

**MEDFIELD SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
Zoom Remote Meeting  
May 21, 2020**

**PRESENT:** Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke - Chairperson  
Jessica Reilly - Vice-Chairperson  
Timothy Knight - Recording Secretary  
Meghan Glenn - Financial Secretary  
Leo Brehm - Legislative Secretary

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

Ms. Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke opened the meeting at 5:00 pm and announced that the Executive Session would commence at the conclusion of the Regular Meeting.

Ms. Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke stated that public comment on grade configuration would be allowed after Ms. Christine Power's presentation.

**PUBLIC INPUT - None at this time**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Timothy Knight made a motion, seconded by Ms. Jessica Reilly to approve and retain the 5/7/20 and 5/14//20 Executive Session Minutes and to approve the 4/23/20 School Committee Meeting Minutes.

A Roll Call Vote was taken to approve and retain the 5/7/20 and 5/14/20 Executive Session Minutes and to approve the 4/23/20 School Committee Meeting Minutes.

- Jessica Reilly-yes
- Leo Brehm-yes
- Timothy Knight-yes
- Meghan Glenn- yes
- Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke-yes

**The vote was unanimous.**

**NEW BUSINESS - presented by Dr. Jeffrey Marsden**

School Choice Public Hearing - Ms. Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke asked for a Roll Call Vote to open the School Choice Public Hearing.

A Roll Call Vote was taken to open the School Choice Public Hearing:

- Jessica Reilly-yes
- Leo Brehm-yes
- Timothy Knight-yes
- Meghan Glenn- yes
- Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke-yes

**The vote was unanimous.**

Dr. Marsden explained that the School Choice program enables districts to establish open seats in their schools to allow students from other towns to attend. The School Choice reimbursement amount is \$5500 per student and the

Department of Education does not expect the amount to increase for next year. Medfield has never participated in School Choice and due to the current budget situation along with the ongoing pandemic, Dr. Marsden feels strongly that it is not in the best interest for Medfield at this time. Dr. Marsden recommended that the district not participate in School Choice.

Ms. Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke concurred by stating that during this pandemic the focus needs to be on the safe re-entry of our staff and students and this is not a good time to entertain School Choice.

Mr. Leo Brehm made a motion, seconded by Ms. Jessica Reilly not to participate in the School Choice.

A Roll Call Vote was taken not to participate in the School Choice.

- Jessica Reilly-yes
- Leo Brehm-yes
- Timothy Knight-yes
- Meghan Glenn- yes
- Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke-yes

**The vote was unanimous.**

**Ms. Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke and Ms. Jessica Reilly read the following public comment/questions:**

**Q:** Chris McCue Potts asked what the projected class size is for 6, 7, and 8th grade this coming school year? There is no overcrowding there. Wouldn't it help with much-needed revenue for such a small number?

**C:** Chris McCue Potts stated that you are going against school policy by not taking my questions.

**A:** Ms. Jessica Reilly apologized to Ms. Potts and explained that there is delay with receiving the questions/comments via the zoom chat. Ms. Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke asked Dr. Marsden to answer the question from Chris McCue Potts.

**A:** Dr. Marsden stated the class sizes at the middle school are between the high teens to low twenties but still feels that School Choice is not in the best interest of the district.

**A:** Ms. Jessica Reilly stated that it costs more than \$5500.00 to educate a student in Medfield and it doesn't seem prudent since there is a significant budget issue and a potential reduction of staff. Ms. Reilly stated that a decision to participate in School Choice would require a more planned and studied approach.

**C:** Chris McCue Potts stated that it is a small number of students, and we are paying out for School Choice and that \$5500 is not an incremental cost...we have empty seats on the buses that could help to cover staff costs and preserve positions.

**A:** Dr. Marsden stated that School Choice allows people to live where they want and take advantage of the services that the Medfield taxpayers pay for. Dr. Marsden feels strongly that the district needs to concentrate on what is happening currently in the town and now is not the time to take this on. Ms. Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke stated that she is in full agreement with Dr. Marsden.

**C:** Chris McCue Potts stated that the School Committee should request a cost-benefit analysis to look at this more deeply before being so quick to vote.

**A:** Ms. Jessica Reilly responded by saying that School Choice is reviewed and discussed yearly. Ms. Reilly again said that she could not support School Choice at this time.

**C:** Chris McCue Potts inquired if Medfield is sharing services with districts for Special Ed?

**A:** Ms. Jessica Reilly stated that Special Education tuition is not the same as School Choice reimbursement.

**A:** Ms. Meghan Glenn concurred with the decision not to participate in School Choice.

**C:** Ms. Chris McCue Potts commented that there has been no formal presentation with real numbers on School Choice, ever. Holliston has had a detailed presentation on all the variables and school choice would provide tuition to Medfield.

