

These minutes to be accepted/amended at the December 13, 2021 Board of Education Enrollment Sub-committee meeting.

Sharon Center School Board of Education Enrollment Sub-committee

A meeting of the Sharon Board of Education Enrollment Sub-committee was held on Monday, November 15, 2021 in the school library.

PRESENT:

Board of Education Members: Plamen Petkov, Deborah Rathbun, Amanda Thompson and Anne Vance

Principal: Karen Manning

Guests: Katy McEnroe

Guests via Remote Access: Superintendent Lisa Carter, Rebecca Malone, Meghan Flanagan

The meeting was called to order at 4:21 P.M. by Principal Karen Manning.

Deborah Rathbun requested an amendment to the agenda to elect a committee chair.

Motion by Anne Vance/2nd by Amanda Thompson to approve the agenda as amended. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

Motion by Anne Vance/2nd by Deborah Rathbun to elect Amanda Thompson as Committee Chair. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

Written Communications – Letters submitted by [Meghan Flanagan](#) and [Meg Ensign](#) were read aloud.

Public Comments – Meghan Flanagan read her letter that was submitted to the BOE via email and made further comments about enrollment, local data and recommendations for the sub-committee. Rebecca Malone read the letter submitted to her by Meg Ensign and made further comments about enrollment, how it affects her family and her current involvement with Principal Manning regarding after school care.

There was a discussion regarding school enrollment including, demographics, area private school attendance, housing, surveys, data and future goals of the sub-committee. The committee will next meet to gather information regarding potential future surveys.

The next subcommittee meeting was set for Monday, December 13, 2021 at 5:00 in the school library.

Public comment was heard from Katy McEnroe, Rebecca Malone and Meghan Flanagan regarding enrollment and surveys.

Motion by Anne Vance/2nd by Deborah Rathbun to adjourn at 5:30 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Amanda Thompson

Fwd: Sharon Center School....

----- Forwarded message -----

Date: Mon, Nov 15, 2021 at 11:50 AM
Subject: Sharon Center School....

Thanks for asking for the reasons we moved our children out of Sharon Center School to a local private school. We have often wondered why there was no 'official' exit interview or questionnaire requesting feedback, so we are happy to help with our own personal experience and choices. We think its important to know that we are parents of several older children and have been active participants in all of our childrens' education for many years.

Firstly, we very much enjoyed the school in the lower grades from Mrs Paster, Ives, Ellington, Gafney, Justine Smith and Mr. Smith. Our children had a vibrant and well balanced class and wonderful atmosphere. The extra curriculars including book clubs, fundraisers/auctions, PTA movie nights with Kim Fallon, ski club and music/concerts, etc added to the community family environment and that was a very positive experience for our children.

However, beginning in/around 2017, in addition to losing a few students in their class, we began to notice other changes including more emphasis on standardized testing, more early dismissals due to 'teacher enrichment', concern about the changes in grading systems in Region 1, and homework or lack thereof. In the year or so following, we also were very disappointed with certain teaching 'tools' , less teacher engagement – more independent work on SCREENS (computer based extra math for times table that went on for entire school year , science videos such as Bill Nye the Science Guy with little or no teacher engagement), independent reading at length (30-45 mins) in a completely quiet/dark classroom with no teacher engagement whatsoever, little/no homework. The school librarian's retirement was an obvious loss that directly impacted our childrens' experience and our overall concerned feeling about the direction of the school.

Importantly, in such a small community, we were made aware by several parents that they were looking at other educational opportunities in other towns/schools because of these concerns. We also became aware that there were teachers within Sharon Center that not educating their own children at SCS, but rather a different town and this began to take on a new meaning to us. Meanwhile, the park and rec programs seemed to be dwindling and opportunities to become actively involved and engaged in rec sports were very limited. Having older children, we believe that participation in youth sports is an integral part of our children's education. In all small towns, the union of the school system and Park & Rec is critically important, but did not seem to be a priority.

The cascade between what was happening with education, park & rec and PTA gave us pause to really consider alternative education options. That would be schools, towns, homeschooling, club sports, etc.

When we started at SCS, it was NEVER our intent to move our children to private school.

We made the choice to leave because we thought our children would benefit from a more student-centric environment. We continue to (try) to participate in local P & R programs when available and continue to follow SCS's status with keen interest as residents and concerned parents.

Thank you.



Comments Prior to Subcommittee Meeting on Enrollment Today 1 message

Hello Sharon Board of Education Members,

I am joining a meeting today of a subcommittee discussing enrollment at SCS, but I wanted to get a few things down in an email as not all are necessarily related to enrollment.

Overall, I have concerns about where my child, currently in 3rd grade, is headed at SCS. I have spoken to quite a few families over this last month, some parents are currently enrolled at SCS and have found a dramatic decline in the quality of the education their children are receiving somewhere between 4-6 grades. I also touched base with families who left when their child hit those grades to go to private school, citing concerns with the quality of educators once they get into those grades.

In looking at the grades from the [SBAC, the numbers are disappointing](#). In math we have only 54% of our students at grade level. English is not much better at 63%. I know when we look at this against the state we are doing better, but to me this is unacceptable. As I understand it most of our classrooms have a support teacher and each class averages roughly 10 students. That is a lot of available resources for our children. I have heard in meetings and in minutes that remote learning and Covid is to blame, but how is that possible? These test results are from 2018-2019, before Covid. I also hear the numbers are skewed because of how small our student body is compared to other schools, but a percentage is a percentage. 54% of 5 vs 5,000 is still 54%. What is it we need to get these grades up?

Finally, with regard to the enrollment issue. We have continued to hear the reason we have low enrollment is because children are not moving here. And children are not moving here because the cost of housing is too high for families to afford. So are we saying that only low/middle income families are willing to use our public school? I find that hard to believe, I know a number of people with plenty of financial resources who proudly send their children to Salisbury Central School.

Additionally, the [median home value in Sharon for 2021 was \\$374,100 which is \\$98,700 more than the average in the state of \\$275,400](#). Yes, that's higher but not millions of dollars higher. [Also Salisbury Central School has absolutely no trouble attracting families and their median home value is \\$494,500 - that is \\$219,100 over the state average](#).

Lastly, this message immediately above is actually incorrect. There are a lot of students moving here, some of whom joined SCS last year and then promptly left after one year, why? Salisbury was able to retain all of its new students but we did not. I inquired with a parent whose children attend Indian Mountain

School, and they informed me that 26 students who are eligible to attend SCS are going to IMS. That's about 25% of our available student body attending just one of roughly 5 private elementary schools in the area and all of which require a fairly significant commute for Sharon residents to attend. Why are parents going out of their way to attend another school?

Perhaps some of this can be answered at today's meeting.

Thank you for your time and attention.