Mr. Boardman opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.
Mr. Boardman stated the enrollment study was posted to the website on Friday, adding that the Board received it when the public did, and this is the first time we have seen the presentation with open dialogue to follow.

Dr. Zerbe provided some history – the Board approved Milone & MacBroom to conduct an enrollment study in May 2016. As part of that proposal, a preliminary draft was provided in August 2016. In September 2016 a recommendation was made to move onto phase 2 of the Milone & MacBroom proposal. As you will see in the presentation, part of phase 2 includes the capacity and the conclusion of phase 1 of their work in the final enrollment study. As approved in May 2016, we are within the timeline as originally planned. Dr. Zerbe introduced Mike Zuba and Tim Baird of Milone & MacBroom.

Mike Zuba and Tim Baird shared the following agenda and presented the enrollment and capacity study:

- Factors Influencing Enrollment
- Enrollment Projections
- Capacity and Home Room Utilization
- Next Steps
**Enrollment**

Mr. Boardman opened the discussion with the Board regarding the enrollment part of the presentation.

Ms. Rees questioned the jump from kindergarten to first grade in slide 25.

M&M responded there is a growth rate of about 120 students in first grade to about 100 in kindergarten in the previous six years.

Mr. Dorn questioned slide 21 with new students factored in and private schools.

M&M responded that we did take that into account using numbers generated from our students attending our schools.

Mr. Winters questioned persistency ratios and is that specific students or the number changing from period to period.

M&M responded that the persistency ratios reflect the change in the number of students in cohort moving from one grade to the next adding that it is looking at it by grade by year.

Mr. Winters added it would be interesting to see if there is a change in the demographics of the District especially in the specific elementary schools that may not be caught in the historical trends.

M&M responded that an analysis was done in the overall pattern of migration and we did see a decline in the overall degree of mobility and it did seem to be trending down and not up.

Ms. Hackett commented on the slides showing the low, medium, and high changes in the future and questioned if economic change enter into determining low, medium, or high and what effect does it have on the desirability of the school district.

M&M responded that economic considerations were taken not just in Lower Providence and Worcester, but the County as well. Regarding the low, medium, and high projection scenarios; they embody different sets of assumptions regarding the economy with the high enrollment assuming house sales continue to increase, the unemployment rate is going to continue to drop; the medium scenario assumes average economic conditions persist; the lowest scenario less explicitly considers the economic conditions but assumes something of a down trend with a housing market that you have seen in the last 5-7 years.

Ms. Hackett commented on capacity and questioned the size of the classrooms and whether some of them could be used in multiple ways or not.

M&M responded that classrooms used were those considered comparable to homeroom classrooms adding that there is not specific square footage and our count of homeroom type spaces was the same count as Thompson’s study. It comes down to what those spaces can be used for and is a programmatic decision made within the building. Rooms were not measured for square footage, the Thompson report was used as a starting point and floor plans were studied.
Ms. Aubrey-Larcinese commented on slide 16 with persistency ratios and questioned where are the T-1 students in those numbers adding that up until 2012 we had a transitional first grade program and how did that data factor in and effect the trend.

M&M responded that those students were included in the first grade total.

Ms. Aubrey-Larcinese questioned if they were included twice.

M&M responded that figures were used from October 1st which did not designate T-1. The students were assigned one grade in our data and not broken out as T-1 students. In early to mid-2000 you can see where we had this persistency ratio of about 1.4 or 1.3 likely then they were reported as grade one and where you see the drop off they were likely excluded but we didn’t have them separated out in the data used which was October 1 data.

Ms. Aubrey-Larcinese questioned if T-1 was considered first grade in PDE reports.

Mr. Winters commented that it looks like they were reported as first grade.

Ms. Aubrey-Larcinese followed up with how that impacts the projections.

M&M responded that the T-1 program was phased out in 2010-2011 putting one year of the existence of that program into our mid scenario.

Mr. Boardman commented that in looking at each school, whether you put them in first grade or kindergarten, it is such a small number and not an average class size so it shouldn’t make any real difference.

Ms. Aubrey-Larcinese questioned slide 17 and the consistency of women’s age regarding child bearing years.

M&M responded that the 15-50 range is how the census reports fertility range.

Ms. Aubrey-Larcinese questioned if M&M used their own fertility range as opposed to the range used by census.

M&M confirmed.

Ms. Aubrey-Larcinese questioned slide 21 regarding 225 new homes and the timeline for those coming on the market.

