



## S u p e r i n t e n d e n t M e m o r a n d u m

**To:** Board of Selectmen  
**From:** Dr. Toni Jones, Superintendent  
**Date:** April 27, 2018  
**Re:** Responses to April 18, 2018 BoS Questions on Mill Hill Project

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At the April 18, 2018 Board of Selectmen Meeting, clarifying questions were raised regarding the Mill Hill Renovation and Addition Project. Answers are provided below. In addition, the Board of Education held a Special Meeting on April 24<sup>th</sup> to further discuss the Mill Hill project and remains committed to the educational value and the long-term benefit of a 24 classroom (504) elementary school model that will serve the needs of the west side of town. The Building Committee's work is essential to determine whether financial considerations require a revision of the Educational Specifications before the spring of 2019.

1. There is some question whether the BOE Ed Spec must match the bonding resolution before advancing to town bodies for approval.

FPS has consulted with Tom Reault from the CT Dept. of Administrative Services, Office of School Construction Grants and Review (OSCG&R) concerning the Mill Hill Educational Specifications and the resolution language as passed by the Board of Finance on April 3, 2018. Tom Reault confirmed that the additional language added to the resolution by the Board of Finance is not an issue for the department, as this part of the process involves planning.

The Ed Spec as a 504 and the Bonding Resolution as changed by the Board of Finance are fine to move the project forward in regards to planning funds. Once planning information is gained from the process, the Ed Spec and final funding resolution will have exactly the same number of classrooms requested and capacity.

2. Why would a 378, 441 or 504 work, or conversely, not work?

Mill Hill is planned to have a higher enrollment than 378 during the ten-year projection; the BOE feels planning to this number would be irresponsible. (See attachments, showing a 76% capacity in 2026-2027, with Mill Hill built to 504.)

In addition, the following year 2027-2028, the three western quadrant schools (Riverfield, Dwight, and Sherman) are expected to be at 92%, 93%, and 104%. There is no margin for additional enrollment; the schools are over the historic 90% planning capacity required to support small class sizes. Research shows that small class size has a positive impact on student achievement.

Utilization rates don't include future developments within the next 10 years; these numbers are expected to increase in the downtown, beach and Southport areas.

3. Does the BOE have a preference to one of the 3 schemes (378, 441 or 504)?

The Educational Specification from the BoE was voted on and approved at 504 students. Please see attachments showing the utilization rates (over time for the four schools), which are needed to balance the west side of the district: Sherman, Riverfield, Mill Hill, and Dwight. This question was further discussed at the April 24<sup>th</sup> meeting and the BOE remains convinced that the west side of town will be best served by a 24 classroom (504) elementary school model now and in the future. The BOE made no changes to the Ed Specs as approved and remain willing to have the Building Committee determine the realistic cost of this project. Should financial considerations force a review, the capacity issue will be readdressed in spring 2019.

4. Is Mill Hill an appropriate location for a large renovation and addition?

Yes. There are limited options on that side of town for the four buildings, which share the west quadrant.

- Riverfield is already a 504, and making that building any larger would be moving away from the educational quality of a smaller school.
- Dwight would pose significant busing challenges and expense to migrate students from the lower part of the district through the Greenfield Hill area.
- Sherman has little capacity for expansion due to FEMA and land constraints.

The financial feasibility of Mill Hill's expansions will not be determined until after the Project Team professionals hired by a Building Committee can assess the site.

5. Please provide the handout from MM used at the BOF meeting, which includes material from the Feb 2016 packet.

MM BOF Presentation 4/3/2018

6. What is the approved Plan for Mill Hill?

The Board of Education has planned for a school that will accommodate 504 students. By 2027, the four schools that accommodate families on the west side of town are projected to be full (see attachment).

2027-2028

Riverfield	92%	23 sections (plus 1 CLC)
Dwight	93%	18 sections (plus 1 CLC)
Sherman	104%	24 sections

2026-2027

Mill Hill	504	76% (allows some space to move students)
Mill Hill	441	87% (allows no room to move students to Mill Hill, or take additional students from Southport developments)
Mill Hill	378	101% (allows no room to move students to Mill Hill, or take additional students from Southport developments)

7. What is the plan for all of the schools?

The plan for Mill Hill is to build the school to 24 classrooms (504 students). For previous school renovation projects that required re-districting, the BOE generated the redistricting plan in the year prior to construction completion. This ensured that redistricting options were examined using updated enrollment data and projections for students per household by grade.

If one area of town is growing faster than another, a districting model may shift. The district will work with the planning and zoning staff at the town to obtain future development plans, the number of existing single-family homes, the number of permits for new single-family homes, multi-unit developments and planned housing developments (that are known). This information together with updated enrollment information and projections can keep the district informed with the most current data.

