

**Millbury Public Schools
School Committee**

Special Session
Meeting Minutes

Date: February 3, 2021

Members Present: Mrs. Jennifer Nietupski, Chairperson
Mr. Christopher Wilbur, Vice Chairperson
Mrs. Julia Lagerholm, Member
Mr. Nicholas Lazzaro, Member
Mrs. Jessica Bristol, Member

Administrators Present: Mr. Richard Bedard, Jr., Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations
Ms. Elizabeth Boutiette, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
Mr. Christopher Lowe, Jr./Sr. High School Principal
Mr. Gregory Myers, Superintendent of Schools
Ms. Kate Ryan, Director of Pupil Services

Contributing Guests: Noted below

Location: This meeting was held virtually with Zoom

Time: 6:00pm

Mrs. Nietupski opened the meeting at 6:02 PM.

1. Public Forum: Revisions to the Current MPS Reopening Plan

Mrs. Nietupski reviewed the procedures that would govern the public forum.

Mr. Wilbur reviewed the Committee's reason for holding a public forum and reminded the audience that no decision regarding the mixing of cohorts had been made yet. He encouraged the audience to share their opinions so that the Committee can take them into consideration before making any decisions about mixing cohorts.

Mrs. Nietupski called on Connor Winston, MHS student, to speak.

Connor requested that the Committee agree to mix cohorts so that extracurricular activities can take place and said he was speaking as an advocate for student athletes.

Mrs. Nietupski called on Maureen Watkins, parent of an MHS student, to speak.

Mrs. Watkins quoted a statement on the Superintendent's web page and asked if we are following that statement. She urged the Committee to follow health recommendations issued by various agencies and stated that most COVID-19 transmission occurs at home, not during athletic activities.

Mrs. Nietupski called on Kathryn Mimo, MHS student, to speak.

Kathryn stated that she was advocating for the marching band and requested that the Committee agree to mix cohorts so that the entire marching band can participate together. She cited studies about the effectiveness of modifications to make playing instruments safe, such as bell covers and specialized masks.

Mrs. Nietupski called on Troy Watkins, parent of an MHS student, to speak.

Mr. Watkins spoke in support of mixing cohorts, citing research about COVID spread and precautions to mitigate risk. He also cited neighboring towns, which are mixing cohorts without incident.

Mrs. Nietupski called on Max Kolifrath, MHS student, to speak.

Max stated that he was speaking on behalf of the football team and requested that the Committee agree to mix cohorts so that football can take place.

Mrs. Nietupski called on Matt Friedman, parent of MHS student, to speak.

Mr. Friedman cited guidance from various organizations, including the MIAA, and stated that other towns are playing sports without incident. He also emphasized the importance of extra-curricular activities.

Mrs. Nietupski called on Emma Flaherty, MHS student, to speak.

Emma requested that the Committee agree to mix cohorts so that the Best Buddies program and softball can take place. She cited the success of club sports during the pandemic and noted that the precautions are keeping students safe.

Mrs. Nietupski called on Kirsten Gleason, parent of MHS student, to speak.

Mrs. Gleason deferred to her husband, Peter Gleason, to make a statement.

Mrs. Nietupski called on Keegan Gleason, MHS student, to speak.

Keegan requested that the Committee agree to mix cohorts so that extracurricular activities can take place and highlighted the importance of extracurricular activities.

Mrs. Nietupski called on Rob Phillipio, parent of MHS student, to speak.

Mr. Phillipio commended efforts to keep school open and safe and requested that the Committee agree to mix cohorts so that extracurricular activities can take place. He noted the success of club sports and cited research and recommendations from various organizations.

Mrs. Nietupski called on Perry Drugan, MHS student, to speak.

Perry stated that she was advocating for all extracurricular activities, especially the performing arts. She noted the importance of extracurricular participation on students' social-emotional health and cited neighboring towns that are mixing cohorts without incident.

Mrs. Nietupski called on Peter Gleason, parent of MHS student, to speak.

Mr. Gleason advocated for co-curricular activities as an extension of the classroom and just as important to students' development as academics are. He cited neighboring towns that are mixing cohorts without incident and the fact that Grafon will soon bring K and 1st graders back full time.

Mrs. Nietupski called on Allie Pine, MHS student, to speak.

Allie advocated on behalf of the volleyball team, cited the success of neighboring towns during Fall 1, and emphasized the importance of providing opportunities for all students, especially seniors who want one more chance to play.

Mrs. Nietupski called on Dennis Kelly, parent of MHS student, to speak.

Mr. Kelly requested that the Committee agree to mix cohorts so that extracurricular activities can take place, citing MIAA's safety modifications.

Mrs. Nietupski called on Ryan Jerome, MHS student, to speak.

Ryan advocated on behalf of the football team and requested that the Committee agree to mix cohorts so that extracurricular activities can take place and highlighted the importance of extracurricular activities. He cited other schools that have been able to safely mix cohorts.

Mrs. Nietupski called on Tina Pugliese-Savage, parent of MHS student, to speak.

Mrs. Pugliese-Savage stated that the School Committee is not aware of the emotional stress that students are dealing with and suggested using weekly surveys to track students' mental health. She requested that the Committee consider allowing public speak as part of their meetings. She commended the students who spoke at the forum.

Mrs. Nietupski called on Kayla and Kelcie Turner, MHS students, to speak.

Kayla and Kelcie requested that the Committee agree to mix cohorts so that extracurricular activities can take place and highlighted the importance of extracurricular activities. They cited area schools that played in the fall without incident.

Mrs. Nietupski called on Scott Turner, parent of MHS students, to speak.

Mr. Turner commended the student speakers and cited the many activities lost due to COVID. He stated that the School Committee was obtuse and that nothing has been done for students.

Mrs. Nietupski called on Darin Haig, parent of MHS student, to speak.

Mr. Haig commended the student speakers and advocated for extra-curricular activities as a way to improve the mental health of students experiencing depression and isolation due to COVID restrictions. He cited other towns and organizations that have mixed cohorts without incident.

Mrs. Nietupski called on Rob Pine, parent of MHS students, to speak.

Mr. Pine commended the students for speaking at the forum and noted that the School Committee has been hard at work addressing a number of important issues. He advocated for the mixing of cohorts and cited the importance of extracurriculars as stated in the MIAA's mission statement, the Jr./Sr. High School's mission statement, and the statement from the Jr./Sr. High School Principal and Superintendent in the Program of Studies. He also cited area schools that are mixing cohorts without issue.

Mrs. Nietupski called on Eneida Sanchez, parent of MHS student, to speak.

Mrs. Sanchez requested that the Committee agree to mix cohorts so that extracurricular activities can take place and highlighted the importance of extracurricular activities.

Mrs. Nietupski called on Chris Naff, Member of the Millbury Board of Selectmen, to speak.

Mr. Naff cited extracurricular participation as among his most fond memories of school and commended students for their contributions to the forum.

Mrs. Nietupski called on Ray Richards, MHS teacher and coach, to speak.

Mr. Richards requested that the Committee agree to mix cohorts so that extracurricular activities can take place and highlighted the importance of extracurricular activities.

Mrs. Nietupski commended the students who spoke at the forum and reminded the audience that the next meeting of the School Committee will be Wednesday, February 10, 2021. Mrs. Nietupski closed the Public Forum at 7:24PM.

Jennifer B. Nietupski, Chairperson

Christopher J. Wilbur, Vice Chairperson

Julia Lagerholm

Nicholas Lazzaro

Jessica Bristol