

Answers to Questions asked at Special Meeting of October 22, 2013

- What happens in the future if enrollment comes back up; how much will a new school cost then to build?
 - Based on the enrollment projections it would take between 15 to 20 years for enrollment to reach the peak enrollment of 5200 the district realized in 2003.
 - The cost of a new school would depend on the educational specifications. It is not possible to project the cost of a new school without a clear understanding of the grade configuration, size of the school and year of construction.
- Statistics might work for the moment but what is going to happen in the future?
 - The demographers reported it will take 15 to 20 years for enrollment to come back to the peak enrollment of 2003.
 - The methodology utilized by the demographers is a widely used standard method accepted by the State Department of School Construction Projections.
 - Predictions about projected enrollment are based on historical trends in the district and state as well as local and regional economic trends.
 - The first five years of projections are based on known data.
- What will we do if people move in from Danbury?
 - People enroll in the district from many communities and there is no data to show that the migration from Danbury to New Milford will be any greater than it has been in the past.
- Is the money saved by closing a school worth it since there will be expenses for adding buses and moving?
 - It is important not only to look at the annual savings in operational costs but to also look at cost avoidance: a new boiler and roof for John Pettibone School, window replacements, blind replacements and external door replacements.
 - The money saved from closing a school will most likely offset expenses in the operating budget.
- Why is the suggested realignment best?
 - The recommended realignment creates an early education site, an intermediate school, and a middle school.
 - It maintains the same number of transitions students currently experience.
 - The 6-8th grade configuration is a very common and widely established norm for middle schools. It offers a wider range of co-curricular and extra-curricular options for students.
 - Transition activities for students and specific, identified leadership for sixth grade will enhance and support the inclusion of sixth grade to Schaghticoke.
- Why is it good to move the sixth grade and the third grade?

- The integration of third grade to Sarah Noble will provide additional opportunities for students in science and the arts. In addition, there are intramural opportunities for students.
- The movement of sixth grade to Schaghticoke will expose students to more curricular and extra-curricular offerings.
- The number of transitions will remain the same and students will be in each school, K-8, for three years.
- This realignment provides the most advantageous distribution per facility.
- What can be done by the Board of Education to keep the school open?
 - If the school remains open the Board of Education will have to ensure the operational budget will support funding five schools that will have classroom occupancy below 85%, the industry standard rate of classroom occupancy.
- How can they work with the community to attract young families to New Milford?
 - Attracting young families to New Milford is a complex, multi-faceted issue. The Board of Education can continue to grow and maintain adequate services and programs for students in order to prepare them to be college and career ready.
- With the elections coming up and new Board members coming on, how is the process going to be handled going forward?
 - The new Board will have to determine how it wants to proceed when new members are seated in December 2013.
- Can the community live with not closing JPS?
 - Closing a school is never an easy decision. Whatever the decision of the Board, the faculty and staff will continue to serve the community and educate its students to the best of our ability.
- What is going to happen with spillover from Danbury?
 - This is a hypothesis that has been tested in one other community similar to New Milford that is near an urban center. The migration out of the urban center to that contiguous affordable community was no greater than migration in from other communities and suburbs.
- What about the impact of these changes on students?
 - Change must be managed and planned for adequately. Transition and planning activities will be developed to engage the students involved in changing schools. Students are resilient and with organized activities to help with the transition process it is expected the students will embrace the change.
- Do the projections take into account the impact of low income housing coming to town?
 - According to the demographers there are no immediate plans for low income housing. The most recent affordable housing complexes that were constructed in New Milford did

not bring in a significant number of students as evidenced by the decline in district enrollment.

- JPS is used after hours by lots of groups and the fields are also used. Where will all these groups go?
 - The groups would have to select other available venues.
- How many jobs would be lost in a worst case scenario where nothing happened to help keep those jobs?
 - The reality is that staff have been losing jobs over the last several years due to declining enrollment. Whether John Pettibone stays open or it closes staffing will decline as enrollment continues to drop.
 - There is a significant number of senior staff in the NMPS and it is anticipated that many staff will be retiring over the next five years.
- What is the number?
 - There are many factors that will affect the impact to staffing. Until a decision is made and a timeline established, there have not been any reliable numbers established.
- Is there a way to determine the rental/lease data for movement while doing enrollment projections?
 - Rental/lease happens currently in New Milford. There is no reason to think there would be a significant change from the present.
- What is the impact of the Route 7 Bypass?
 - Dr. Chung in his report of 2007 established high, middle, and low projections for enrollment. He anticipated that the bypass would bring in the high enrollment rates. His low enrollment rate was accurate for three years and for the last two years the district has been below the low rate.
 - The impact of the Route 7 Bypass has not contributed to any significant enrollment.
- What is the cost vs. savings to build a new school if projections are wrong and you have closed a school?
 - This is not a simple calculation because building a new school is predicated on many factors including: building specifications, five to ten year enrollment projections, programmatic needs, and level of state reimbursement.
- What is the impact of class size on test scores?
 - With fewer buildings to service, support staff and traveling staff will be more concentrated in buildings. Class size will be more consistent because of the concentration of students across two K-2 schools.
 - Direct correlation between class size and academic performance as measured by standardized test schools has not been conclusive. There are several factors that can affect performance that make it difficult to draw conclusions beyond the extremes.

- There is no anticipated increase in class size due to the school closing. This may change based on when a decision is made and what year the closing would occur.
- What are the next steps?
 - The Board will deliberate, review more data and reach a conclusion to either do nothing, act on the information it has, or postpone a decision.
- If children are split between only two schools, will there be art on a cart again?
 - The population in each of those two schools would have to grow dramatically and quickly to necessitate that situation. Projections show population decline.
- What can we do to draw people with children into town?
 - That is a community wide effort. It may require research and surveys to determine what school aged families are seeking when they move to a community.