8. Is there an approved plan from Milone and MacBroom?

There is a planning mechanism derived from the Feb 2016 MM Report; Scenario E/F (page 24). This is how the waterfall was determined and planning has occurred. As noted previously, additional factors, such as town development and demographics, must be re-examined once Mill Hill construction is complete.

9. What is the plan for Redistricting?

The district will then look at current students per household by grade before determining which housing clusters have the potential for movement to reduce or increase elementary, middle, or high school enrollment at particular sites.

The district will assess new housing and buildings, which may have impacts on enrollment for particular zoned areas. For instance, the Trademark building located at 665 Commerce Drive, which did not exist two years ago, now has an additional 5 families living there and enrolled in the McKinley district, which is one of our schools running at capacity. There are at least two more future known developments zoned for that same elementary school which could shift enrollment in the next two years.

10. How many additional school renovations and additions are planned?

Mill Hill has been planned in the waterfall schedule for many years. At this time, there are no other schools planned in the waterfall to be 504 schools. School construction is largely dependent upon migration of families to Fairfield, children born to families in Fairfield, and town-wide economic development, which affects additional housing unit inventory.

11. When will the BOE address Redistricting?

The BoE must share community and Board discussion about its planning efforts, including redistricting elementary schools with the State Board of Education by June of 2019. (The state Board of Education acknowledged we cannot re-district until Mill Hill and Holland Hill are finished as 504 schools.) While we must show a commitment to redistricting if efforts to solve racial imbalance fail, FPS is not required to produce a re-districting plan in June 2019.

12. If the Mill Hill site does not work, what is Plan B?

The BoE will take the same approach as it does for all capacity issues and base solutions on available space. The Building Committee Project Team professionals will use the planning time

to survey the land and the site to expose any expansion issues prior to June 2019. This will allow FPS to fully prepare the project fund request.

13. Will the Board of Education have a planning meeting to open up discussion in public for all of these questions?

The BoE has met on numerous occasions to discuss all aspects of the Mill Hill project. The BoE met again in a special meeting to discuss the Mill Hill Ed Spec on April 24, 2018.

A sample of recent presentations and meeting information is provided below:

Milone & MacBroom presentation, 2/16/16

Milone & MacBroom presentation 10/24/17

FairTV recording, starting at 7:45

Milone & MacBroom Enrollment Projections, November 2017

Initial Mill Hill Discussion, BoE 12/12/17, FairTV recording, starting at 1:57:50

BoE Minutes, 12/12/17

Mill Hill funding request vote, BoE 1/9/18, FairTV recording; starting 56:30

BoE Minutes 1/9/18

***"The Board had significant discussion on the Mill Hill Project including whether it would be built to a 504 enrollment. Mrs. Gerber questioned whether the size of the project would affect the preliminary funding. Several members asked about the ed specs approval process and the formation of a building committee. Mr. Cullen said the initial funding would not be affected whether the project was built to a 504 or not."***

Milone & MacBroom presentation, BoE, 2/13/18, FairTV recording; starting at 10:09

14. What is Pocket Redistricting?

School districts use pocket redistricting to solve a problem in one particular area of a district by moving a portion of students (a pocket) to release overcrowding at one school site. This is in contrast to a comprehensive redistricting that moves students from all or most schools to balance the whole district. For example, if we moved 80 students out of Sherman to reduce

enrollment there and did not move students from any other schools it would be a pocket of Sherman families impacted by the move.

15. What is the plan for Racial Imbalance?

The Racial Imbalance Plan is in effect through 2019. There are many steps that the district is working through now up until June of 2019 when we report to the Connecticut State Board of Education. Those steps include: surveying the community, meeting with PTA's and relevant groups, discussing intra-district magnet schools, possible redistricting scenarios, and grade re-configuration. If those efforts do not resolve the racial imbalance question, then FPS will commit to implementing a re-districting plan upon the completion of Mill Hill. In June 2019 we will be asked to report on the results of our community discussion, but implementation will not be required until Mill Hill's construction is complete.

16. Please provide the Milone and MacBroom (MM) Report from February 2016.

After review, the report was provided to the BoS on February 22<sup>nd</sup> in an e-mail from the BoE Secretary: Fairfield BOE Presentation 2/16/16

17. Can we set up a tour of Mill Hill for the BoS?

Yes. The tour is being scheduled for early May.

#### ATTACHMENTS

1. *Mill Hill and West Quadrant Building Utilization, Facilities Planning Principles*
2. *Mill Hill and West Quadrant Building Utilization - Chart*

## Mill Hill Building Utilization

The Mill Hill building utilization percentage increases rapidly when section numbers are reduced, as seen below.