**A:** Ms. Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke stated the comment made by Chris McCue Potts was duly noted.

Ms. Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke stated that another vote would be taken regarding the district's participation in School Choice.

Ms. Jessica Reilly made a motion, seconded by Mr. Leo Brehm not to participate in the School Choice.

A Roll Call Vote was taken not to participate in the School Choice.

- Jessica Reilly-yes
- Leo Brehm-yes
- Timothy Knight-yes
- Meghan Glenn- yes
- Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke-yes

**The vote was unanimous.**

Ms. Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke asked for a vote to close the Public Hearing for School Choice.

A Roll Call Vote was taken to close the Public Hearing for School Choice.

- Jessica Reilly-yes
- Leo Brehm-yes
- Timothy Knight-yes
- Meghan Glenn- yes
- Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke-yes

**The vote was unanimous.**

**School Committee Meeting Dates 2020-2021 (Agenda Out of Order) - presented by Dr. Jeffrey Marsden**

A Draft of the 2020-2021 School Committee Meeting Dates was included in the committee meeting materials. Dr. Marsden explained that the dates were very similar to this year's dates and additional meeting dates can be added if necessary. Dr. Marsden asked the School Committee to approve the proposed School Committee Meeting dates for 2020-2021.

Ms. Meghan Glenn made a motion, seconded by Ms. Jessica Reilly to approve the 2020-2021 School Committee Meeting Dates for 2020-2021.

A Roll Call Vote was taken to approve the 2020-2021 School Committee Meeting Dates for 2020-2021.

- Jessica Reilly-yes
- Leo Brehm-yes
- Timothy Knight-yes
- Meghan Glenn- yes
- Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke-yes

**The vote was unanimous.**

Ms. Jessica Reilly also reminded the committee to check the meeting dates for conflicts with Passover and if so then the meeting would be changed. Ms. Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke agreed to do so if a conflict occurred.

**End of Year FY19 Financial Audit - presented by Mr. Michael LaFrancesca**

The End of Year FY19 Financial Audit completed by Powers and Sullivan came back with no findings and has been submitted to the Massachusetts Department of Education.

Mr. Timothy Knight made a motion, seconded by Ms. Meghan Glenn to accept the End of Year FY19 Audit.

A Roll Call Vote was taken to accept the End of Year FY19 Audit.

- Jessica Reilly-yes
- Leo Brehm-yes
- Timothy Knight-yes
- Meghan Glenn- yes
- Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke-yes

**The vote was unanimous.**

**School Lunch Price Increase FY21- presented by Mr. Michael LaFrancesca**

Dr. Marsden began by publicly acknowledging and thanking the staff of the school lunch program who have been serving lunches to community members since the pandemic began. Dr. Marsden also thanked Blue Moon for donating baked goods to help support the efforts. A Monday, Wednesday, Friday schedule has been established to make sure that families and senior citizens have breakfast and lunch available to them. The staff has been serving 200 meals per week and has been doing a fantastic job.

Mr. Michael LaFrancesca explained that the federal government makes adjustments at the federal level, which requires the district to adjust their school lunch prices.

Mr. LaFrancesca shared his presentation on the School Lunch Price increase which covered the following topics:

- School Nutrition Budget Overview
- Paid Lunch Equity
- Considerations - expected increases for next year,
- New Proposed Meal Prices
- Meal Service During Closure

**Ms. Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke opened the meeting up for public comment regarding the school lunch price increase.**

**Q:** Chris McCue Potts asked how much money is abandoned in School Bucks accounts each year, either because of students graduating, moving, etc.? What happens if a refund is not requested?

**A:** Mr. LaFrancesca responded that the food service department reaches out to all seniors with balances and either the balances are refunded, rolled over to a sibling, or donated to the school lunch program.

**Q:** Ms. Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke asked when the last time the price increased.

**A:** Mr. Michael LaFrancesca stated that the last school lunch price increase was two years ago.

Ms. Jessica Reilly made a motion, seconded by Mr. Leo Brehm to increase the School Lunch Price for FY21.

