

**MEDFIELD SCHOOL COMMITTEE**  
**Regular Meeting**  
**May 18, 2023 - 7:00 pm**  
**Medfield High School Library Media Center**

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

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

**NOT PRESENT:** Leo Brehm - Recording Secretary

**PUBLIC HEARING - SCHOOL CHOICE**

The Chair opened the School Choice Public Hearing at 7:02 pm and took a Roll Call:

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

Dr. Marsden explained that under Massachusetts general laws, Chapter 76, Section 12b, all school districts in Massachusetts are presumed to participate in admitting non-residential students through the school choice program. The Medfield Public Schools have not participated in the school choice program for over 30 years. Dr. Marsden presented the following challenges and concerns and their impact on the District if it were to participate in the school choice program:

- Increase class size over and above Medfield enrollment
- Reduction of opportunities for Medfield students
- Medfield taxpayers subsidizing the education of non-Medfield students
- Lack of control when demand outweighs slots
- Removing funding from other school districts
- Commitment to siblings of enrolled school-choice students
- Implications to local real estate

Due to the reasons presented, Dr. Marsden's recommendation was for the Medfield Public Schools not to participate in the school choice program for fiscal year 2024.

The Chair opened the school choice public hearing to public comment:

Chris McCue Potts, 7 Curve Street, informed the Committee that she did not see the school choice public hearing on the meeting agenda and there was no hearing notice listed in the paper. Ms. Kirkby informed Ms. McCue Potts that the agenda item was listed underneath the webinar information on the agenda. Ms. McCue Potts reiterated that she did not see a hearing notice in the paper and stated her belief that it is required by law according to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to have a hearing notice published. Ms. Potts also shared her belief that the information presented was misstated and that under the school choice law, there is no requirement to admit siblings and no real data has been shown to see how many seats are available by grade at the high school. She shared her belief that a

school choice presentation with actual data and real numbers has never been given and only the cons have been discussed, not the pros of school choice participation.

Mr. Knight expressed his concern about potentially violating open meeting laws. Dr. Marsden explained that a public hearing notice is only required for a public budget hearing, not on school choice which has been confirmed by the school counsel.

Ms. Potts requested the Committee look at the online listing of other districts. She stated that she has spoken to DESE about this and it is supposed to be published in the newspaper and there is supposed to be due notice of a public hearing on a school choice hearing.

Ms. Simonini asked how many members of the community historically have chosen to participate in the topic of school choice. Ms. Potts stated that should have no bearing. Ms. Simoni stated that it does have bearing and understanding the level of community interest in this topic would be interesting to understand. Ms. Potts inferred that the history of not providing due notice 10 days in advance and only notifying the community 48 hours in advance of a meeting that does not include a presentation with actual school choice data impacts community involvement. She stated that she is not for or against school choice but believes that the School Committee should receive a detailed data-based presentation on school choice like Holliston does. Dr. Marsden explained that if the District counted on school choice revenue in the operating budget as Holliston does then it would be a part of the budget process. Medfield has never had school choice so it is not part of the budget process. Ms. Potts stated that it is the School Committee's responsibility to make data-driven decisions and there has been no actual data presented for years on school choice. She also stated that Dr. Marsden brought up at the beginning of the budgeting process that there was a real risk of having real low enrollment at the High School and tough decisions were going to be made. She shared her belief that the Community should be hearing the real numbers.

Mr. Knight interjected to bring order to the meeting and shared his concern about violating DESE regulations or the Committee's policy.

Mr. Horne asked Ms. Potts if she had an opinion on whether or not the District should participate in school choice. Ms. Potts responded that she didn't because she has never seen the financials presented to show how many seats would be available based on enrollment along with current staffing and class schedules. Mr. Horne stated that the school choice revenue received, \$5000 per student, does not come close to the \$18,000 the district currently spends per student. He also stated that low enrollment allows more opportunities and better staff/student ratios for students. He asked Ms. Potts to help him understand why filling those classes when it would cost the district more money would be a good thing. Ms. Potts compared the cost of operating a bus with low ridership to running a classroom with low enrollment. The overhead is the same but additional students would bring in extra revenue that the district. Mr. Horne stated that the bus analogy does not apply. Ms. Potts responded that the classrooms wouldn't have to be filled to capacity and limited seats could be open. She stated that this could be debated forever but the actual data on the number of seats available and the cost to the district has never been shared.