504 school with 24 sections; 441 school with 21 sections; 378 school with 18 sections

**2020-21** 361 enrollment projected, 18 sections projected

504 school 72%

441 school 82%

378 school 96%

**2021-22** 367 enrollment projected; 18 sections projected (close to needing 19)

504 school 73%

441 school 83%

378 school 97%

**2022-23** 366 enrollment projected; 19 sections projected (close to needing 20)

504 school 73%

441 school 83%

378 school 97%

**2023-24** 368 enrollment projected; 19 sections projected

504 school 73%

441 school 83%

378 school 97%

**2024-25** 374 enrollment projected; 18 sections projected

504 school 74%

441 school 85%

378 school 99%

**2025-26** 384 enrollment projected; 18 sections projected

504 school 76%

441 school 87%

378 school 102%

**2026-27** 382 enrollment projected; 18 sections projected

504 school 76%

441 school 87%

378 school 101%

**2027-28** 382 enrollment projected; 18 sections projected (close to needing 19)

504 school 76%

441 school 87%

378 schools 101%

# West Quadrant Projected Elementary School Building Utilizations

## Enrollment Projections

- Riverfield (504 capacity, 24 general ed classrooms),
- Dwight (378 capacity, 18 general ed classrooms),
- Sherman (462 capacity, 22 general ed classrooms including 6 classroom annex)

*By 2027-2028, all 3 schools are over the highest recommended threshold of 90% utilization.*

### 2020-21

Riverfield – 426, 85%, 20 sections (plus 1 CLC-S)

Dwight – 326, 86%, 16 sections (plus 1 CLC)

Sherman – 486, 105%, 23 sections \*\*

### 2021-22

Riverfield – 441, 88%, 22 sections (plus 1 CLC-S)

Dwight – 311, 82%, 15 sections (plus 1 CLC)

Sherman – 473, 102%, 23 sections \*\*

### 2022-23

Riverfield – 455, 90%, 21 sections (plus 1 CLC-S)

Dwight – 309, 82%, 14 sections (plus 1 CLC)

Sherman – 453, 98%, 22 sections

### 2023-24

Riverfield – 455, 90%, 22 sections (plus 1 CLC-S)

Dwight – 321, 85%, 16 sections (plus 1 CLC)

Sherman – 465, 101%, 24 sections \*\*

### 2024-25

Riverfield – 461, 91%, 23 sections (plus 1 CLC-S)

Dwight – 311, 82%, 17 sections (plus 1 CLC)

Sherman – 469, 102%, 24 sections \*\*

### 2025-26

Riverfield – 461, 91%, 23 sections (plus 1 CLC-S)

Dwight – 312, 83%, 17 sections (plus 1 CLC)

Sherman – 465, 101%, 23 sections \*\*

### 2026-27

Riverfield – 469, 93%, 24 sections (plus 1 CLC-S) \*\*

Dwight – 328, 87%, 17 sections (plus 1 CLC)

Sherman – 471, 102%, 23 sections \*\*

### 2027-28

Riverfield – 462, **92%**, 23 sections (plus 1 CLC-S)