M&M responded that the 225 estimate is not the total home building across the community for the projections. The existing persistency ratios already capture the small 2-5 subdivisions built to handle a few homes adding what we are trying to capture here is what was reported to us by the County Planning Commission in terms of larger scale developments. These are probably five years out or longer in most cases.

Ms. Aubrey-Larcinese questioned slide 26 and why the projected number for Audubon drops by 50 students over the next 5 years with Arrowhead staying about the same.

M&M responded that one of the factors of the dramatic growth at Audubon was due to a tremendous growth in birth rate.
Ms. Aubrey-Larcinese questioned if the rental units were part of the reason for the Audubon growth.

M&M responded that had some effect as well with new students to the District adding that there are no key drivers indicating a hot emerging market to make adjustments and we rely on the persistence ratio which includes the larger percentage of the rental market with a lot of turnover but the demographics generally won’t change that much.

Mr. Ryan questioned the 225 new homes and how concrete is that number because it doesn’t sound like anyone’s planning on building on a specific plot.

M&M responded that there are plans on a specific plot for the 225 new homes.

Mr. Ryan commented on the three scenarios, high, medium, and low, asking for clarification that no scenario has the District dropping below 1500 at this point for K-4.

M&M responded that the low scenario for elementary drops down to exactly 1500 in 2021-2022.

Mr. Ryan commented on the Audubon number on slide 26 where there was a birth spike eventually causing a decrease and questioned wouldn’t we see that spike and downturn and then the normalization in the projections.

M&M responded that would still be based on actual birth numbers adding that those students have entered the system but have not passed through the K-4 range yet indicating the current second grade bubble at Audubon.

Ms. Rees expressed concern over what is enrollment and what is capacity and are we sure we want to stay on enrollment and then go back to capacity.

Mr. Boardman responded there are two areas requiring decision. One is having faith in the enrollment numbers we are seeing and ask questions so we are comfortable with that. The second is capacity.

Mr. Boardman opened the floor to the community for questions.

Andrew Sandner commented on needing more time to analyze the report. He commented on an increase in births on page 6, new home construction on pages 11 and 12, page 10 and aging population in Worcester, page 27 indicating not using the low model, in the birth persistency ratio, it wasn’t clear if consideration was given to people moving into the district after a child was born but before entering kindergarten. He also pointed out some issues with the report such as referencing route 522 instead of 422 and a blank page, signaling that we may be rushing again and expressed concern for that.

M&M responded that people moving into the district after the birth of their child but before entering kindergarten is accounted for in the birth to K persistency ratio. They also indicated that the minor errors in the report were not due to rushing but PDF writers, pagination, etc.

Jim Mollick asked if they looked at the PEL study and did your numbers correlate with their numbers and projections were generally close.

M&M responded that there were some general correlations and there were similarities.
Mr. Boardman added that both show similar declines but in varying magnitudes.

Jim Mollick disagreed commenting on the low projection by M&M compared to PEL.

M&M responded that is not their recommended projection.

Jim Mollick commented that different birth rates were used.

M&M responded that they (PEL) manipulated the birth rates driving the projections.

Ms. Aubrey-Larcinese questioned if the Milone & MacBroom report included a comparison with the PEL study.

Dr. Zerbe responded that Milone & MacBroom was not asked to compare the studies.

Ms. Aubrey-Larcinese commented that comparing the two studies is outside of what we have asked M&M to do and we can take the data and do a side by side comparison, reiterating that it is not something we asked them to do.

Jim Mollick commented that they looked at it and it is important to know that both studies are pretty much the same.

Mr. Ryan commented that PEL’s study reported a slow and steady decline in enrollment over the course of a ten-year period and M&M reports an upward trend.

Jim Mollick disagreed saying the figures are pretty close. He also commented on T-1 in that the numbers are so small it is not significant.

M&M clarified that they are not combined and it just depends on where they are reported at that point in time, adding they are not additional students.

Jim Mollick commented on the 225 homes adding that there are no new homes being built in Worcester.

M&M responded that there are several single family developments per his conversation with Worcester adding that they may not be public knowledge yet or come in for final approvals yet.

Jim Mollick commented on the only new homes going in are an over age 55 community.

M&M responded that their information is different from that.

M&M responded that the number of 225 was not just for Worcester, it was for Lower Providence as well adding they are confident in the information received on new homes.

Jim Mollick asked if there is a figure used for students per household on homes built.

M&M responded they use .85 in Worcester for the properties surveyed.

Jim Mollick commented he was given a figure of .35 adding the average price of a home built is over $600,000 and most of those kids end up going to private school.
M&M commented that in collecting those multipliers, they are specifically looking at students attending Methacton schools only.

