

**USE OF HENRY LORD
SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING**

**Tuesday, October 15, 2013
3:30 PM**

**Morton Middle School
1135 North Main Street
Fall River, MA 02720**

AGENDA

Discussion Items:

- Use of Henry Lord Middle School

MINUTES

At 3:42 PM, Chairman Pavao called to order the Use of Henry Lord Subcommittee meeting. A roll call showed that Mr. Andrade, Mr. Martins and Mr. Pavao were present.

Also present were Superintendent Mayo-Brown, members of the Leadership team, local reporters and several community members.

Mr. Pavao stated that they had received about twelve recommendations for the use of the Henry Lord Middle School over the past few months and there had been another recommendation made that afternoon by School Committeeman Martins and he asked Mr. Martins to discuss his proposal.

Mr. Martins: He has given a great deal of thought of what could work, the great deal of problems they are facing, and how the Henry Lord Middle School could be used because the South End cannot be the only community that does not have a middle school. His goal is to return Henry Lord as a middle school for the South End which solves one problem but does not solve the overcrowding of the elementary schools which needs to be addressed with economics in mind. He looked at this and thought about doing something a little bit different. He took the enrollment from October 1, 2012 from the DESE website because he did not have current enrollment data. From this he noted that the enrollments of the middle schools last year (2012-2013) aren't that different that they cannot be considered accurate. On October 1, 2012, Henry Lord had 490 students; Kuss had 623 students; Morton had 524 students; and Talbot had 598 students. He looked at what he could do to be equitable for all areas of the City that would be age appropriate and still give a middle school to the South End.

His proposal is to have the Grade 5 of the elementary schools incorporated with the middle schools except for two elementary schools. He noted the following elementary school Grade 5 enrollments for October 1, 2012: Letourneau, 110; Viveiros, 86; Tansey, 47; Spencer Borden, 82; Fonseca, 101; and Watson, 52. He did not deal with Greene because they have a total of approximately 805 students or Silvia who has 758 students because those buildings are constructed for those capacities. He then noted the following moves:

Use of Henry Lord Subcommittee Minutes of October 15, 2013

- Letourneau Grade 5 students (110) and Watson (54) would move to Henry Lord (490) which would bring the population up to 654 students.
- Viveiros Grade 5 students (86) would move to Kuss (623) totaling 709 students.
- Tansey (47) and Spencer Borden (82) would move to Morton (524) totaling 653 students.
- Fonseca (101) would move to Talbot (598) totaling 699 students.

Mr. Martins noted that by doing these moves, the middle schools would be approximately equal and the buildings could handle those numbers. Also, by doing this, it would allow for the elementary schools to have lesser numbers of students so that there would be additional classrooms in the elementary schools for grades K-4 which would lower class sizes.

In addition, Mr. Martins continued, at some point in time the Westall School would be complete which could be used as an early childhood center because it was a former elementary school and is centrally located. This would also give more room in the elementary schools.

Mr. Martins was prepared to make this as a motion but asked for questions first. He also noted that one caveat was that there might be a concern of departmentalization.

Mr. Andrade said whichever route they take, he likes the idea of being able to kill two birds with one stone. There is overcrowding at the middle grades but also at the elementary schools. Even if they wanted to split classes at the elementary level, they could not because there is no room to put them. Also, the other problem is a personnel and question of will the budget support splitting classes.

Mr. Martins: There is consideration of another K-8 school but that does not solve all the problems. He felt that his proposal solves a lot more than a K-8 which would still leave the South End without a middle school. "This way every area has a middle school. We are just adding a 5th grade to them and they are all treated equally."

Mr. Pavao asked if his target date is September 2014.

Mr. Martins said that would be realistic as he did not want to take students out mid-school year.

Mr. Pavao said if this proposal is taken by the School Committee as a Whole, they would need to have a meeting for the stakeholders/parents to be sure they understand what the concept is and that they are part of the decision making process. Also, if the proposal is for September 2014, Mr. Martins numbers may be off because they would be looking at this year's Grade 4 students which will be Grade 5 for next year. He added that it may not be a big difference but wanted to make note of that. He then asked Mr. Martins if his plan was to phase in each year starting 5-8 in September 2014.

Mr. Martins said that he intended to have them all go in the same time because there would continue to be overcrowding in the middle schools if they did not.

Mr. Pavao: He asked the Superintendent if her plan would be to staff the school the way it was staffed when it was Henry Lord with a full contingent of teachers.

Superintendent: She said that she had only learned of Mr. Martins proposal at 3:00 that afternoon so she did not have that information.

Use of Henry Lord Subcommittee Minutes of October 15, 2013

Mr. Pavao asked her to put that in her wheelhouse to have an answer to as they progress along.