Mr. Knight stated that he understood the bus analogy at a high level, and even if there is room to offer seats the counterpoint is that if there is more demand than space a lottery system would be implemented on where the students could be accommodated. He shared his opinion that he does not see a financial pro at this time.

Ms. Simonini stated that this was not a topic that she had previously been familiar with and before coming into this role she has been doing a lot of reading and canvassing. She has talked to a variety of folks, some with students in the district and some who had students in the district who are now grown, along with some teachers just to get a feel for what the reaction is amongst the town. In talking with these groups she learned that there is a perception amongst families that the class sizes are too large and that some families have chosen private school as an option. Costs and enough resources for current students are also a concern for families. Ms. Simonini stated she received this information from a handful of people across the district and would not say it is representative of the entire district, just feedback from the conversations she had with some people to gain more understanding.

Ms. Potts stated that the big question the School Committee should ask is if there is a huge drop in enrollment at the school level what would be sacrificed and what courses would not be offered that have been offered in the past because of low student enrollment at the high school. Ms. Potts asked what classes at the high school level would not be offered this fall due to low enrollment. Mr. Horne asked if any classes were lost due to low enrollment. Dr. Marsden explained there are no classes not being offered and the one teacher fte lost is due to a leave of absence and is not being replaced.

Mr. Horne replied no teachers have been dropped, enrollment in the classes is driven by student demand, and teachers can teach other classes so it does not seem to him that any options for students are being lost. He stated that it would be a different story if significant FTE cuts were being made. Ms. Potts explained that she was speaking to reductions in class offerings for students, not teacher fte's. She stated that at the beginning of the budgeting season, Dr. Marsden said due to the large decline in enrollment at the High School different classes based on the schedule may need to be looked at differently and this information would be brought back to the School Committee but no report has been provided to help the Committee guide them. Mr. Knight acknowledged Ms. Potts' concern that she is not receiving all the information and expressed his appreciation for the input given.

Ms. Kirkby shared her concern that the District would be obligated to have students enrolled in school choice through their graduation and this is something to seriously consider in light of how tight the budget is. She explained that future cost and the long term impact should also be taken into consideration.

Mr. Horne stated he is ready to vote because he doesn't believe that school choice is right for Medfield. He asked Ms. Potts to share any information that may have been missed if he is going to vote against school choice.

Dr. Marsden explained that the District has always paid out and this has not changed since 1993 and the District is not losing hundreds of thousands that need to be recouped. Ms. Potts asked for the information to be presented in report form to the Committee. Dr. Marsden explained that this information can be shared one on one with School Committee members.

Ms. Simonini stated that it was the Committee's responsibility to educate themselves on this topic and that has been done.

Mr. Horne stated that he was ready to vote.

Mr. Knight asked if there was additional input from the public or comments from the Committee on school choice.

Ms. Simonini explained that in talking with families one question was would Medfield families could send their children to another public school. Dr. Marsden confirmed that was correct and Medfield students can attend another public school that participates in school choice. Ms. Simonini was trying to understand the implications of students leaving Medfield to attend school in another district. Mr. Knight stated that can happen from time to time but this isn't currently a driver in the Medfield.

Ms. Simonini also shared that if Medfield did participate in school choice the District would not be able to say no to a student who was previously expelled from another district.

Ms. Potts stated that she was looking at masspublicnotices.org and listed the papers in Massachusetts that currently have public hearings posted. Mr. Knight stated that the legality of the posting is a separate topic right now and he is trying to gain general input from the Committee on school choice.

Dr. Marsden read the following information from DESE webpage on the school choice public hearing:

*The hearing and the school committee's vote can occur at the same meeting and may occur at a scheduled school committee meeting provided there is notice to the public that this item will be discussed and that members of the public are afforded an opportunity to participate and make their positions known to the school committee prior to the vote.*

The 48 hour open meeting posting meets the requirements for a school choice hearing.