A Roll Call Vote was taken to increase the School Lunch Price for FY21

- Jessica Reilly-yes
- Leo Brehm-yes
- Timothy Knight-yes
- Meghan Glenn- yes
- Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke-yes

**The vote was unanimous.**

**Other items since posting - COVID- 19 Re-Entry Committee - presented by Dr. Marsden**

Dr. Marsden informed the committee that the Commissioner has asked districts to hold off developing re-entry plan until guidance is received by the state. The town is going to have a Covid-19 Committee as well. The Town Administrator, Kristine Trierwieller, and Dr. Marsden met and discussed establishing one committee for the school and town since the same people would be serving on both committees. Ms. Trierwieller and Dr. Marsden agreed that one committee with subcommittee offsets would be the most effective. Dr. Marsden still plans to include all stakeholders - parents, high school students, and staff. Dr. Marsden explained he would be working with the principals to recruit volunteers who are actively engaged in their school site council and hopes to have the committee formed soon.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Dale Street School Project- presented by Dr. Jeffrey Marsden**

Dr. Marsden began by stating that the Public Q&A Forum was well attended and there were a lot of great question asked by the community about the project. He informed the committee that the online survey has been emailed directly to all families and is also on the homepage of the district website.

Ms. Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke stated the committee wants to hear from as many community members as possible to be able to appropriately take the next steps. Dr. Marsden stated that the committee is cognizant of what is happening in the community, economy and realizes that things have changed since this project started two years ago. Dr. Marsden stated that it is his responsibility to advocate what is best for students and the community long term but will support the decision of the town.

**Grade Configuration Presentation – presented by Ms. Christine Power**

Ms. Power presented a review of the research on grade configuration which focused on the following:

- Early Childhood versus Elementary
- Grade Levels
- Instruction
- Staffing
- Curriculum

**After Ms. Power's presentation, Ms. Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke opened the meeting up for public comment and question on Grade Configuration.**

**Q:** Renee Howley asked if Ms. Power could speak to the readiness for first-grade students to transition to Wheelock since most of what has been heard about transitions pertain to third, fourth, and fifth-grade students.

**A:** Ms. Power recognizes that transitions are difficult for students throughout the district. Ms. Power stated that the district is meeting regularly on this topic and working together to support all students in the district as they transition through the schools.

**Q:** Renee Howley asked what the potential impacts would be to things like the World Language and the Music program, where the transitions are natural with the current structure, with WL starting in 2nd and instruments starting in 4th grade.

**A:** Ms. Power responded by stating that World Language is not tied to any specific grade level. Students will be supported at the developmental level they are at and curriculum will grow as the students gain proficiency. World Language would be able to adjust easily. The music frameworks also support the curricula for a PreK-K, 1-2, and 3-5 grade configurations. Dr. Marsden added that Jason Bielik, the Music Director, would be able to add a 3rd-grade ensemble in the 3-5-grade configuration that would give students exposure a year earlier than they currently do.

**Q:** Renee Howley reiterated her transition question for grades, K-1. This seems especially important when a child

doesn't attend preschool at Memorial and then will be moving after only one year?

**A:** Ms. Christine Power stated if that were to happen the district would provide extensive professional development to support students who may experience that transition. Dr. Marsden also stated that the configuration of a PreK-K building would allow the district to expand more preschool programs and options for many more preschool students to attend instead of attending private preschool programs.

**C:** Ms. Jessica Reilly stated that the district currently has many transitions that are difficult for students, teachers, and families but those have been managed. Ms. Reilly said that having students stay in one spot for Grades 3-5 would be beneficial for peer relationships and student learning.

**C/Q:** Chris McCue Potts stated that the Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes launched a nationwide P-3 initiative roughly four years ago to lead sustained improvements in early learning outcomes. Massachusetts is one of just a few states considered to be a leader in this initiative, and reps from MA DESE are actively involved in the P-3 effort, as well as a long list of other experts. CEELO has fundamentally aligned grades Pre-school to 3 together for child development reasons and especially social-emotional learning. What teachers have shared is that the rationalization for a grade 3-5 configuration is based more on readiness for standardized testing vs. truly looking at 3rd graders' unique developmental and social-emotional needs, which are SO varied in Grade 3. Prep of teachers and MA curriculum frameworks are aligned to standardized testing too vs. mindset and maturity of children who are still very young. A GR 3-5 config just perpetuates the spiraling DOWN of love of learning. What is your reaction to the CEELO P-3 initiative?

**A:** Dr. Marsden stated that this study is out of Rutgers and that he has a surface level of understanding of the particular study. He pointed out that the district could find many different initiatives for rationalizations on different grade configurations.

**A:** Dr. Marsden stated that he is concerned that the statement made by Chris McCue Potts implies that Medfield teachers are sharing this belief when in fact the many conversations, surveys, and meetings with teachers this has never been shared with him or the distinct leadership team.

