

Medfield Board of Selectmen with School Committee
Meeting Minutes, March 8, 2022

Place: Hybrid Meeting held at Chenery Hall, Medfield Town House and via Zoom

Call to Order

At 7:02 pm, Selectman Marcucci called the meeting to order.

At 7:02 pm, Chair Jessica Reilly called the School Committee meeting to order.

Selectmen Present: Michael Marcucci; Gustave Murby; Osler Peterson. **Absent:** Town Administrator, Kristine Trierweiler; Town Counsel, Mark Cerel.

School Committee Present: Jessica Reilly; Meghan Glenn; Timothy Knight; Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke.

Absent: Leo Brehm; **Participating Remotely:** None.

Disclosure of video recording.

We want to take a moment of appreciation for our Troops serving around the globe in defense of our country.

New Elementary School Workshop

Approach to Moving Forward with a new Elementary School

School Committee Chair Reilly addressed Selectmen with the intent of the workshop is to have a conversation about our goals, what the Town's priorities might be, what the School's priorities might be, and come to an agreement about how we start to work out some of the logistical issues.

- Upcoming Town Meeting and the School Building Committee By-Law Study
- Decisions to make around whether we apply to the MSBA
- If MSBA funded, how does the Town get the information it needs to assure meaningful feedback?
- Make sure feedback is not intended as a plan to be executed, but have a timeline for goal completion
- Tonight's goal is to be fiscally responsible in coming out with an SOI to submit to the MSBA
- Feedback should not solely be via FaceBook pages but in meetings with meaningful conversations

Tim Knight summarized what he hoped to achieve at this meeting:

- A process to receive funding for an approved school between this meeting and Town Meeting
- What are the roles and responsibilities of the various groups?
- What factors outside of our jurisdiction might contribute to a "no vote"?
- What happens if the School Committee wants an SBC (School Building Committee)?
 - The "straw-man" process
 - What is an SBC?
 - How does it get formulated?
 - What are its goals for the next 6 months?
 - How do we get a design in which the Town feels this has been an inclusive process?
- Meghan Glenn agreed.
 - Ensure any SBC formed has greater input of what the Town seeks and can tolerate in a new building
 - How does a new or renovated building fit into the future of this Town financially and physically?
 - Get the pulse of the Town through an immediate survey
 - It would be unfair to form a group without a solid blueprint for what they are tasked with doing

Ms. Reilly:

- We need data around derived intent so the entire Town, all six sides, can trust the data is neutral

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- Commended the Warrant Committee for their attempt
- School Committee wants a financially responsible school that will not need major renovation
- Need a serviceable school building that is comfortable and conducive to learning for students
 - Not 100 degrees on the second floor in June
 - Quality infrastructure that schools and office space require today

Ms. Reilly said the Town's tax base too small to execute a plan without the buy-in of the Board of Selectmen. This needs to be a Town concept of the Medfield experience, not a School Committee versus Select Board concept. Our students are citizens of the Town.

Ms. Glenn said what happens with the State Hospital directly impacts the schools. If the decision goes one way, the project will attract senior citizens; if it goes the other way, the decision will attract families. We can't operate as separate islands. We need to inform and work together.

Ms. Reilly suggested it is the School Building Committee that is the body that represents both the interests of the School Committee and the Town to make sure that over time, on benchmarks, we are aligned for how to reach our goals.

School Building Committee First, or the Survey First

Survey First

Mr. Peterson suggested a Town survey to find out how the voters feel.

Mr. Murby believes the survey should occur before the SBC is developed so we're not taking a sample of the Townspeople and saying this represents the whole Town. He would consider a Facilitator.

Ms. Reilly agreed that it would be good to know how the Townspeople feel about future overrides or shocks to the system for future building projects. We need a neutral and trusted third-party to survey.

Ms. Glenn suggested putting out a survey immediately to the Townspeople before the SBC is formed so that anyone who volunteers to be on the SBC is fully aware of its direction.

School Building Committee First

Mr. Knight partially agreed. The SBC could use the survey to kick things off. What is the survey goal? Who will design the survey?

Selectman Marcucci said the SBC is the body that would have the most time to devote to this exclusively and be charged with making a recommendation with all the various inputs, public input, public hearings, whether or not a market survey is done.