Mr. Knight thanked Ms. Potts for her input and since this is voted on each year and the amount of prior notice given on this topic he was ready for a vote if the Committee was ready to proceed.

Ms. Simoni shared her insight that there are other topics where the public has shared their input with the Committee by either showing up to a meeting or speaking individually with Committee members. She acknowledged the passion around this topic but didn't feel that there is community wide passion on this topic. She stated that even if 60 days' notice was provided on this topic she did not feel like there would be a lot of discussions because historically there never has been. She stated that she fulfilled her responsibility to learn about school choice by doing research and parent outreach. This has given her the information needed to inform her vote.

A motion was made by Ms. Kirkby, seconded by Ms. Simoni to adjourn the school choice public hearing.  
**The motion passed unanimously.**

The school choice public hearing was adjourned at 7:40 pm

A motion was made by Ms. Kirkby, seconded by Mr. Horne for the Medfield Public Schools not to participate in the school choice program.

**The motion passed unanimously.**

The Chair opened the regular meeting 7:42 pm and took a Roll Call:

- Michelle Kirkby - present
- Kristin Simonini - present
- Will Horne - present

➤ Timothy Knight - present

## **PUBLIC INPUT**

Colleen Tierney, 14 Hatters Hill Road, expressed that she has been hearing a lot of conversations regarding the number of middle and high school students leaving the Medfield schools to attend private schools. She shared that she had heard her private school admissions contacts in this area who are seeing a significant jump in the enrollment of Medfield students. She also inquired about the exit surveys that are now being given once a student withdraws from Medfield to attend private school. She wanted to confirm that there is an exit survey and wanted to know how the survey was being distributed, reviewed, and if the results would be shared for transparency. She hopes that the information gained by the survey will be a catalyst to address improvements needed in her opinion at the middle school so those students remain in Medfield.

Mr. Knight thanked Ms. Tierney for her input and stated that this is on the agenda topic at tonight's meeting.

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

- Approval of Minutes - Regular Meeting 4/13/2023 and 5/1/2023
- School Committee Meeting Dates for the 2023-2024 school year
- Medfield High School Student Activity Adjustment Journal
- Medfield High School Student Awards for Graduating Seniors
  - 1 David E. Medeiros Theatre Society Memorial Award for \$1000.00
  - 2 MHS Theatre Society Award of Distinction @ \$ 1000.00 each for a total of \$2000.00
  - 5 MHS Theatre Society Awards @ 200.00 each for a total of \$1000.00
  - 3 Student Council Awards @ \$250.00 each for a total of \$750.00
  - 2 Unsung Leader Awards @ \$250.00 each for a total of \$500.00
  - 10 NHS Awards @ \$200.00 each for a total of \$ 2000.00
  - 6 NHS Awards @ \$250.00 each for a total of \$ 1500.00
  - 1 NHS Service Scholarship Award for \$500.00
- Donations
  - \$3000.00 from the NHS to the High School Gift Account
  - \$1000.00 from Mr. Ray Scharlacken to the Dale Street Gift Account for the Dale Street Library. Mr. Scharlacken's wife was a former Dale Street Librarian
  - \$1300.00 from WestEd to the Dale Street Gift Account for Dale Street's participation with their recent learning study

A motion was made by Ms. Kirkby, seconded by Ms. Simonini to approve the Consent Agenda

**The motion passed unanimously.**

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Elementary Math Curriculum Recommendation and Vote - presented by Christine Power and Jennifer Belsky**

Ms. Christine Power and Jennifer Belsky were in attendance and presented the K-5 Math Pilot recommendations. The presentation was the culmination of a comprehensive year long math pilot. The presentation covered the following information:

