

Frank Todisco, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. in the Stonington High School Commons. Members present were, Alexa Garvey, Board Secretary, Candace Anderson, Jack Morehouse, Alisa Morrison, and Craig Esposito.
Member absent: Deborah Downie

Also, present were Dr. Van Riley, Superintendent of Schools, Ana de Oliveira, Recording Secretary, Student Government Representative, Madison Geiger, members of the staff, and interested citizens.

Board Presentations

Principal Ms. Dawe, introduced teachers and students from West Vine/West Broad Street Schools who gave a presentation on S.W.I.M. (Stay Safe, Work Hard, Include All, Model Respect), a school-wide behavioral expectation program. Each student gave a summary of what the program means to them and the role they play in the S.W.I.M. model. The teachers also shared a slide show of information. The students ended with the S.W.I.M. cheer.

Communications and Recognitions

Jack Morehouse shared he attended the Mystic Middle School Chorus Winter Concert at the La Grua Center and added that is a good to see we are forming partnerships. Mr. Morehouse added hats off to Mrs. Gilbert for a great performance. Candace Anderson communicated that she recently attended the high school chorus concert, which was very nice.

Comments from Citizens

Sue Jones commented on a few items that were covered in the report provided regarding the middle school consolidation. Ms. Jones remarked on the statement regarding the administration unanimously in favor of the consolidation, the Central Office building listed as a savings if the consolidation occurs. Ms. Jones had questions whether the savings from the Central Office go directly to the town budget or school, and added this item is misleading. Ms. Jones commented on Attachment A of the report and noted that there is no mention of parent and community groups for the consolidation. Ms. Jones also had questions regarding the sample schedules in the report. Ms. Jones suggested that there be open office hours in August for those students and parents who might want to get familiar with the school, which would make the transition easier.

Jana Geiger, spoke on behalf of the 2018 Graduation Party Committee and asked that the 2017-2018 school calendar be updated to reflect the snow days and graduation date for better planning the end of the year party.

Katie Quinlan commented that she has three students at Deans Mill School and is excited for the middle school consolidation and believes it is a good thing.

Ashley Gillece commented that the idea of consolidation has been brought up before and feels that it is hard to explain to students that currently attend Pawcatuck Middle School that the school they are attending will be closing. Ms. Gillece questioned why Central Office could not be moved to a wing of another school building. Ms. Gillece feels that PMS students are taking a hit on this consolidation. Ms. Gillece also spoke about the busing for the current PMS walkers and asked that the consolidation be postponed for a couple more years.

Cindy Nadeau spoke in favor of the middle school consolidation, commented that our students are more resilient than we think. Ms. Nadeau added that combining the schools would complement the music program. Ms. Nadeau also spoke we need to provide the best situation for our teachers by having full-time teachers rather than part-time teachers split among two buildings.

Paul Sartor shared this middle school configuration was looked at when he was on the building committee for the high school renovation, but did not work at that time. Mr. Sartor spoke that he has heard from parents and teachers of Pawcatuck regarding the inequity. Mr. Sartor commented on the middle school report stating that it is a really good report and feels that it addressed many issues that justify the consolidation. Mr. Sartor also added that we could improve student opportunities, increase programs, and extracurricular activities because students will be in one school, while saving money for taxpayers. Mr. Sartor spoke about the issue with parking at Mystic Middle School, but reminded the community that there is now an extra acre available that could be used for parking or sport fields. Mr. Sartor touched on the busing times, and agrees there are more positives to consider that out way the busing time issues. Mr. Sartor noted that the only down side to the consolidation is we might lose some tremendous administrative staff. Mr. Sartor ended his remarks by stating that students are coming first in this consolidation but it is nice for those paying taxes to benefit from this also.

Bruce Yarnall spoke that he supports the consolidation, but had questions regarding the map that was included the report and where certain classrooms were placed. Mr. Yarnall also had questions on the reduction of special ed teachers with the consolidation and added not sure, why we are reducing if there is the same number of students. Mr. Yarnall commented on existing building issues at Mystic Middle School that would need to be addressed. Mr. Yarnall questioned if there would be enough time to create new programs if the consolidation took place in the fall of 2018.