If you tell the SBC to go build this building, that direction makes it a technical body rather than a deliberate body that's taking input. Have the most robust process. Have the SBC be a cross section of people; take that input and make that recommendation based on that deliberation.

Mr. Marcucci suggested if all the important decisions are made before the School Building Committee is created, those things that people care about are going to be less important to the Committee.

Give the body that is going to make the substantive recommendation as clear a slate as possible. You don't want to say, here are the results of the survey. You must come up with a building that meets these recommendations in the survey. Let's not set that committee up for failure by telling them in advance, here are these five substantive things you should do.

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Selectman Murby agreed not to give the committee marching orders. Can we get strategic level issues dealt with before the building begins?

Concepts

Ms. Reilly said the School Committee would like to know what is the Town's tolerance for spending (new building or renovation) or tolerance for elementary grade levels.

Selectman Marcucci said part of the Education Plan is that the School Committee prioritize from a cost perspective what is most important.

Ms. Reilly said the School Committee can prioritize, but if the Town and the tax base cannot support the higher cost priorities, they will need to consider the lower cost priorities.

Selectman Murby said we are being too linear and mechanical in how to address this building (surveys, trade-offs). Many people care about the history of the Dale Street School, the values in Town. Is there a concept we can come up with that is what people value (financial dimensions, education dimensions, Town dimensions)? Everyone agrees we need a school, but what school, what does it look like?

Workshop Strategy Consensus

Ms. Reilly asked for the strategic features the School Committee and Selectmen agree upon at this point.

Mr. Knight agreed with Mr. Marcucci to set up the ground rules for the SBC at the beginning.

- What are the 5 top priority features for the School Building Committee?
- Is there a concept we can come up with? Concept A, Concept B
- Having a third-party involved in the survey doesn't mean it's neutral
- If SBC is formed in June/July, gather input from the Town

Selectman Murby posed questions for the survey:

- Is the question a strategic question or a building question?

Ms. Glenn suggested the survey should contain answers to questions such as:

- What is the cost of inflation, high interest rate, or propping up Dale Street School for X amount of years to get back in the MSBA?

Ms. Reilly said she is thinking more of strategic and Town fiscal responsibility

- Statistics say 37% percent of the Town will always say no.
- Is that true for our Town?
- Will that continue to be true in 20 years?
- What do we have to do to meet that 2/3 vote?

These are good questions to ask as we're thinking about 20- or 30-year debt.

Selectman Murby said both Boards agreed:

- We want a new school building
- The School Committee are stewards for the Town's education program
- The Board of Selectmen are stewards of the Town and its culture
- We work in parallel
- A survey is not enough
- Townspeople want a public hearing

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Ms. Reilly agreed:

- We need a better school building than we have today
- Selectmen are fiscal managers who have fiscal and long-term responsibility around strategy
- The School Committee puts forth educational planning. Selectmen should have input as well.
- School Committee and Board of Selectmen work like gears in conjunction with each other

Ms. Glenn:

- Public input has been solicited numerous times.
- She observes mistrust, conspiracy, and friction.
- Selectmen have said the way to get at public opinion is at a public forum, but people do not show up for the forum for various reasons. We want to get to the people where they are at.
- Get a neutral party to conduct the survey immediately. Give everyone an opportunity to say something.

Selectman Marcucci:

- A public debate should be in-person in the room with the decision makers.
- Don't let the survey or pre-judgment of the strategic questions become the end all.
- Facilitate the debate with the School Building Committee. When people make substantive inputs, take the input that is good; consider the things that have value.
 - Give the SBC the longest leash possible
 - Have the deliberations
 - Take their recommendation
 - Go to Town Meeting for citizens to vote

We don't need to rehash all the arguments. Have a bigger committee that will go about it differently. Don't write a blank slate. Don't get bogged down fighting the last war. Expect the issues will be the same. From a procedural standpoint, we could do a better job by doing this.

Ms. Reilly: We want a new education facility for our kids that they can learn in for the long-term.

Selectman Murby said people are pushing for a public hearing. What input should the Town take forward in reconceiving a school project that will set us up for better success? Keep the dialogue going.

Timeline

Ms. Reilly asked, what do we know?