Jim Mollick asked if the numbers came from the Planning Commission.

M&M responded the numbers came from their own analysis as well as conversations with the Planning Commission.

Jim Mollick questioned if the birth rate is the most important piece of data relied on in doing the projections.

M&M responded that projections cannot really be done with one piece of data, adding that you need various factors.

Jim Mollick questioned if the high tax rate in Worcester was taken into account.

M&M responded that they are aware of the high tax rate Worcester.

Jo Orsin commented on focusing on fact-based evidence. Questioned the historical data and how far back does it go for the model used.

M&M responded the data goes back to the 2004-2005 school year to get an understanding of what the trends have been and what has changed since then. We go back the last 6 or 7 years as far as statistics.

Jo Orsin questioned if there is a comfort level that it includes pre-recession and post-recession.

M&M confirmed.

Jo Orsin questioned other than birth rate, can you remind us of the other factors included in your model.

M&M responded that the primary factors that drive the model are first the cohort survival rates or the persistency ratios, and anticipated housing sales are the two key factors in addition to the birth rate.

John Ferraro commented on the graph on slide 22 and the bottom most value on the Y axis looks like about 4,000 and questioned why it isn’t zero.

M&M responded that the bottom table shows a true representation of what the percent change is and if we were to make an axis of 0 to 6,000, nobody would be able to tell the difference between any of the numbers.

John Ferraro asked if the bottom value were 0, what is the effect on the trend line and how would it change as a visual representation.

Mr. Boardman commented that if you introduce 0 there, it masks the effect or discussion that we are looking for. In this graph we are looking at the difference in the impact on the total enrollment of different underlying assumptions and different models. In conclusion, using 0 there would pull the lines so close together you couldn’t really understand what is a low risk, high risk model approach. We want to be able to understand the relationships between the underlying assumptions that are fed into the model and what the impact is on the projections.
John Ferraro commented that this type of representation invites a certain type of interpretation and could inadvertently give the impression that enrollment is projected to be, at some point in the near future, less than half of what it had been at the beginning of the period.

M&M responded that their professional experience has been most people read the numbers on the Y axis and in presenting this type of data 12-18 times annually, the general consensus is they understand the context of what we are presenting.

John Ferraro commented that this type of representation is an exaggeration of the divergence between the different halves and size of decline in enrollment. It might be interpreted as an enrollment trend over time adding that a portion of the graph is missing.

John Andrews commented on the last year for T-1 being 2010-2011. Referring to the graph on slide 22, he agrees with the M&M high estimate provided. Students per home sale is on the low side due to significant economic changes occurring. Persistency ratios utilized are not reflective of increasing home sales. The middle line is underestimating what is going to happen considering current economics in our region. Asked M&M to speak to the accuracy in their projections done in recent years. Commented on the significance of an increase of about 33% in enrollment for K-4 private and parochial schools from last year to this year. That change has to be associated with home sales. Significant demographics in this area such as an increase in young families in apartments which would affect Audubon. The upper projection is the one we should be dealing with.

Mr. Boardman questioned if there is a trend relative to the millennials with housing, birth rates, etc. or any evidence that it has influenced your models in recent years.

M&M responded that the millennial generation has some impact on enrollment projections specifically with a decline in birth rates in recent years adding that the perception of wanting to live in apartments and moving away from the suburbs is severely overstated. There is an element of truth but it is marginal and not a massive change. There is still a demand for buying a home in the suburbs and attractive places to raise children. Attentive to it, as far as the parameters that are already in the models, but not significant enough to change the model approach.

Mr. Boardman questioned that when we take the models into a more detailed approach with capacity, along the way can we take side by side comparisons with the high and the medium models?

M&M confirmed depending on the feasibility for both.

Mr. Boardman is hopeful that as we work through the process, choosing model A or model B (high or medium) does not dramatically change the decision.

**Capacity**
Mr. Winters commented on 4 sections per 4 grades and 22 students max for K-2 referring to slide 36 and not coming up with the same 450.

M&M responded that 22 was not used as the basis for planning capacity adding that the guidance in developing this capacity was to use District policy of 25 for K-4. We can use 22 for K-2 as one of the options in our discussions but we wanted to establish the capacities based on the buildings themselves and what they can be loaded at. If it is the Board’s desire to use a different
number for that capacity, we would be willing to do that as well, reiterating that it was our understanding to use that maximum capacity for the buildings.

Mr. Boardman questioned from a moving forward perspective, is it a significant amount of work or operationalized to say here is what it looks like from 25, 22, and 20.