**A:** Ms. Christine Power stated that Massachusetts is one of the few states to be considered a leader in this initiative and in preparation for her presentation she consulted with many of her colleagues in the early childhood departments of the universities she is connected with. The overall feedback received was that the district is being mindful in developing an early childhood center, which acknowledges the understanding that learning and teaching are fundamentally different from grades 1-2 versus grades 3-5.

**C:** Chris McCue Potts stated that school transitions from one school to another are safe, and healthy transitions because they are supported by caring adults. The current two-school transitions have helped to build resiliency over the long term. I haven't heard from any of our graduates that the transitions were difficult for them -- in fact, they liked being in a smaller school environment.

**C:** Chris McCue Potts stated 8-9-year-olds are the same age everywhere...it's not unique to Medfield. Teachers in multiple districts have been calling for a stop to pushing children to grow up too fast,

**A:** Dr. Marsden responded by stating that he is proud of the work the teachers have done to address student social and emotional needs at every level. This has been a focus in the district which is fully supported by teachers and parents

**C:** Chris McCue Potts stated that our teachers are awesome -- I never said I wasn't proud of them!

**A:** Dr. Marsden stated that no one was insinuating and said that supporting teachers and school choice is a contradiction because the MTA does not support school choice. Dr. Marsden acknowledged the tension and frustration that occurs with these types of narratives.

**FY21 Budget - presented by Dr. Jeffrey Marsden**

The School Committee attended the Warrant Committee Meeting along with the Board of Selectmen on Monday, May 18, 2020. The meeting reviewed the current issues with the FY21 Budget and the lack of revenue projections from the state. Medfield is planning for a 10% reduction in State Aid for FY21.

Dr. Marsden reviewed the history of this budget season to give the committee a perspective of where the process started and where it is now..

Dr. Marsden shared the following:

- The original approved FY 21 Budget was a 4.02% increase over the FY20 Budget which increased the budget by 1,465,275.
- The Warrant Committee reduced the School Budget by \$915,000 to balance the Town budget which left the school budget with an increase of 1.51% for a total of \$549,00. This is where the budget stands now.
- The next option to be considered is a level-funded budget if the town required the school to have a 1/12 budget which would be the exact funding the district had for FY20 with no increases.
- Based on the additional revenue reduction that was presented at the Warrant Committee Meeting the budget would be reduced by an additional \$300,000 which would bring the reduction to a total to 1.7 million dollars.

Dr. Marsden explained that a 1.7 million dollar reduction to a level service budget would be problematic for the school district and will negatively impact students and staff. Mr. LaFrancesca and Dr. Marsden will be working on different scenarios to reduce staff to share these scenarios with the committee at the June 4 meeting.

Dr. Marsden also stated that it might be beneficial for the School Committee to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Board of Selectmen to ensure that all Chapter 70 money goes to the district.

Ms. Jessica Reilly asked if Medicaid reimbursement that generally goes to the town could go to the school instead. Dr. Marsden responded that the new Medicaid regulations have decreased the amount of reimbursement to districts. The new regulations have caused many districts to stop participating. Dr. Marsden still feels that it is important to still participate because even if the amount of reimbursement is not substantial it still goes to the Town's operating budget.

Dr. Marsden also informed the committee that the Cares Act is set up differently than the American and Reinvestment Act also known as the Recovery Act. The Recovery Act money was paid directly to towns/schools whereas the Cares Act requires towns to apply for reimbursement through a grant process for their Covid-19 expenses instead of direct payment to offset the revenue loss. Dr. Marsden shared his concerns about this process with State Representatives Sean Dooley and Denise Garlick who both agreed that the process does not work for communities and their focus is to support local aid for communities.

Dr. Marsden shared that many other districts in the state received the same information regarding the revenue reductions but it is unfortunate that Medfield was already at a deficit before Covid-19. Dr. Marsden stated that he will continue teasing out what the actual numbers are which is challenging not knowing what school will look like in September. Dr. Marsden said that the school is being disproportionately cut in Medfield and feels strongly that the 75/25 needs to be reassessed to keep the school district intact.

Ms. Jessica Reilly shared her concern that the School Committee has been rushed to make these cuts to meet the timeline of Town Meeting when it is unclear Town Meeting will take place and feels that the level of cuts in the short amount of time is irresponsible because of how it affects students and staff.

Ms. Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke stated that it is difficult to wrap her head around the cuts and how it will affect people but asked Dr. Marsden if the Committee has ever asked the Board of Selectman for a Memorandum of Understanding with the Board of Selectmen.