- School Building By-Law Study formed is coming up with recommendations

Ms. O'Shea Brooke:

- ATM is May 4
- We will vote or not vote on the School Building By-Law, Warrant Article

Selectman Murby: If we vote yes to the By-Law, do we start with MSBA statement of interest in April? He would like to have some articulation about the project before a selecting a date.

The timeline according to Mr. Knight:

- School Building Committee Meeting By-Law formed
- Annual Town Meeting, May 4
- Appointment of a School Building Committee (SBC)

Selectmen Murby:

- Decision on SOI in April

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- School Committee may want to use SOI as forcing function to get vision/concept of what we would do

MSBA Application or not

Selectman Murby:

- A clean application to the MSBA will mean 5 years waiting for an answer
- That has significant implication for what we do with the Dale Street School
- Need a picture of planning concepts
- Do we take on a project of our own, or do we suggest pursuing MSBA application simultaneously?

Ms. Reilly:

- It would be fiscally irresponsible for the School Committee to say we won't apply for State funding because we don't know whether or not we will get funding when there is no risk. Leave options open.
- If we were to get on MSBA's list and they understand our issues, things could go faster.
- We could use local contractors to complete a school renovation.
- MSBA priorities are set around buildings in the worst shape. If we don't apply, we lose ability to work within the options of a new application to MSBA which could mean a project closer to completion.
- Would we be able to get a school completed on our own with different projects, different populations if we knew the Town was committed to this site or that site? It's a different animal this time.

Ms. O'Shea Brooke:

- See what kind of funding we can get; at the same time, do an analysis of the cost benefits.

MSBA Timeline and Concerns

Ms. O'Shea Brooke:

- April application to MSBA
- December answer

If we get MSBA funding, but they go in a different direction, we have the option to decline the offer.

Selectman Murby:

- Statement of Interest (SOI)
- If Town Meeting votes to form School Building Committee in June:
 - o They do preliminary work pending acceptance back into MSBA program.
 - o If we don't know if we're in or not in December, what is the plan?

Selectman Marcucci:

- December - You should get to the basic concept (renovation or new school)
- Get advice from professionals
 - o Feasibility study
 - o Does our concept work better under MSBA or not?
 - o They will recommend what is better.

They're working on a school the Town will support. We'll have some preliminary money at Town Meeting to fund it. You're not going to be working on school design, but whether it is a renovation or a new school.

The School Building Committee will present:

- This is best for the Town based on:
 - o Information from School Committee

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- o Education goals
- o Public input from the survey
- o Meetings

Is this something we think is workable within the restrictions of MSBA?

How long do you think it would take in the opinion of our professional assisters?

It may be you present to the School Building Committee:

- Our recommendation if you want to reuse the Dale St School building
- If they say no, you're still prepared to move forward

Selectman Murby asked what happens in December if we don't get accepted into MSBA?

Ms. Reilly:

- We have to build a new school
- Continue the conversations with a fully supportive SBC
- Make sure this education facility is supported by entire Town
- Plan with SBC, School Committee and Select Board as managers of the Town

Mr. Murby:

- Our plan must be a school the State will subsidize with MSBA
- Otherwise, it has to be a school we can afford to build and we have to fund it

Mr. Marcucci: Move ahead with the concept without the State funding.

Mr. Peterson: We know we are going to have maintenance with Dale Street School.

Ms. Reilly wrapped up:

- By April, do we feel we can file SOI to MSBA?
- Public hearing with School Committee and Select Board dependent on calendar of Public Safety Bldg.
- Survey

Selectman Peterson suggested bringing in the Consensus Building Institute to get to a decision-making process. They have a simple system for getting input of the Townspeople.

MOTION: Ms. O'Shea Brooke motioned to adjourn the School Committee meeting at 9:04 pm.
Seconded by Ms. Glenn.

Vote: Ms. Reilly, aye; Ms. Glenn, aye; Mr. Knight, aye; Ms. O'Shea Brooke, aye. All in favor.
None opposed.

The next meeting of the School Committee will be Thursday, March 10, 2022.

MOTION: Mr. Murby motioned to adjourn the Board of Selectmen meeting at 9:05 pm.
Seconded by Mr. Peterson.

Vote: Mr. Marcucci, aye; Mr. Murby, aye; Mr. Peterson, aye. All in favor. None opposed.

Respectfully submitted,

Dale Michaud
Recording Clerk

Approved by School Committee: May 19, 2022