M&M responded that it is really a Board decision on what you are effectively going to do, adding that as a consultant, the study should have parameters as to how to derive that capacity. We are looking for input on what that final number should be before we begin going through the scenario planning process adding that it greatly impacts that. If we are testing a medium and high as requested as well as two different planning numbers, there are so many “if thens”; we need to have concrete parameters rather than based on so many “what ifs” that it is difficult to implement.

Mr. Winters commented on going with 450 per school is 2250 with the possibility of closing any of those 5 schools, puts you at 1800 and our current enrollment is 1718 - over 1800 with 100% 25 students per class.

M&M responded that the 1800 number with one of the schools offline takes into account a 90% utilization allowance with a 10% buffer.

Mr. Winters commented that the 10% buffer or wiggle room is something that needs to be discussed.

Ms. Aubrey-Larcinese questioned that assuming the capacity information is correct, did the analysis consider the daily logistics of the school day for example at Audubon, we currently have students eating lunch at 10:30 in the morning. If we had 495 students at each elementary school, what would we have to do to the student day to make that happen; how does arrival and dismissal work; how does moving students through the cafeteria and hallways work.

M&M responded that in order to make that happen, we would have to observe every movement in every building and that was not in our perusal, adding that the building administrators would be the ones to determine how that works and those conversations will need to take place among the Board, Administration and building principals. Next steps for what we are doing is having those conversations but they don’t happen at this part of the planning process.

Ms. Aubrey-Larcinese agreed that makes sense and it is a conversation we will have to have. She questioned if any of the homeroom eligible spaces are currently being used as special education services.

M&M responded that there may some cases where special education services are being utilized in rooms eligible for homeroom class space. Every room is being utilized and whether that homeroom eligible class was used for special education, or resource space or offices in some cases, adding that there needs to be discussion on whether that space is necessary to support that program and that needs to be done with someone intimately familiar with the building.

Ms. Aubrey-Larcinese questioned that if we are at that 495 number, do we have the space for the special education services we are currently providing to our students.

M&M reiterated that they did not audit the programmatic use of the buildings. Special education comes in various shapes and sizes depending on needs. You would have to go program by
program in that building to determine what size space is needed. That discussion needs to be held at a much different level than what we working with now.

Mr. Ryan commented that it is important for the Board to establish if we are sticking with the target number or policy class size number for K-2 adding that his preference is to stick with the target so we don’t go over the max number in the policy.

Mr. Boardman commented that his goal is to make those decisions at the end and give them their marching orders.

Mr. Ryan commented that with two board members missing and it being a town hall style meeting, he wasn’t sure if the Board could vote.

Mr. Boardman commented that we are just giving guidance and not taking a formal vote.

Mr. Ryan commented on not having much time to review the report but recommends advising them to use their preference of using the mid projections adding that we need to move forward. He commented on the capacity piece and questions that can’t be answered by M&M as they are questions that need to be answered by the building principals adding that he doesn’t see the usefulness in discussion with M&M on capacity at this point.

Mr. Boardman commented that the point of this is to have a dialogue to understand what we know and if we have questions. M&M represents their abilities appropriately and pointing out to us as a school district, we have to do our own internal work adding that it’s very valuable and not a waste of time. There will be a list of questions that as a District we have to answer ourselves and understand. No one is rushing the process, we are going through the process in trying to understand some of the numbers and ask questions tonight as a starting point and it is also a starting point for the capacity study. Is it realistic to balance out our schools with half-day and full-day kindergarten and balance it out if one school is closed? We need to feel confident in our footprint and where we are spending our money and focusing our efforts, reiterating the value of this discussion.

Ms. Rees commented on the confidence in the enrollment projections and the issue is capacity. When we see numbers of 450 and 495 in a building, it is not realistic and we see the unbalanced numbers in two of our schools. The importance of class size, reiterating comments from last week, that we are here to give the best education to our children as efficiently as possible but our concern is that efficiency piece. She commented that M&M needs from us that class size number and full or half day kindergarten.

Mr. Boardman commented that the proposal is clear in that full and half-day kindergarten and with and without the closing of schools. Those are the scenarios they will be looking at but they need the parameters to go ahead with that.

Ms. Rees commented that redistricting should be a part of that so we know how many special education students. What we don’t want are students taking tests in copy rooms to save money.

M&M responded that we don’t know the individual needs in each building, nor should they with FERPA. When we look at the size of buildings and homeroom classrooms, our planning numbers are right in that sweet spot but those conversations need to happen with the principals and leadership team and what is needed to support the educational mission. Whether or not you need a computer room is not our decision to make. Using Arrowhead as an example in commenting
on very safe planning numbers. It’s a process with a lot of hard conversations and we will provide guidance. These numbers are a good starting point.