Superintendent: She agreed and added that they could have provided Mr. Martins with current district enrollment as he was developing his proposal. She noted that the enrollment is increasing by 200-300 students per year so the numbers that he is using for 6th grade has increased by 39 students, 7th by 20, and 8th by 45. "So we do have more students at those grade levels as well as 4th graders that will be next years 5th graders. We have 40 more." She also asked the Committee to consider as they leave Greene and Silvia out because their buildings are suited for that many students that they are two buildings that have class sizes over 30 with Greene having eleven and Silvia having six classes over 30. She also noted for the public that she wanted it to be clear that they are not over capacity in any of the buildings. "I am not saying it is the best educational environment but I don't want to cause alarm that we are over capacity in any of our buildings."

The Superintendent also stated that there are a number of areas they need to delve into including transportation as they talk about the location of Watson School. She thinks there would be some transportation costs there by adding a fifth grade and would defer to Mr. Coogan.

Mr. Pavao said there may be a balance there because if they cut down on transportation costs from the students they are busing from the South End to the other middle schools, there may be a wash.

Superintendent: She said they would have to look into it.

Mr. Pavao: He thinks Mr. Martins and Mr. Andrade hit on something that will not be discussed tonight but if they are saying there are schools with 30+ in a grade, this proposal doesn't affect the lower grades K-4 so they need to look at that, through subcommittee, on how to lower the grade numbers in the lower grades.

Superintendent: She said to that point, that they generally see those large class size numbers at the lower grades and not at the 5th grade levels. By 5th grade the enrollment starts to dip slightly. She feels it is important to get parent feedback about the model because they see that the perception of sending a child to middle school and all that that brings, the District does lose students to the parochial/Atlantis K-8 models. "So we do get a sense that some parents are making a choice to go to a K-8 school for a middle school concept rather than one of our public middle schools. So I think that parent piece is critically important."

Mr. Pavao noted that the model that Mr. Martins gave would give them some physical room in each building where they could break down a class of 30 to a workable number at each grade level. He then asked the Superintendent if she could send the latest enrollment data so they can look at better/more defined numbers.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown responded that on any given day she can pull the District enrollment and tell them what it is.

Mr. Martins expressed that this has been going on long enough and he is sure that there are others that could give different ideas but in the meantime Henry Lord remains vacant. They need to come to a conclusion of the best alternative, while looking at the fairness of each area of the City, while having the same educational structure for each area.

Use of Henry Lord Subcommittee Minutes of October 15, 2013

Mr. Pavao agreed and said he would like to take Mr. Martin's model along with a couple of others he was about to discuss. He thought that they need to gather the most accurate figures they have so they can call another subcommittee meeting to look at the models with more solid numbers. He added that he doesn't think there is anyone sitting on the School Committee who doesn't want the school functioning at a point where it is productive and student achievement is being reached.

Mr. Pavao continued that he looked at all of the previous recommendations made to the subcommittee and the two that stood out the most were:

#1: Move Henry Lord to a PreK-8 school.

He did some research on that particular model because he recalled in the fall the Mayor had made that proposal and it was sent to the Subcommittee on Instruction and to the Henry Lord Stakeholders Group. What he found was on:

- April 30, 2012: The Henry Lord Stakeholder group unanimously endorsed the conversion of the Henry Lord Middle School to a PreK-8.
- June 5, 2012: The Subcommittee on Instruction agenda stated there was a consideration of the PreK-8 school. At that particular meeting reference was made to bring that recommendation to the Committee as a Whole for their consideration.
- November 13, 2012: A partnership was put into place with People Inc, BayCoast Bank and Bristol Community College bringing \$50K to the table.

He noted that there had been some work done on this model and the Herald News website has writings on the recommendation of a PreK-8. He is not leaning that way and is in the middle of the road with the proposals but he feels it was one of the stronger recommendations made over the past month and they have seen it work at the Doran School quite well. He then asked the Superintendent if the Doran moving to the Henry Lord building still on the table.

Superintendent: She said it is not. The Principal met with her parents at two open houses/functions at Doran and they surveyed parents. Overwhelmingly the response from parents was to stay put. They feel that is their community/community school and with the recent move from a Level 4 to a Level 2 they don't want to mess with a good thing.

Mr. Pavao: The second on the list that received a lot of recommendations but he did not agree with:

#2: Convert Henry Lord back to a regular middle school

Mr. Pavao: In speaking with the Superintendent and a member of DESE, if the School Committee was to do that he thinks they will back themselves right back into a corner of which they are trying to get out. He feels it is clear that if they go that route of just a 6-8 grade model which is the same model Henry Lord was prior to closing, the State would step in immediately. Mr. Martin's proposal of a 5-8 does change the concept of the model but it should be run by representatives at DESE to be sure.

