mr. Knight would like a Superintendent School Start Times Task Force to be established with representatives from the union, athletic department, performing arts, and the Medfield Afterschool Program (MAP).
- Ms. Simonini requested that the task force begin in September with a proposal presented in January.
- Mr. Knight suggested that an update in December and a proposal in March may be more realistic.
- Mr. Horne inquired about the process of selecting committee members and shared a perception that the same people continually serve on committees.
- Ms. Kirkby will bring the School Committee feedback on this topic to Dr. Marsden and will ask that he report back with expectations and major milestones for this Task Force at the July 24th meeting.

Bus Fees

The Committee engaged in a conversation about the potential implementation of bus fees and the discussed the following:

- Mr. Knight shared that it may be best to wait until after the new school start times were established. He shared his concern about how much the community can absorb at once.

- Mr. LaFrancesca shared that there will be costs associated with implementation of bus fees. He explained that grades K-6 is more difficult because of the two mile requirement but grades 7-12 are not subject to the same requirement and can be charged a bus fee. He also shared his concerns about the bus driver shortage and the challenges of having buses in-house.
- Mr. Horne asked what impact bus fees would have on the budget and inquired if there were other fees that could be implemented. Mr. LaFrancesca shared that technology and parking fees could also be implemented.
- Mr. Knight stated that there may be additional savings to consider before instituting bus fees.
- Mr. Brehm spoke about a technology portal for parents/schools as a way to collect fees and offered to work with Eoin O’Corcora, the District’s Director of Technology, on some possible initiatives. Mr. Knight asked Mr. Brehm to report back on this at a future meeting.
- The Committee agreed that there is still more exploration to be done possible fees and in order to better understand the needs, and the Committee will continue this discussion at a future meeting.

School Committee Meeting Agendas -Agenda Topics Calendar and Prioritization

The Committee reviewed the School Committee Agenda Topics Calendar to gain understanding about the range of topics the School Committee covers at their meetings. There were not any obvious topics that should be added or removed from agendas; however, Ms. Simonini made a request to change the timing of the Public Hearing for the Budget which is typically held at the end of January. She requested to hold a Public Hearing in early January and then hold the vote on the budget as part of the second January meeting. This may or may not be logistically feasible due to the timing of the budgeting process as this requires a balanced budget amongst all schools along with several Warrant Committee meetings to maintain alignment.

Ms. Simonini made a request to post School Committee agendas 72 hours in advance of the meeting. Mr. Horne stated that he supports this request. Mr. Knight stated that he was open to posting the meeting agenda’s 72 hours in advance but wants the ability to remain flexible.

At the conclusion of the workshop, Mr Knight confirmed that the next meeting is scheduled for July 24th and additional agenda items will be added to that meeting. The Committee discussed potentially scheduling a meeting prior to the July 24th meeting acknowledging that it may be difficult due to people’s schedule but regardless there is a meeting scheduled on July 24th.

Mr. Brehm stepped out of the meeting prior to the motion to adjourn the meeting.

A motion was made by Ms. Kirkby, seconded by Mr. Horne to adjourn the School Committee Workshop.

A Roll Call Vote was taken on the motion to adjourn the meeting:

- Michelle Kirkby - yes
- Kristin Simonini - yes
- Will Horne - yes
- Timothy Knight - yes

The motion passed unanimously

The workshop was adjourned at 4:37 pm.

Next Meeting: July 24, 2023

EXHIBITS AND DOCUMENTS

- School Committee Agenda Topics Calendar Document - 6/21/2023
- School Committee Meeting Video:  School Committee (06-21-2023)

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Moores
Secretary

Minutes Approved by School Committee: August 28, 2023