Mr. Boardman questioned how to infuse the uniqueness of individual students into the models. Do you have the data compiled to the point now or is it fairly straight forward because we can’t make decisions on what we are going to do until we are comfortable with the numbers when we infuse that piece in.

Dr. Zerbe commented that it should not be a mathematical exercise and each one of the scenarios is workable and it is really a matter of as those students come to us as defined today and potentially in the future, how we program for them appropriately. Can’t tell how many special needs students in each building based on the scenario until we get the data from Milone.

M&M commented that in their history they have never gone to the level of detail in planning particular students in an area, adding that number is going to change and the District should have flexibility in their program to add a classroom if needed.

Mr. Boardman commented on how much of this has to be sequential and how much has to be parallel. Do we have the data and enough knowledge so we can set up what we need to do to infuse the detailed knowledge and the different parameters that are important to the District or do we have to wait until the end when they deliver their information and then work on that?

Dr. Zerbe commented that you may recall 12-18 months ago when we made previous recommendations we went through those exercises adding that my staff and I are capable of moving forward and looking at the scenarios using the information we have today to make those predictable assumptions associated with what we need in each of the schools. Some of that has already been done.

Mr. Dorn agreed with Mr. Ryan in picking a scenario and it seems like the experts say the mid scenario is the one that makes sense and we’ll need to provide that direction adding that it makes sense to him as well. There is a need to validate the capacity issue by school. Administration has to look at the floor plans and report back to the Board and compare with what is said in this report for checks and balances.

Dr. Zerbe asked Milone and MacBroom if that work was done with the principals and would you agree that this is the validation of those spaces as concurred with the building principals.

M&M responded that they would like to have a conversation with the principals to confirm with them again and establish their comfort with the numbers.

Mr. Dorn reiterated that confirmation is needed with the Administration, principals and M&M to have that baseline number to do any type of planning. As far as target efficiency and utilization of the assets, the Board needs to define that whether it’s K-2 at 22 and 3-4 at 25 – those become baseline numbers but we need to have the flexibility if we need to go 1 or 2 over. Have the same parameters with a max of 25 adding that it is a critical number. Regarding the list of 5 or 7 parameters when we think about redistricting and capacity, it is important to maintain the integrity of the neighborhoods adding that as we get to the wrap portion of this, we need to have discussion around how we rank those 5 or 7 things, and is there anything missing that we should consider. As we get to the homestretch, the redistricting gets defined by that.

Mr. Winters agreed with Mr. Dorn adding that we need to officially decide what we are doing with the enrollment study and need to understand what homeroom eligible and the usage needed
in special education and those scenarios and assumptions based on our policies and what that policy is. Respectfully disagrees with Dr. Zerbe and M&M and he is not accepting this capacity study as the validation at this point adding that we need hands-on validation with community members, board members and administrators to touch the schools. The number of 495 that Ms. Rees mentioned is real for those that have touched the schools. He reiterated that he cannot accept a validation based on someone 250 miles away that hasn’t walked into those schools to validate what those rooms are being used for adding we need to have a greater connectivity in this because this is a critical point in the process.

Ms. Aubrey-Larcinese added to Mr. Winters’ comments in that it is important to include our teachers in that discussion. Questioned the capacity planning slide showing total classrooms varying by school but total capacity does not and how does that happen.

Mr. Boardman responded that does not represent the total capacity of the school adding that there should be another column saying total capacity for the school. This is the planning capacity just done with the math.

Ms. Aubrey-Larcinese questioned how we can have planning capacity be the same for 26 classrooms vs. 29.

M&M responded that if you were take 29 and multiply it by 22 or 25, you come up with the maximum capacity but the reality is you can’t educate within that capacity. What we are looking at is a reasonable model to sustain adding that you plan a school on sections per grade to allow students to matriculate through so whether its 27, 28, or 29, you still don’t have a full 5 to be able to make it a 5 section per grade school and then you look at it and say if we were able to make this a 3 section per grade school, allowing students to move through evenly keeping grade cohorts together – reducing it by 125 – is that an efficient use of a building and the answer is definitely not. In conclusion, despite the small differences in the total number of classrooms, doesn’t change the model of which we are proposing to be viewing these buildings. In talking with building principals, could there be a certain nuance that can impact that number – definitely. That is why you don’t see a dramatic change in the planning number.

