

Medford Public Schools
Medford, MA 02155

Medford School Committee
Committee of the Whole

January 17, 2017

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Mayor Burke in the library of Medford High School. The following members were present at the meeting: Vice-Chair Ann Marie Cugno, Secretary Paulette Van der Kloot, Erin DiBenedetto, Kathy Kreatz, Mea Mustone, and Robert Skerry Jr. Also present were Superintendent Roy Belson, Headmaster John Perella, Vocational Principal/Director Heidi Riccio, High School Assistant Principals David Blauch, Gail Treanor, and Nicholas Tucci, Vocational Assistant Director Jill Sawyer, Director of Curriculum Bernadette Ricciardelli, Health Services Supervisor Toni Vento Teachers Rob Drobneck and Norm Rousseau.

All rose to salute the Flag.

Mayor Burke stated that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the possible adoption of a single LEA code for MHS and MVTHS.

Mayor Burke called upon the Superintendent for an overview of the proposal.

Each member had a full packet of materials describing the reasons for the recommendation to accept the proposal (attached to this report).

The Superintendent referred to his regular meeting report (in packet). While he did not re-read the report, he added the following comments: Tonight we will provide a detailed rationale for our proposal. Our goal is to formalize the official state relationship between the two school programs. This act will not change what we do now, but it will facilitate interaction between the two entities and add a powerful new dimension to each. All students need to think "career." All students need the opportunity to take advanced academic offerings and to have access to the comprehensive curriculum at this level. Careers in the future will need skilled persons who can adapt to new technologies and market realities. The linking of these two schools will preserve tradition but enable us to advance into the 21st century. This initiative will enable us to complete our reduction of students attending Minuteman and will also increase the revenue coming into our schools. This will enable us to better invest in the maintenance and development of our programs and to acquire substantial grants that would not be available to us without this type of regionalization and re-structuring.

The Superintendent then introduced Headmaster Perella and Principal/Director Riccio for a formal presentation.

Headmaster Perella and Principal/Director Riccio provided the background and rationale for the proposal. They employed a question and answer format (see included materials). They took turns speaking about the key points in the proposal.

Dr. Perella began stating prior to 2012 MHS and MVTHS functioned entirely separately and offered different opportunities and educational expectations. Since that time, with school committee, community and parental support MHS and MVTHS has strategically taken measured steps to work collaboratively, for the benefit of all students. Slowly, we have integrated students into common core classes and provided opportunities in each of the schools. We would not like to move forward on the following: building bell alignment, integrated cafeteria and homeroom advisory activities, leadership team and support services coordination, shared PTO, site council, evening events and parent-teacher conferences. He continued saying that the purpose of a common LEA number for MHS and MVTHS is to further expand academic and technical education opportunities, streamline scheduling and reporting date to DESE and to continue to integrate instructional staff to serve all secondary students in Medford in preparation for college/career. This plan is for a very exciting future. It's been a step by step process, working together with all of you, the community and parents. He stated that when he was hired there was little to no communication between the schools. Times have now changed, communication is now open. Four years ago, the two faculties did not talk or really know each other. It is no longer that way. We now share most engagements.

Dr. Riccio stated that when I was interviewed, I was asked how will I bring in more Chapter 74 programs to try to eventually eliminate the need for students to go to Minuteman. We have brought in more programs and the Medford students that are at Minuteman now, once they graduate, because of our new programs Minuteman will no longer be a necessity for this school district. Now MHS/MVTHS can crossover to vocational programs or the MHS for advanced placement or honors classes.

Dr. Perella said that it was the logical next step to continue to empower the changes we've already made and to give potential opportunities to all students. LEA is an advantage for all.

Ms. Cugno asked if students lose any time. Dr. Riccio answered that shop time is similar to science lab time. It will also allow us to direct our students to classes they will need. For example: robotics students may not need chemistry but they do require AP physics for their CTE credit/accreditation. Culinary and cosmo students need chemistry. So we can strategically schedule these students ahead of time for their tech requirements. For example: academics can be in a.m. with shop/tech in p.m. It will also depend on the pathway chosen.

