

**HAMPDEN-WILBRAHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
MIDDLE SCHOOL TASK FORCE
MEETING MINUTES – OPEN SESSION**

Thursday, October 30, 2014 – 7:00 p.m. – Thornton W. Burgess Middle School - Hampden

Members Present: Susan Bunnell, Allison Digrande, Marc Ducey, Nick Fyntrilakis, Karen Grycel, Marty McQuade, Lisa Morace, Tricia Murphy, Tod O'Brien, George Semanie, and Sandra Sheehan.

Members Absent: John D. Flynn and Peter Salerno.

Ex officio Members Present: Ed Cenedella, Courtney Derosia, Marty O'Shea, Eric Panasci, Noel Pixley, and Beth Regulbuto.

Ex officio Members Absent: Tim Connor and Peter Dufresne.

Others Present: Chris Goudreau, *The Reminder*; Suzanne McLaughlin, *The Republican*; and Tyler Witkop, *The Wilbraham-Hampden Times*.

During the course of the meeting the following exhibits were distributed and reviewed with the members of the HWRSD Middle School Task Force members:

- Exhibit 1: Memorandum from Marty O'Shea, HWRSD Superintendent of Schools, to the HWRSD School Committee re: Middle School Planning dated September 23, 2014.
- Exhibit 2: Building Footprint of Thornton W. Burgess Middle School

1. Call to Order

Marc Ducey called the HWRSD Middle School Task Force Meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. in the Cafeteria of Thornton W. Burgess Middle School in Hampden recognizing that there was a quorum of at least 7 voting members present. Note: There were 11 voting members present at 7:04 p.m.

2. Introductions

Marc Ducey stated that he appreciated the involvement of those present and noted that a great number of residents applied to take part on the HWRSD Middle School Task Force (MSTF), which is a sub-committee reporting to the HWRSD School Committee. He requested that each member of the Task Force introduce themselves.

The MSTF consists of the following 13 voting members:

- 4 parent/community representatives from Hampden: Nick Fyntrilakis, Marty McQuade, George Semanie, and Sandra Sheehan.
- 4 parent/community representatives from Wilbraham: Allison Digrande, Karen Grycel, Tricia Murphy, and Tod O'Brien.
- Hampden Board of Selectmen representative: John D. Flynn
- Wilbraham Board of Selectmen representative: Susan Bunnell
- 3 HWRSD School Committee representatives: Marc Ducey, Lisa Morace, and Peter Salerno.

The MSTF consists of the following 8 ex officio/non-voting members:

- HWRSD Superintendent: Marty O'Shea
- HWRSD Assistant Superintendent for Business: Beth Regulbuto
- HWRSD Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum: Tim Connor
- HWRSD Director of Facilities and Operations: Ed Cenedella
- Principal Thornton W. Burgess Middle School: Peter Dufresne
- Principal Wilbraham Middle School: Noel Pixley
- Thornton W. Burgess Middle School Teacher representative: Eric Panasci
- Wilbraham Middle School Teacher representative: Courtney Derosia

Marty O'Shea thanked those in attendance for their willingness to serve. He distributed the agenda and Exhibit 1: Memorandum from Marty O'Shea, HWRSD Superintendent of Schools, to the HWRSD School Committee re: Middle School Planning dated September 23, 2014. Mr. O'Shea reported that in an effort to make documents associated with the MSTF accessible, he sent each MSTF member a link that will enable them to share a folder containing important MSTF foundation documents. He asked for a show of hands to see if members of the task force were able to access the materials.

3. Review Massachusetts Open Meeting Laws

Marc Ducey stated that the MSTF has to abide by Massachusetts Open Meeting Laws. He said that whenever the Task Force meets we must have a minimum of seven voting members present and that everything is done in public. He noted that there may be some occasions where we could meet in private. He stated that everything that a Task Force member emails to the group is public matter. He discouraged side discussions and stated that chain discussions become an open meeting. He stated that links to the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law will be emailed to the Task Force members. He said that the MSTF could get press coverage and suggested that if members want to have discussions with the public that is fine, but he suggested that the Chair should be the spokesperson for the Task Force as a whole to keep the message consistent.

4. Purpose and Scope of MSTF

Marc Ducey requested that the MSTF elect a Chair and a Vice Chair who would be responsible for setting the meeting schedule and moderating the meetings.

Lisa Morace made a motion to nominate Marc Ducey as Chair. Marty McQuade seconded the motion. Vote: unanimous.

Susan Bunnell made a motion to nominate Lisa Morace as Vice Chair. Allison Digrande seconded the motion. Vote: unanimous.

Marc Ducey reported that the District had a study on enrollment and facilities done by NESDEC 2 ½ to 3 years ago. The study also forecasted what the birth numbers were, and was done in conjunction with the closing of Memorial School. He noted that the overriding theme of the report was that the decline in enrollment will continue but then will even out, and at some point houses will begin selling.

Marty O'Shea stated that the document (NESDEC 2013-2014 Enrollment Projections) was dated January 13, 2014, and it looks at wider population trends. He said that the document is very rich with information about the capacities of the schools and encouraged the members of the MSTF to spend some time reviewing the document, which is one of the items in the folder in the link that he emailed to all members of the Task Force.

Marc Ducey reported that the MSTF will look at the buildings (TWB and WMS), and try to understand the team approach, adding that the ultimate goal is to make a recommendation to the HWRSD School Committee. Mr. Ducey stated that the HWRSD School Committee wants to: 1) Set up a model that is better for the students; and 2) make it more cost effective. He said that it is a lofty task, but there are a lot of opportunities for improvement.