Dwight – 351, **93%**, 18 sections (plus 1 CLC) \*\*

Sherman – 482, **104%**, 24 sections \*\*



## Facilities Planning Principles – Adopted by the BoE on 6/22/10

- 1) **Core Facilities** – *Additional classrooms shall not be added without addressing the core facilities that they will impact.* With any new classroom additions at our schools, we must equally incorporate relative additional space to expand core facilities when necessary. More children may bring more space needs in the cafeteria, library, gymnasium, bathrooms and hallways. **(All three plans – 504, 441, 378 -- expand APR/cafeteria and kitchen)**
- 2) **Class Size** – *Facilities planning, whenever possible, shall have a goal of providing adequate space to enable educational guidelines to be met.* Class size should not be viewed as a variable designed to simplify facilities and budgetary problems. Class size should not be used as a means to fit students into the limited space we have, wherever we may be. Instead we should endeavor to provide appropriate facilities that meet educational specifications throughout the district. **(Milone & MacBroom 2017 enrollment projections and FPS class size guidelines of 23 students K-2 and 25 students 3-5 have number of class sections at Mill Hill ranging between 18-19 sections. 504 plan will provide 24 general ed classrooms, 441 plan will provide 21 general ed classrooms, 378 plan will provide 18 general ed classrooms.)**
- 3) **Specialized Curriculum** – *We must provide, whenever possible, appropriate and dedicated space for specialized curriculum needs such as special education, art, music and technology.* We should endeavor to provide appropriate and dedicated spaces for specialized curriculum needs, as specified in the Educational Specifications that are generated for our elementary schools. In particular, space must be provided for art, music, technology and special education. These critical components of our curriculum cannot be effectively delivered “on a cart,” in a closet, or in similar inappropriate spaces. **(All three plans – 504, 441 and 378 -- add computer room, instrumental music room, Gifted Room, SPED room, OT/PT room, ELT room, ELL room, MRT room, Spanish, Social worker)**
- 4) **Enrollment Projections** – *A long term plan should account for and accommodate peak enrollment projections.* When realistic and feasible we should not ignore the new dynamics that play a role in school population like in-migration, zoning density, regional economy, or being named “The Best Town in Connecticut” by CT Magazine. We should endeavor, whenever possible, to use projected enrollment figures that account for these factors, and that compensate for the fact that recent projections have at times underestimated actual enrollment, when determining space needs.
- 5) **Stability** – *We should strive to create district plans that provide stability for the district’s students.* We should endeavor to plan for stability in our educational system. Whenever possible, redistricting should not be revisited every 3-5 years, especially not without a major event such as a school opening or closing.
- 6) **Headroom** – *To ensure stability we should leave headroom in each school – the maximum number we should PLAN to is 90%/85% of capacity.* We should ensure that headroom is built into our calculations for school planning. Because enrollment projections are not an exact science district planning must account for the statistical

variance between projected and actual enrollments. As such, whenever possible, schools should be operated at a utilization level that accommodates year-to-year fluctuations in enrollment without resorting to inappropriate measures such as redistricting, or buying and installing portable classrooms. For elementary schools, this utilization level is 90%, for middle and high schools, this utilization level is 85%. **(504 school will have Mill Hill (without redistricting) at 72-76% capacity. 441 school will have Mill Hill (without redistricting) at 82-87% capacity. 378 school will have Mill Hill (without redistricting) at 96-101% capacity)**

- 7) **Commitment to Adding Space Where Students Are Located** – *At the elementary school level we must have a commitment of maintaining the concept of “neighborhood schools” and/or allowing students to attend the school which is reasonably close to the students’ homes whenever educationally feasible and possible. We should not be busing students past or away from their neighborhood school or a school which is reasonably close to their home because there is an open seat in another school located in a different part of town. Therefore, the planning process must evaluate where the population centers are and build or expand in those areas.*
- 8) **Phase out Temporary Solutions (Portables)** – *Eliminate the Town’s reliance on portable classrooms as a permanent substitute for brick and mortar classrooms. Whenever possible phase out the temporary solutions by eliminating the Town’s reliance on temporary portable classrooms – wood, steel or otherwise – as a permanent substitute for brick and mortar classrooms. **(All three plans – 504, 441, 378 -- eliminate five portables at Mill Hill – one 18 years old, one 17 years old, three 10 years old)***

	2020-2021 projected enrollment			2021-22 projected enrollment			2022-23 projected enrollment			2023-24 projected enrollment			2024-25 projected enrollment			2025-26 projected enrollment			2026-2027 projected			2027-2028 proj		
	Utilization rate	Sections needed	Utilization rate	Sections needed	Utilization rate	Sections needed	Utilization rate	Sections needed	Utilization rate	Sections needed	Utilization rate	Sections needed	Utilization rate	Sections needed	Utilization rate	Sections needed	Utilization rate	Sections needed	Utilization rate	Sections needed	Utilization rate	Sections needed		
Dwight-378 18 gen. ed rooms 1 - CLC **	326	86	16	311	82	15	309	82	14	321	85	16	311	82	17	312	83	17	328	87	17	351	93	18
Riverfield - 504 24 gen ed rooms 1 - CLC-S **	426	85	20	441	88	22	455	90	21	455	90	22	461	91	23	461	91	23	469	93	24	462	92	23
Sherman - 462 22 gen, ed rooms	486	105	23	473	102	23	453	98	22	465	101	24	469	102	24	465	101	23	471	102	23	482	104	24
Mill Hill 18 gen ed. 21 gen ed. 24 gen ed	361			367			366			368			374			384			382			382		
		96	18	97	18		97	19		97	19		99	18		102	18		101	18		101	18	
		82		83			83			83			85			87			87			87		
		72		73			73			73			74			76			76			76		
All four schools	1599			1592			1583			1609			1615			1622			1650			1677		
w/MH 378		93		92			92			93			94			94			96			97		
w/MH 441		90		89			89			90			90			91			92			94		
w/MH 504		87		86			86			87			87			88			89			91		
**=did not impact section needs or utilization rate in this spreadsheet																								