Ms. Aubrey-Larcinese commented that she would like to go school by school and room by room and get an analysis of what each classroom is currently being used for and then what it would be used for in a redistricting scenario. We don’t have all the pieces that we need adding that M&M has done everything we have asked of them, but the information that the Board needs to make the decisions to take the step is the missing piece. We can’t move forward until we receive this information.

Ms. Rees commented that when we say we want teachers involved, it is not due to a lack of trust with the Administration, we want to make the right decision and we need to get all of the information. In terms of capacity, it’s the practical piece that we are nervous about.

Jo Orsin commented that we need to base this on what we want for our students and not what is possible to achieve as far as logistics. We want to find a middle ground to maximize education and efficiency. Is the January timeline still in the realm when we start to consider all of these important details that we haven’t even scratched the surface yet?

M&M commented that we are getting into the weeds adding that early in a process like this, you never try to get into the weeds. Our recommendation is and has been that the specific needs of individual students on an annual basis completely changes the drive classroom need. You need to have a standard deployment model for your buildings of how you want to deliver education
across the board for similar size buildings, which you truly have, and we are splitting hairs on 27, 26, 29, 28. You’ve already carved out your art and computer spaces, half of the work is done. You need to look at what each building needs to deliver the Board’s educational mission which should be similar across the schools so what is that standard deployment model that you need to deliver.

Jo Orsin questioned if we are in the ballpark on the timing of this.

M&M responded that if we can get past the what ifs and what the numbers are and actually drive toward getting a thoughtful process and not letting these questions that are very minute details in a larger plan bog us down, then we have a very reasonable process, however, if we are going to debate the minutia of things that are outside of our control, no timeline is reasonable because we will just be mired in this discussion we are having tonight.

Jo Orsin commented that right now we are limiting our discussion with the five elementary schools without thinking of other options as far as incorporating any excess capacity at the 5th and 6th grade levels and would like a better understanding of the capacity issues at the elementary schools. She questioned if there is any desire to expand this beyond the elementary schools or any other out-of-the-box ideas.

Mr. Boardman responded that right now we are focused on the elementary schools.

Andrew Sandner commented on keeping the discussion on the elementary school enrollment data. If the consideration is to close a school, then the high model should be used. Need to involve the community and the committee that he is on would like to look at the floor plans and needs to be more engaged. Referring to one of the graphs, planning capacity of 450 is based on 25 per class when our average class size is 21.6 so these multiples should be multiples of 22 not 25. Numbers at Audubon don’t make sense. Special education criteria need to be factored in and room by room analysis has to be done and provided to the community.

Mr. Boardman commented that the Board is engaging the community. We understand that M&M is not tasked with certain things and we need to figure out if the numbers they give us are realistic and numbers may need adjusting that our team will need to make. Favors getting the community and teachers more involved.

Andrew Sandner responded regarding community involvement.

Mr. Boardman commented on getting community involvement and wanting everyone to feel comfortable adding that we are trying to work through the process and feels we are all more comfortable with M&M which is a move forward.

Sandy Fischer commented on the capacity at Audubon being too small for the current number of students and we don’t want to set up the rest of our schools at 25 students to a class with a goal of 90% capacity; it might be too tight for us. What physically might fit somewhere, doesn’t mean it will fit for us. Audubon is already at 91% and it is too tight so maybe we don’t want to make that our goal; maybe 85% so we have the room for additional students and that’s not the 26th child in the classroom, but the 23rd.

Mr. Boardman commented that we didn’t ask M&M to walk through all of the schools for total footprint and when we make our decisions, we will have to take into account the uniqueness of the building adding that the numbers may look similar but structure and layouts are very different.
Jim Mollick commented on the Board micro-managing when it comes down to specifics in the classrooms. Questioned if the student enrollment of 450 was based on 25 students per class quoting PDE numbers for each building with classes of 25 being much higher at 500 plus.

M&M responded that those capacity numbers are assuming a different number of classrooms are being use for homeroom classes.

Jim Mollick commented that these numbers come from PDE for grades K-4. Based on PDE numbers, we have an excess capacity in the elementary schools of about 1,000 students. Knowing there is an excess in capacity of 1,000 seats, would you say those schools are overcrowded, taking Audubon out of the equation.

M&M responded in disagreement with the over capacity of 1,000 seats. Walking through and looking at an empty building does not tell you how that building needs to operate and function and ultimately it is how you wish to serve your students. Our capacity numbers were developed based on four sections per grade adding that we have a proven track record of setting space, utilizing space and being able to guide through the process and to say that this number, which anyone can print from the internet, is in fact the number to guide the educational mission here is a little off base to be honest with you.

Mr. Boardman commented that he is struggling with what the question is.