Ms. DiBenedetto asked how does this happen and how does it affect the district? Superintendent Belson answered that basically all we have to do is send a letter to DESE. It is not difficult and the benefits are huge. It is a really good thing for us. It will be more of an advantage for us in funding circles. Not many districts have this type of set up, career and college prep together in the same building. By partnering with other districts, it will make us eligible for many more grant opportunities, as grants tend to benefit regional districts.

Dr. Riccio commented that the Governor believes in pathways for all students, comprehensive as well as career.

Ms. DiBenedetto asked what are the road blocks or tentative negative issues that could arise? Dr. Riccio answered the fear of the unknown, fear of losing identity of voke, fear of closing the voke, but personally, I don't believe in any negatives. It is important that all students have career/tech experience. She spoke about mechanic student in western part of state who is receiving a full scholarship to Bentley and a Nashoba student who already has an associate degree in college prior to getting his high school diploma.

Dr. Perella said that it will be easier for Dr. Riccio and I. We do not have Medford roots so we are able to create something unique and provide a competitive environment. Our potential has no ceiling.

Ms. Kreatz asked if the cooperative education piece will remain. Dr. Riccio answered that we are required to offer work based learning to all CTE students. It used to be only senior year, now we are able to offer it in the third term of junior year. This allows students to earn money, gain employment experience and improve their proficiency levels. Cooperative Ed is not going away. However, there are some programs that don't allow for easy coop experiences, such as robotics, biotech and environmental science as the student's age tends to be a problem for companies that deal with those majors. We will try to offer internships instead to those students.

Ms. Kreatz asked if there will be a name change? Could we do a survey with the students to decide. Superintendent Belson answered at one time I thought we could have a cute name like MIT – "Medford Institute of Technology". The name won't change at this early stage. We can consider it as we progress.

Ms. Van der Kloot would like 8th graders to still have to complete the vocational application process. What do Everett students do? How do they apply? Are we setting up competing placements for Everett? Is there a significant need for Everett students?

Dr. Riccio answered that Everett students must complete the application. Eighth graders will still complete the application. Everett students come to us in 9th grade, but some come to us in 10th grade but the final threshold is 11th grade. In the late 90's a number of high schools (like Everett) renovated and got rid of their voke programs. Luckily, Medford did not.

Ms. Van der Kloot asked if we will potentially lose Everett students to Northeast or even Minuteman? Superintendent Belson said that Northeast can't serve the population they have and Minuteman costs are high per student so I don't see Everett students applying there. Dr. Riccio said that partnering with other communities in our geographic area is very important – Medford, Everett and Charlestown are part of the Metro North Region. We would like to add plumbing to our programs but are finding it hard to obtain quality teachers as plumbers because they are making huge dollars out there now. In addition, this area is looking for dental and medical assisting as well as hospitality. These employment areas will be huge within our area for years to come. We have had the SOLVED Collaborative in place for many

years. We have partnered with Everett on many projects including grants. If an out of district student does not work out we can send them back to their home school. Transportation is the responsibility of the sending district. Ms. Van der Kloot asked how many Everett students we have. Dr. Riccio answered 25 but can allow for up to 100 of out of district students. Medford students will always have preference.

Ms. Cugno asked how would this change affect contracts. Superintendent Belson answered that we have already worked out the prep periods. We will grandfather people in as needed until new negotiations begin.

On the motion of Ms. Kreatz seconded by Ms. Cugno to accept the merger of MHS and MVTHS:

Roll Call:

Yea: 7 Cugno, DiBenedetto, Kreatz, Mustone, Skerry, Van der Kloot, Burke

Nay: 0

Absent: 0

Ms. Van der Kloot asked the Superintendent to place the formal acceptance on the next agenda so the community is aware. Ms. DiBenedetto asked that the information be sent to the council. Superintendent Belson said that he will forward to council once the formal vote is taken.

On the motion of Mr. Skerry seconded by Ms. Van der Kloot the meeting was adjourned at 7:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Paulette Van der Kloot
Secretary