Mr. Pavao said those would be the three proposals he is recommending they work on over the next several weeks to have sufficient time to get a working model in place. They need to start working with stakeholders and then have a solid recommendation to the Committee as a Whole that is supported by the stakeholders, administration, and the subcommittee.

Mr. Andrade: Another item that seems to be a negative if they were to go back to using the school the way it was is that it appeared to be under utilized. He also agrees that getting parental input is important. He feels that parent perception is key.

Use of Henry Lord Subcommittee Minutes of October 15, 2013

Mr. Pavao asked where they were at with the Westall School.

Mr. Coogan: He explained that the City is still in negotiations with the insurance company for settling the claim. There are a lot of compliance issues that are still being negotiated through the City who is the policy holder.

Mr. Pavao: He asked the Superintendent if she would like that to be an early childhood center.

Superintendent: She said that is one potential use to consider. She understands that the Committee is very interested in investing in early childhood. Only 50% of the District's students experience a PreK setting. They know when they invest in early childhood, they reap the benefits of it through the early grades and children are more likely to leave third grade as proficient readers. She thinks as a community they need to tackle the issue of what they can do for their youngest learners. She added that the Committee has invested a lot in the secondary piece of education and there needs to be equity with what is happening in the secondary level and what is happening with the youngest learners.

Mr. Pavao: His mission this evening would be to report out on the subcommittee meeting and set up another subcommittee meeting within 10-12 days which would give the Superintendent the opportunity to get some of the information requested to them. They can have a working session and look at each model closely and either make a recommendation of bringing it to the Committee as a Whole or deleting it.

Mr. Martins: He agrees with having stakeholder involvement taken into consideration but reiterated that each area of the City should be treated equally and have the same opportunities. He asked if the stakeholders that supported the PreK-8 model were the same group of people that were supporting of the Innovation High School.

Superintendent: She clarified that the Henry Lord Stakeholder Group was a result of the school being declared a Level 4 and Mr. Martins represented the School Committee on that group.

Mr. Martins: He did not recall the vote to have it a PreK-8.

Superintendent: She thinks the School Committee needs to grapple with what is the best educational model for students. Is it a return to a middle school model or is it a PreK-8 model? Regardless of where it is in the City, she thinks the School Committee might want to consider options for parents knowing that they have a number of families that leave the school system to enter into a PreK-8 model.

Mr. Martins said that is not the only reason they leave.

Superintendent: She is not saying it is but is asking if the Committee wants to consider having a portfolio of options for parents. "I am not weighing in on that. I am just saying do you want those kinds of options for parents or stay with a more traditional model. That lies within the authority of the School Committee. I can provide you with as much information but ultimately as elected officials that is your decision."

Mr. Pavao: He thought they could address Mr. Martin's concerns if they look at the number of kids that are presently at the three middle schools that originally were going to go to Henry lord and then adjust

Use of Henry Lord Subcommittee Minutes of October 15, 2013

the model down from that. Rather than having two strings of PreK-5, they may just have one string. As Mr. Andrade mentioned earlier, the building as it was being used was under populated being built for 800-850.

Mr. Coogan confirmed it was 850.

Mr. Pavao said that would leave approximately 400 seats that they could accommodate after moving all the Henry Lord students back if that is the model that is adopted. This is why he suggested a working meeting.

Mr. Pavao asked that it be noted that Mr. Maynard and Mr. Hart were present at this meeting. He then noted that with Mr. Martins model, he does not see Tansey as being overcrowded with approximately 270 students and asked if they had class sizes.

Superintendent: She responded that the kindergarten classes had 29 and 28; first grade had 29 and 31; fourth grade 25 and 24.

Mr. Pavao: He thinks they need to run down this together to look at the models that are going to be proposed and the overcrowding of the classrooms across the District at the elementary level. He suggested that Madame Superintendent may have to get creative by making some fiscal moves where they would have to come up with a strategy on how to man extra classrooms. He noted that they had already dropped the high school teaching rate by 20-21 teachers to accommodate some of their elementary situations. "That is something you need to look at as administration to see if we need to convert some non-teaching positions to teaching positions to accommodate reducing the class size at the elementary level."

MOTION: Mr. Andrade – Mr. Martins To adjourn
All in favor None opposed Meeting adjourned at approximately 4:39 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Rebecca L. Caron
Interim Administrative Assistant for
School Committee Services

Please note: A videotape/DVD of this meeting is on file in the School Committee Office and is available for review by contacting the Interim Administrative Assistant for School Committee Services.