

Special Meeting Minutes
Fairfield BoE, April 24, 2018, 6:00 PM

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Call to order of the Special Meeting of the Board of Education and Roll Call

Chairman Philip Dwyer called the Special meeting to order at 6:00 PM. Present were members Jennifer Leeper, Jessica Gerber, Philip Dwyer, Jennifer Jacobsen, Nick Aysseh, Jennifer Maxon-Kennelly, Jeff Peterson, Trisha Pytko and Christine Vitale. Others present were Superintendent Dr. Toni Jones, Mr. Cullen, and 7 members of the public and staff.

Mr. Dwyer said the meeting discussion would be limited to the Mill Hill Educational Specifications.

Dr. Jones referenced the Holland Hill and Mill Hill classroom layouts that she had forwarded and provided a memo confirming that language added to the resolution by the BOF may move forward to the RTM; what is important is that Ed Spec and resolution language match when the district submits the official plan for review, prior to June 2019. Dr. Jones recommended that the Ed Specs remain as is with 504 capacity.

Mr. Peterson expressed reservations about the short timeframe for completion of the site survey. Mr. Cullen assured the Board that there is still enough time to complete the work.

Mr. Aysseh understood that the BoF requested options. His understanding, however, from the BOS is that they are requesting a 'plan of action'. The issue of redistricting was mentioned, and he wondered how the BOE planned to respond to the list of BoS questions. He questioned whether the BoE should approach facility planning separate from the issue of racial imbalance – and if racial imbalance remains an issue, then FPS should redistrict with existing space. Attempting to address both overcrowding and racial imbalance may be causing undue confusion.

Mrs. Gerber handed out her charts on Mill Hill with surrounding school capacity information, as well as the Facilities Planning Principles adopted by the Board in 2010 – the charts show that if Mill Hill was renovated to a 378, it would be at 102% capacity by 2025-2026.

Mr. Dwyer felt that BoS and BoF have been conflating the two issues of overcrowding and racial imbalance. The Board agreed that redistricting at this time does not make sense, and the Mill Hill Ed Spec should remain a 504. A redistricting plan has never before been required for approval of a building project. Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said the good news is that no one is questioning the renovation, however, this is the first time that a school expansion will address the needs of the district and not a specific school. Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly handed out a chart with 378, 441 and 504 enrollments for Mill Hill – and the effect those numbers would have on surrounding schools (Dwight, Riverfield and Sherman).

Mrs. Jacobsen said the Board has done its due diligence and already approved a 504 Ed Spec. She handed out a chart showing Mill Hill's utilization rates. What is the Town's plan for school utilization with regards to home construction? The Town could not provide the detailed information she was looking for within the last three years and in the future – how many homes will be built/were built – with how many bedrooms in each and in which school district? How is that responsible Town Planning, and why does this fall entirely on the Board of Education? All of the Boards should meet and discuss this topic and plan together.

The Board again agreed on keeping 504 in the Ed Spec for Mill Hill – based on enrollment projections alone, but questioned how it should respond the BoS. Mrs. Vitale felt the Board should recommend that the BoS approve the language and move the project forward. Mr. Aysseh was concerned about a perpetual delay; the BoS drew a line in the sand by requiring a plan for a 504 enrollment. After discussion, the Board concluded that it did not want to forward a redistricting plan from Milone and MacBroom; any plan at this time could not be implemented until Mill Hill was complete. The Milone and MacBroom projections did not account for all home builds or the possibility of implementation of universal PK – the projections will change.

The Board agreed that it would not approve a 378 capacity for Mill Hill. Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly wanted to clarify that the Board is not making any recommendations on approving the BoF language. Mr. Dwyer countered by saying the simplest approach is to request the BoS to pass the resolutions and forward to the RTM; this will allow the Building Committee to do its work.

Mrs. Gerber asked Mr. Cullen if all of the questions asked by the BoS have been answered and hoped that the BoS would get the answers as soon as possible. Mr. Dwyer said that the staff is working on a document that will be sent to the BoS soon. Mr. Dwyer said that the next BoS meeting will take place on May 3, but he had no commitment as to whether the Mill Hill Project would be a voting item. Mrs. Jacobsen urged the BoS to add this item to its meeting.

Mrs. Gerber motioned, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly seconded, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion Passed: 9-0

Meeting Adjourned 7:06 PM

*Respectfully submitted by
Jessica Gerber
Secretary, Fairfield Board of Education*