Jim Mollick commented that the question is that there are actual, official figures adding that these figures (on the screen) are not official and arbitrarily decrease the capacity of the building from the official capacity of the building. M&M took them down to those figures (on the screen) which restricts the capacity and the class size in the building and he’s trying to figure out why adding that I know why, because M&M is taking the class size down.

Dr. Zerbe responded that this is a functional analysis to say 4 sections per grade and that is how the math works. He (Milone) is not saying this is the capacity of the building to its maximum. The numbers you shared are in line with what the PlanCon document suggests and are the official capacities of each building but they are different from the numbers here and it is not because we subtracted from those numbers, it is because we started with 4 sections per grade and went that way.

Jim Mollick commented that those numbers don’t reflect the class size of 25, adding that some class sizes are 18 at the elementary schools.

Mr. Boardman commented that the numbers in the last column do not represent the total capacity of each school and what drives the total capacity is how you use the building. If we had a need for 18 special services classrooms, that would significantly change the capacity of that building. M&M numbers are focusing on the math of if we want this many sections per grade and we want a class size of 25, what does that add up to. That does not suggest what the true total capacity is.

Jim Mollick questioned if there were multiple classes with at least 18.

Dr. Zerbe responded that there are some classes with 18.

Jim Mollick commented that to give the impression that we have class sizes of 25 is wrong. A lot of the K-2 classes have 18 students, not 22.
Mr. Ryan stated the class sizes for K-2 adding that the only class with less than 20 is first grade.

Jim Mollick commented that Mr. Ryan spoke about the middle projection not showing a decline in enrollment where numbers show it drops in 2026 in overall enrollment. According to your chairman you are looking at 3 scenarios. One of them is to do nothing, one of them is to redistrict and the other is to close a school. When you close a school, it deals with the overall enrollment and why the study was based on overall enrollment.

Ms. Aubrey-Larcinese commented that part of the reason is that the options and scenarios we are looking at of redistricting or possibly closing a school, we can’t do that for Skyview, Arcola or high school. Those schools are what they are. The only real area for potential change is in K-4 and as Mr. Boardman said earlier, that is our focus for tonight.

Jim Mollick commented the reason we need to close a school is because of capacity not because of enrollment, adding that we have so much extra capacity including the upper grades. Our enrollment could go up and we still have extra capacity with the real issue in the upper grades as the real capacity issue.

Mr. Boardman commented that the discussion for tonight is K-4 and we need to move on.

John Andrews, commented in agreement with Andrew Sandner’s statement regarding the planning capacity table not doing justice with what our educational system is with reference to special education classrooms, adding that the committee asked for specific information and we still have not received it. The capacity issue has to talk to regular education and special needs students school by school. He distributed copies of a revised capacity planning table with a 10% buffer that he devised. He showed the number of classrooms by school with 4 sections per grade utilizing 90 rooms with 10 flex rooms and special education, etc. of 23 rooms. In conclusion, we can’t close Audubon or Arrowhead due to special education needs. The second conclusion is that vs. 45 pull-out rooms now, we could have only 33 in the projection period and that may not be doable. Third conclusion is there is no space for 12 more kindergarten rooms for full day kindergarten. Fourth conclusion is redistricting is needed. He reiterated this entire discussion since June 2014, we need to accommodate regular classroom students and special needs students.

Ms. Hackett questioned that it is now almost 11:00 p.m. We have been doing this for almost four hours and is there a plan for how we will continue.

Mr. Boardman commented that two more people would like to speak and then we’ll give some guidance to M&M.

Jen Zavertnik, Lower Providence, commented in support of M&M’s second opinion study on enrollment, but is lost on Audubon’s capacity numbers being just under 90% efficiency. Audubon is overcrowded with lunches starting at 10:30 a.m. Going forward, suggests not making all the schools as crowded as Audubon. Commented on the uniqueness of Arrowhead and 25 students in those pie shaped rooms without doors is a lot. Thompson’s study said the number of Arrowhead classrooms is 26 – don’t know where you got 29.

M&M responded that the 29 rooms at Arrowhead includes the music, art and computer lab and you will see that difference across the other buildings as well.

Mary Hull, Lower Providence, commented on the capacity report specifically, Arrowhead. As a volunteer, she went room by room adding that home and school volunteers would be happy to do
this. She commented on the unique shapes of Arrowhead’s classrooms and keep that in mind when considering capacity as well as the percentage of special needs and ESL students.

Joe Bickleman, Audubon, commented on Arcola being 6, 7, and 8 as it once was and making Skyview 4 and 5. Doing that would make your decision on closure and realignment a little easier to deal with, adding you would also have space for full-day kindergarten.