Dr. Marsden stated that there was a potential one generated with the Board of Selectman but at that time Chris Morrison, the School Committee Chair, felt it wasn't necessary and it was not signed. Dr. Marsden stated that due to the current situation it would be good practice to consider doing so along with reaching out to the Board of

Selectmen for consideration.

Ms. Meghan Glenn asked Dr. Marsden if he felt that the Board of Selectmen would not allocate the Chapter 70 funds unless there was an agreement. Dr. Marsden does not expect that it would happen but feels that it would be smart to have it formalized due to the current budget situation.

Dr. Marsden stated that different scenarios will be presented to the School Committee on June 4, 2020, but acknowledged that the numbers will most likely look different. Mr. Michael LaFrancesca also stated that the scenarios would change once guidance from the state is received. The scenarios will be adjusted as more information and guidance is received.

Ms. Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke opened the meeting to answer the following questions from Bonnie Wren-Burgess, MTA President:

- I'm still wondering why SC did not take stronger action with initial news to reduce by ~\$1 million before Covid-19...the economy was roaring. Now we're facing almost the same again?
- Has SC recognized the \$ unemployment will cost the district if there are RIFs?
- You've just stated you won't be requesting an override...so what kind actions will you take to replace funds?

**A:** Ms. Jessica Reilly explained that the Board of Selectmen passed a financial policy to help us rein in the amount of free cash spending that has been happening because it was impacting the town's ability to borrow money. The policy requires the town to put in a certain amount towards free cash and it's retirement obligations so that there is a cushion for times like now. These requirements are very different then what Medfield had done previously because the town had been receiving free cash via MSBA reimbursements for the High School and Middle School projects.

**A:** Ms. Reilly also explained that the School Committee has been working diligently to reduce the budget cuts and then Covid-19 happened and now are in a different world. Ms. Reilly stated that the School Committee will work as hard as they can to support and advocate for the schools.

**A:** Ms. Reilly and Dr. Marsden stated that the numbers for paying for unemployment insurance have been shared with the town.

**A:** Ms. Reilly stated that the town and committee are looking at every avenue to replace funds but the reality is that revenue is not there and we will need to work within the resources we have.

**A:** Mr. Michael LaFrancesca explained that the town has three revenue buckets, state aid, new growth, and local receipts. All three of these revenue sources are projected to be decreased. Mr. LaFrancesca stated that it is going to come down to what the federal government stimulus package will be to help communities with revenue flow/loss and until that is known it will be hard to predict what other resources will be available.

**Ms. Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke addressed the following comment/question from Christine McCue Potts:**

- No one is saying not to build a new school...we are saying there is NO reason to go with the most expensive school building project. Why is that being pushed?

**A:** Ms. Brooke stated that the goal is to listen to all stakeholders to help guide the School Committee to make a long-term decision for the community. Ms. Brooke stated that the committee is not pushing for a specific but gathering as much information so the community will support the decision.

#### **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

- FY21 Budget
- Dale Street Project
- Challenge Success

- Student Feedback
- Social-Emotional Learning
- Educational Stability Policy Review
- Kindergarten Enrollment
- Covid-19 Re-Entry Committee
- Standard Based Feedback- Christine Power

### **CLOSING REMARKS**

Dr. Marsden was excited to share that he received an email from DESE with guidelines for schools to have live outdoor graduations. Dr. Marsden is happy for our students and is looking at August 1st as the Graduation date. Dr. Marsden reminded the committee that the Rolling Rally is scheduled to take place on May 31, 2020, at 1:00 for the seniors. This will be a great event for the students and the community. Dr. Marsden thanked all of the Town Departments for their support to make this event happen for the Medfield High School Class of 2020.

Ms. Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke announced that the meeting would move into the Executive Session and not return to Open Meeting.

**Executive Session** – To discuss COVID-19 issues related to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body. (Medfield Teachers' Association)

A Roll Call Vote was taken to move into Executive Session

- Jessica Reilly-yes
- Leo Brehm-yes
- Timothy Knight-yes
- Meghan Glenn- yes
- Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke-yes

**The vote was unanimous.**

The Regular Meeting concluded at 7:20 pm.

### **EXHIBITS AND DOCUMENTS**

- Draft of 5/7/2020 Executive Session Minutes
- Draft of 5/14/2020 Executive Session Minutes
- Draft of 4/23/2020 Regular Meeting Minutes
- Draft School Committee Meeting Dates 2020-2021
- End of Year FY19 Financial Audit
- School Lunch Price Increase FY21
- Grade Configuration Presentation

Respectfully submitted,  
Andrea Moores  
Secretary