- Guiding Principles

- What do we want math instruction to look like:
  - Quality of Materials
  - Alignment to the Frameworks
  - Real-World/Authentic Connections
  - Differentiation
  - Rigor
  - Inclusion/Diversity
  - Engagement
  - Ease of Use
  - Sequencing
- Process
  - Rubrics developed to align to our guiding principles
  - Obtain sample curriculum guided by EdReports
- Develop Evaluation Process
  - Two day review with representation across the three elementary buildings
- Training and Implementation
  - Identify pilot teachers and train
  - Create timetable
  - Develop evaluation and communication process incl. website
- Review Curricula Evaluation and Recommendation
  - Collect and analyze data
  - Formulate recommendation
- Next Steps
  - Seek Approval from School Committee
  - Communicate to MPS Community
  - Schedule Teacher Training
  - Summer/Opening Days
  - Order/Distribute materials
  - Revise Data Collection Process
  - Monitor progress
  - Provide support
  - Provide opportunities for ongoing learning

Ms. Simonini asked if there were any negatives to the math curriculum selected. Ms. Power replied no program is perfect and this program is lacking color and is presented in a minimalist way which is uncommon for elementary curricula which are usually presented with bright colors.

Mr. Horne wanted to know if selecting Illustrative as the curriculum was an easy decision over the two other programs piloted. Ms. Power stated one was a crystal clear no and the other was a bit closer but not for each grade level and not contiguous. It was very clear that Illustrative was the favorite program overall.

Dr. Marsden shared his observation of an Illustrative Math lesson. He was impressed with the structure of the lesson which encompassed whole group instruction, individual instruction, and progress monitoring. Ms. Power added that the lessons are very interactive and engaging for students.

Ms. Kirby asked how often the district evaluates math curricula. Ms. Power stated that the usual time frame is every five years but as a result of the pandemic the math curricula review was delayed but the goal is every five years. Ms. Kirby asked if there was a cost differential between the programs. Ms. Power explained that materials for Illustrative are available to source and are less expensive but have a professional development and support component which is the main cost.

Mr. Knight asked if the current math program was reviewed. Ms. Power explained that reviewing current curricula is always part of the review process. She also explained that most districts do not pilot as many programs but she wanted to make sure that the program adopted reflected the district, its values, and what is best for the district.

The chair opened the meeting for public comment on this agenda item:

Courtney McCarthy, 6 Willow Circle (via Zoom), wanted to know if other districts using this program were looked at and if they saw improvement in math as a result of using the program. Ms Power confirmed that other districts that use this program were Acton Boxboro, Franklin, Lexington, and Weston. The feedback on student engagement, ease of use, and alignment with the state frameworks was very positive.

Mr. Horne asked if there was any MCAS data available. Ms. Power reported that the program was rolled out two years ago and the MCAS data is not there yet since it is a relatively new program.

Ms. Simonini asked if other data points that would be used to assess student success. Ms. Power stated that Star Math is the internal assessment tool used for math at the elementary grade level.

Ms. McCarthy asked a follow-up question about assessments since MCAS begins in 3rd grade. Dr. Marsden explained that the Star Math assessment is administered three times a year for elementary students.

A motion was made by Ms. Simonini, seconded by Ms. Kirby to approve the adoption of the Illustrative Math Program for the elementary schools.

**The motion passed unanimously.**

### **Update on 2023-2024 Enrollment - New Enrollment/Withdrawals - presented by Dr. Jeffrey Marsden**

Dr. Marsden provided an update on the current enrollment numbers for the 23 - 24 school year to the Committee. He reported that the current enrollment is 2525, and NESDEC has projected a slight increase for next school year. There are 188 students currently registered for Kindergarten for the year and the senior graduating class enrollment this year is 199 students. NESDEC has projected the kindergarten enrollment for the 2023-2024 school year at 216 students. This has happened before where some of the projected kindergarten students show up the following year as first graders but as of today all of the full day kindergarten slots have been filled, and there are slots available in the half-day program. Dr. Marsden shared that currently there are 43 student withdrawals and 32 of those students will be attending private school. There are 20 new enrollments and 10 of those are students returning from private school. Dr. Marsden also provided 30 years of private school data for Medfield and explained that over the past 30 years, the average of students who attend private school is between 6 and 7 percent. Historically 94% of the students who live in Medfield attend the Medfield Public Schools. He shared the percentages from surrounding districts. Wellesley, Needham, Dedham, Dover, Walpole, Westwood, Norwood, Millis, and

the Medway Public Schools, and most have a much higher percentage of students who attend private schools.

