



Shrewsbury Public Schools

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To: School Committee

Subj: ELEMENTARY SCHOOL REDISTRICTING PROJECT PLANNING

Background

Now that construction has begun on the new Major Howard W. Beal School, we need to turn our attention to the task of redistricting our entire K-4 student population. This process requires a high level of effort for the school committee and administration. It will also require outside consultant services who have expertise in demographic studies and forecasts and geographic information systems specialists.

How we conduct this process is important to all constituents and the better process we have, the better outcomes we will realize.

Draft Timeline of Major Milestones

I have drafted the attached timeline of major milestones. This list is not meant to capture all of the details, meetings, or tasks but rather highlight the major milestones we need to complete. As you will see, redistricting is a lengthy process and we need to begin now to ensure it's as smooth as can be. At our workshop, I will review the draft timeline and each of the milestones.

Key Process Question: School Committee Decision Required

First and foremost, a decision is needed in terms of process. While we know that the school committee will make the final decision on a redistricting plan, we need to have a decision on what entity will formulate various options.

One option is to form a composite committee with representatives from Central Office, School Committee, parents, and some building principals. This group would work with the consultants, meet periodically to discuss options, be used as an additional communications vehicle etc...

The second option is to have representatives from Central Office work with the consultants in a similar way as above.

Each option has its own merits. It's important to note that if forming a committee as in the first option is chosen, they committee should receive a clear written charge from the School Committee on the timeline, expected outcomes, and scope/limit of authority.

It's also important to decide who will decide the "Guiding Principles" to adhere to when devising redistricting options. Will the School Committee do this or do you expect the administration or a composite redistricting committee to develop these?

So, before we move further ahead, it's imperative that we have a common understanding on these two questions about process.

Reflections From Last Redistricting Process

I have listed a few bullet point reflections that I recall from being involved in our last redistricting process associated with the opening of Floral Street School.

- Most parents want their child to stay in their current school. Change averse.
- There's a fair amount of emotion involved in the process.
- The process takes longer than planned/expected.
- One common complaint from parents was "lack of communication".
- From a time perspective the process is a "heavy-lift" for school committee, superintendent, Central Office staff, and elementary school building principals. This comes in the form of additional night meetings, proactive communications, and most of all responding to individual parent phone calls, emails, meetings.
- Post-redistricting the students who changed schools adapted very quickly and positively.
- FaceBook and Twitter were not in existence in 1996-97 when we redistricted to open Floral Street School.