At this point, Marc Ducey read aloud the scope of the MSTF (as written on page 3 of Exhibit 1: Memorandum from Marty O'Shea, HWRSD Superintendent of Schools, to the HWRSD School Committee re: Middle School Planning dated September 23, 2014).

- A thorough assessment of the District's current middle school educational program and services.
- A review of the HWRSD District Improvement Plan as it pertains to Thornton W. Burgess (TWB) and Wilbraham Middle School (WMS).
- A review of TWB and WMS School Improvement Plans.
- An assessment of staffing patterns, needs and deficiencies.
- A thorough review of past, present and future enrollment at the District and middle school levels.
- An assessment of the WMS and TWB sites and physical plants in terms of planned and current operating capacity, technological infrastructure, major operating systems, health and safety infrastructure, space usage, etc.
- A set of actionable recommendations to be issued to the HWRSD School Committee in the following areas: facility use, capital needs, educational program, staffing, and instructional equipment.

Mr. Ducey noted that the Committee will be limited, and it may recommend that we bring in some professionals.

Tod O'Brien, Wilbraham resident, questioned the timeline for the MSTF.

Marc Ducey stated that he thinks that we can get a sense of some direction we think may make sense by January 1, 2015, and give the HWRSD School Committee some direction. He noted that the MSTF may find that it makes sense to bring in some architects/engineers/professionals.

Mr. Ducey reported that the High School is owned by the Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District, but TWB is owned by the Town of Hampden and WMS is owned by the Town of Wilbraham and all capital improvements/repairs are the responsibilities of the separate towns. He questioned if we choose to go down a path of combining students, how receptive would the towns be to fill one building to capacity with students from another town. He also mentioned regionalization of the middle school, and stated that there are a whole lot of issues and nuances.

Marty O'Shea stated that there are 86 regional school districts in Massachusetts, and there is an association of regional schools (MARS – Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools) that has consulting resources.

Mr. O'Shea stated that HWRSD has significant demographic issues. He said that we will need to define the ideal, and it is very important that each member of the MSTF get up to a baseline understanding of what we have in terms of facilities. He noted that it will be messy at first, but then we can see what starts to take shape.

Marc Ducey stated that there will be no impact on the 2015-2016 school year.

It was reported that if we choose to do things that will impact the Regional School District Agreement, we must get approval from the two Towns and that town meetings take place in April and May.

5. Review of TWB Programs

Marty O'Shea distributed Exhibit 2: Building Footprint of Thornton W. Burgess Middle School, and he asked Noel Pixley to orientate the MSTF members on the building and programs.

Noel Pixley reported that TWB was built in 1967 as an intermediate grades 4-8 school. He pointed out that the classrooms in section E (on the building footprint) were larger elementary classrooms and contained sinks and water fountains. He noted that section A, the academic portion of the building with upper grades, had smaller classrooms and no water. He noted that section S, at the far end of the building, contained specials/related arts classrooms. Mr. Pixley stated that as time has changed, grades have changed. The building has housed grades 4-8 and grades 5-8.

Mr. Pixley pointed out the current use of the facility to include: E8, E7, E6: Grade 5 classrooms; E5, E4: Tech classrooms; A7, A6, A5, A4: Grade 8 classrooms; C3: closet (built there for expansion purposes); A3: assisted technology office (helps with designing equipment for students with learning needs); A1, A2: Mr. Burke's program (Special Education class for Hampden and Wilbraham students with intensive behavioral needs); A5: Spanish; E11: computer lab; A10: teachers' lounge; E9, E10: Special Education classes; A8, A9: Science classrooms; S2: FAR program (District-wide classroom for students with intensive special needs) and pointed out the Grade 6 classrooms.

Marty O'Shea requested that Ed Cenedella update the MSTF members on recent improvements to TWB.

Marc Ducey noted that currently TWB contains Grades 5-8 (266 students) and WMS contains Grades 6-8 (537 students).

Marty O'Shea pointed out the spaces on the TWB footprint that served as District functions (A1, A2, A3, S2, office space).

Sandra Sheehan, Hampden resident, asked what the ideal class size was.

Marty O'Shea stated that an average core class size of 23 students is reasonable, adding that we have classes that are smaller than that and larger than that.

Nick Fyntrilakis, Hampden resident, asked whether WMS had District functions as well.

Marty O'Shea responded that there was one District psychologist office, but no district-wide classrooms at WMS.

Noel Pixley stated that there is one District program (Mrs. Cebula's class) at WMS as well as a District psychologist.

6. Tour of TWB Facility

At 7:47 p.m. the MSTF members took a tour of the Thornton W. Burgess Middle School led by former TWB and current WMS Principal Noel Pixley. During the tour Ed Cenedella pointed out the high-efficiency boiler and water heater installed in 2004. At 8:22 p.m. the tour concluded and the MSTF continued with their discussions.

Ed Cenedella pointed out the size of the TWB building (76,833 square feet) and the size of the property (23 acres). He stated that the size of the WMS property is 63 acres.

A discussion on the team teaching approach took place. Marty O'Shea reported that the middle school model consists of social studies, math, English, and science teachers who work as a team with the same group of students. One advantage of the team teaching approach is that teams of teachers share the planning of the curriculum.

Noel Pixley stated that ideally 100 kids per team works best. He said that one of the challenges is that the grade level is the team at TWB; at WMS there are two teams per grade level.

Marty O'Shea stated that at a future meeting we can show the models of the teams at TWB and WMS.

Marc Ducey stated that an Excel document will be distributed with everyone's contact information.

7. Adjournment

Lisa Morace made a motion to adjourn the October 30, 2014, HWRSD Middle School Task Force Meeting. Susan Bunnell seconded the motion. Vote: Unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Next Meeting: Thursday, November 13, 2014, 7:00 p.m., Wilbraham Middle School