Dr. Marsden explained that at a recent parent coffee, it was suggested that surveying parents about why they are choosing private schools would be beneficial. Dr. Marsden collaborated with Ms. Simonini on a survey that was recently sent out to any family to date that has officially notified the district that they are withdrawing for the next school year and will be attending a private school. The anonymous survey was sent out to 34 families and 18 responses were received. There were also options for families to follow-up with a phone call to share additional information but no one has reached out to date. Dr. Marsden highlighted a few questions and responses with the Committee. The survey has only been out for a week, and going forward once a family has officially withdrawn the District's registrar will send out an exit survey. Dr. Marsden also shared that an additional survey is being created for families who have explored private schools but chose to stay in Medfield. These surveys will provide the District with valuable information. Dr. Marsden did confirm that there are twenty-one 8th grade students leaving the District to attend private school. This is higher than it has been in prior years. There are seven 8th grade students who are either moving out of town or will be attending Tri-County High School.

Ms. Simonini expressed her gratitude to the families who suggested the survey and it's important to continue to do this, watch the trends, and report back to the Community each year. She also stated that she did not want to lose sight of the students who are leaving after 5th grade before their transition to the middle school for 6th which is what Colleen Tierney has been speaking to.

Ms. Tierney added that the private school where her daughter attends usually has one Medfield student enroll every other year but next year they have six or seven 6th grade students attending from Medfield. Dr. Marsden explained that currently only two 5th grade students who have notified the District that they are withdrawing to attend private school. Ms. Tierney stated that six or seven students have enrolled. Dr. Marsden confirmed that Steve Grenham the Principal at Dale has received student record requests as part of the private school process but only two students have committed from 5th grade. Dr. Marsden explained that the number of students who are attending private school is reported to DESE on January 1st of each school year.

Colleen Tierney asked for clarification on how families would receive the survey. Dr. Marsden explained that he sent emails to all families who notified the district to date that they were withdrawing but going forward once a student officially withdraws the district registrar will send an exit survey.

Mr. Knight was encouraged by the historical information presented but thought that the number of 8th grade students leaving this year for private does seem high which is why it is good to get this kind of data.

### **Reschedule June 1<sup>st</sup> School Committee Meeting - presented by Mr. Timothy Knight**

Due to scheduling, a request was made to consolidate the two scheduled June meetings into one meeting on June 12<sup>th</sup>. The next scheduled meeting will be on June 12, 2023, and the Committee may schedule a workshop in June.

Other items since posting on May 16, 2023

**There were none at this time.**



## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **Strategic Plan - Update - presented by Mr. Will Horne, Ms. Michelle Kirkby, and Dr. Jeffrey Marsden.**

Ms. Kirkby shared that there have been two meetings, one that focused solely on data and so far which have gone very well. She informed the Committee that part of the process is not to divulge too much information outside of the strategic plan steering committee meetings. Ms. Kirkby explained that all of the stakeholder data has been reviewed and the Committee has been divided into groups to look more in-depth at the data at the next meeting. Mr. Horne added that the first meeting was a brainstorming session with the Committee, and the second meeting focused on the data from the survey to establish the goals and pillars for the District.

Dr. Marsden shared highlights from the following goals as a result of the district's former strategic plan, Medfield 2021:

- Goal #1 Collaborative Learning
- Goal #2 Well-Being
- Goal #3 The Whole Child
- Goal #4 Community
- Goal #5 Facilities and Equipment

Mr. Horne asked if there were things that were not accomplished with Medfield 2021. Dr. Marsden stated some of the things that were not accomplished would roll into the next strategic plan because those goals are still a priority. He shared that one of the goals that hadn't been accomplished yet was a standard way for all teachers in the district to communicate with parents and streamlining that across the district will be a continued goal that is important to accomplish. Mr. Horne shared his thoughts on the importance of working with teachers to collaborate more when students are transitioning from one building to another. Dr. Marsden stated that common planning time and department meetings address student transitions but student transitions will always be an area for continuous improvement, especially from grade eight to grade nine. Next year the middle and high schools will be offering parent conferences and the in-person open houses have returned since the pandemic.

Dr. Marsden and Ms. Kirkby explained that developing a system to report progress on the goals to the community has been discussed and a dashboard was one of the tools that could be used to report that kind of information.