Mr. Boardman commented that the first thing we need to do is to have the school planning capacities validated. Dr. Zerbe will work with M&M, Administration and teachers to validate that. Then a quick note back to the Board that it has been validated as is or with changes. That information will then be shared with the public as well.

Ms. Rees asked if we can be clear on what planning capacity is.

Dr. Zerbe commented on the numbers shown and that they concur with the principal’s review.

Mr. Dorn commented that we have to define capacity and then how to utilize capacity.

Dr. Zerbe asked the Board if they are comfortable with going forward with confirming the numbers on slide 34 (on the screen).

Mr. Winters stated that he would like to have a committee or home and school or some independent aspect to that process.

Mr. Boardman suggested touching base with home and school although he is not sure what information they can provide in addition to what teachers and the administration can provide but if people want to do that, we can try that.

Mr. Dorn commented that it is just a floor plan game. Give the Board the floor plan with the counts and we can go back with questions on any variances.

Mr. Winters commented that we have gone through the process many times asking for things a certain way and involving the community will provide the basis for a more acceptance of that understanding. He also pointed out that this is based on a 25 K-2 so the 450 will work based on math but not on our policies.

Mr. Boardman stated the guidance to Dr. Zerbe is work with the Administration in each of the buildings to coordinate between them and M&M and teachers and if community members from the home and school wants to review that and be involved in some way.

Mr. Winters commented that if we didn’t want to use home and school, we can use committee members from committees that have already been established.

Mr. Boardman commented that from his perspective, more people involved in the review is understanding how the space is used to either confirm what M&M is telling us vs. what reality is.

Mr. Winters is saying that if home and school goes around but a classroom might have been identified that is only used 2 hours per week. Doing it jointly will help us have a better understanding as a community how much that room is being used as opposed to just being handed over.
Mr. Boardman commented on that being utilization and is it a classroom that has 22 students, is it a mix of kids, is that classroom used all day long 5 days per week, and that feeds into when they say this building is a capacity of so many students. We go back to them and agree based on this additional information or we say that 400 number is really 325, etc. That’s where the work really is in determining the needs of the students.

Mr. Winters commented from planning purposes other than the assumption based on K-2, I don’t distrust any of the numbers presented, I want to know what the verification provides.

Ms. Aubrey-Larcinese commented that we need a verification of just the first several columns of this total capacity table not utilization, just validate the physical space is what we have in each building and then separately we dig deeper into how the spaces are being utilized. Two separate validations.

Mr. Boardman commented on validating the K-2 numbers being based on 22.

Mr. Ryan asked for confirmation from the other board members.

Mr. Dorn responded he is fine with that but just asks for flexibility for that one or two if needed.

Dr. Zerbe asked the Board what is the number. Currently Milone and MacBroom show 25 students per section and then factored in a 10% buffer. Is it a maximum of 22? It can be a maximum of 22, but we’ll go with 23.

Mr. Boardman commented that it is 22 for K-2 and 25 for the upper grades.

Ms. Aubrey-Larcinese commented that our policy says it is not to exceed 25 adding we don’t have wiggle room at 25. I think we need to be looking at 22 from K-2 and 24 for the other grades. How do we accommodate more students if our policy says not to exceed 25?

Mr. Boardman asked if we want to simplify it to 22 across the board.

Mr. Ryan commented it should be 22 grades K-2 and 25 grades 3-4 as we have been doing.

Dr. Zerbe clarified that if you go with 22 for K-2, you will be building in additional space capacity adding that 25 across the board that 10% buffer may automatically do that.

M&M responded that applying the 10% buffer across through K-4, gives you an average of 22.5.

Dr. Zerbe commented that going with their current numbers actually plans an average of 22.5 per classroom.

Mr. Boardman explained the math in taking 25 in all grades or 22 in K-2.

M&M clarified that reserving two rooms for a bubble is great if it doesn’t take away from anything else, adding that you won’t need the flexible spaces.

Mr. Boardman commented on going with 22 and 25 with a 10% buffer on both.

Mr. Winters commented that the assumption should be based on practice – 22 and 25.
M&M commented that they also need the number of homeroom eligible spaces under a standard climate that you feel would meet the needs.

Mr. Boardman commented that number will come from Administration.

M&M asked the Board what is important to them and get your comments back to us and we will merge them in with what we’ve heard tonight from everyone to come up with a set for you that you will be able to adopt as part of this process.

Mr. Boardman commented that we will get that out to the Board and they will be ranked and averaged out and go with the averages.

The meeting ended at 11:20 p.m.