### **Community Engagement and Communication - Update - presented by Mr. Timothy Knight and Ms. Michelle Kirkby**

Mr. Knight explained that he and Michelle had been working hard in this area for most of the year and the strategic plan has been a part of the community engagement. He reported that at the next School Committee meeting the end of year updates from the school wide organization will be in attendance and give their year end updates.

Ms. Kirkby stated that the goal for community engagement and communication for this year was for the Committee to be more outward facing with their communication. Ms. Kirkby stated that by launching School Committee social media platforms and inviting school council members to come to speak at meetings the Committee has made some good strides in this area. She is looking forward to continuing to increase communication and community engagement.

Mr. Knight expressed interest in having communication and community engagement as an agenda item and a future School Committee Workshop.

**Policy Update - presented by Mr. Timothy Knight**

Mr. Knight expects to be reviewing one or two policy manual sections each month with the Committee and hopes to complete this project by December 2023. Policies will be brought to School Committees first and informational, second as a 1st reading, and third as a second reading and vote to approve in form. Once all of the policies are voted in form the Committee will vote to adopt the new policy manual.

**Policy Manual Section A and Section B - 1<sup>st</sup> Reading** - Mr. Knight asked if there was any committee feedback or comments on Policy Manual Section A and B. There were none from the Committee.

- **Policy Manual Section C and Section D - Informational (Tabled)** - These policies have not been received.

**INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**

Dr. Marsden informed the Committee of the District's partnership with Regis College. This partnership will allow our high school students to take college level courses to start a pipeline for educators. The first course to be offered is Education 101 and eight high school students, who are sophomores and juniors, are taking the course. These students will receive college credit for these courses and the District is committing to this program for the next couple of years. The program is being fully funded by a grant from DESE. Dr. Marsden will continue to update the Committee on this program as it progresses.

Dr. Marsden also informed the Committee that the Medfield Coalition for Public Education (MCPE) had its annual meeting on Tuesday evening and presented the district with a check for \$100,000. This will pay for all of the grants that were approved as part of the MCPE's Reach for the Stars campaign which was for their 35-year celebration. Dr. Marsden thanked the MCPE for the great work they do and everyone who donated to the campaign. He added that on top of this, there were three grant cycles this year which resulted in an additional \$54,000 of approved grants.

Ms. Kirkby and Mr. Horne shared their impressions of the Wheelock Art Show.

Ms. Simonini shared that she did attend the last Dale Street PTO meeting of the year. She reached out to them after the meeting to get their perspective on parent communication.

Mr. Knight stated that they plan to add school start times to the June 12 meeting agenda which would be a conversation about the process and if there would be a path to implement in 2024. Dr. Marsden shared that this process would most likely take a full school year to complete and that he already has students who are passionate about this topic and want to participate. He also explained that this topic was discussed during teacher contract negotiations.

**FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

- School Start Times
- 2023 Retirements
- End of Year Updates (PTO, MCPE, MMA, SEPAC)

**Next Meeting – June 12, 2023**

A motion was made by Will Horne, seconded by Kristin Simonini to adjourn the meeting.  
**The motion passed unanimously.**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:06 pm.

#### **EXHIBITS AND DOCUMENTS**

- Meeting Narrative 5/18/2023
- Memo to School Committee - School Choice Recommendation 5-18-2023
- School Choice-Status
- DRAFT 4/13/2023 School Committee Meeting Minutes
- DRAFT 5/1/2023 School Committee Meeting Minutes
- DRAFT 2023-2024 School Year - School Committee Meeting Dates
- MHS Student Activity Adjustment Journal
- MHS Student Activity Awards for Graduating Seniors
- Donations 5/18/2023
- K-5 Math Pilot Recommendations Presentation to School Committee 5/18/2023
- Medfield Students Attending Private School
- Medfield 2021 Update Memo to School Committee -5/18/2023
- Policy Section V2 A- 3/9/23
- Policy Section V2 B - 2/14/23

Respectfully submitted,  
Andrea Moores  
Secretary

**Minutes Approved by School Committee: June 13, 2023**