



CANTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

New Galvin Middle School Project Puts Options on the Table

For Immediate Release

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CANTON, Mass.— Among the many decisions to be considered before any improvements can be made to the Galvin Middle School, is whether to keep the current grade configuration – grades six through eight – or add fifth-graders. The topic came up for discussion at a community meeting that was held in late October at which School Committee members addressed the pros and cons with parents/guardians, teachers and residents.

“One of the biggest questions I’ve received is, ‘Is the end predetermined?’ and I’m here to tell you absolutely it is not,” said Canton School Committee member Kristian Merenda. “The most important thing we can do is hear as many voices as possible, but also make sure everybody is as well informed as you can be about the tradeoffs with each choice.”

Galvin Middle School is outdated. It was built over 50 years ago and needs substantial educational, capital and maintenance improvements. In 2021, Canton was accepted into the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) program, which allows for a portion of the building costs to be offset by the state as long as the project adheres to established guidelines.

People attending the meeting were asked to write a note with considerations the School Committee should keep in mind when making the decision surrounding reconfiguration.

Some questioned how fifth grade students would interact with eighth-graders; others wondered how the district was planning to review concerns that would result from reconfiguration at the middle school and elementary school levels

“Grade level separation is automatically embedded in the project whether it’s six through eight or a five through eight,” said Justin Thibeault from Ai3 Architects. “We do want controlled interactions, that is key. That is when the progression of students really occurs.”

Thibeault said that the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) reported that 21 percent of schools in Massachusetts are sixth through eighth grade, 15 percent are fifth through eighth grade, and 64 percent are other configurations including K-8.

School officials say they have spent a good deal of time considering the social needs and differences of children in fifth grade compared to those in eighth grade.

“Middle school is a tough time,” said Galvin Middle School Principal Jonathan Mulhern. “The great part about this opportunity in front of us is that we can design a state-of-the-art facility that has room for all the teaming and all the supports that we want to put in place for every student who would

attend here. Five through eight or six through eight—whatever the ultimate decision is, we want to have adequate state-of-the-art facilities to support students in every way they need support at this age level.”

School officials say there would be very limited interaction between fifth and eighth- graders with the exception of some clubs and community service opportunities. Busing concerns could be addressed by having seating assigned by grade.

“We also need to look at the enrollment in our elementary schools,” said Canton School Superintendent Derek Folan. “Crowding was one of the reasons we were accepted into the MSBA program to begin with. Moving fifth-graders to the middle school would alleviate that, while opening up space at the existing elementary schools that could be used for art and music programs, as well as much needed collaborative learning spaces.”

Anyone who missed the meeting can view a recording of it [HERE](#).

Future meetings are planned on November 13th at 7 p.m. and November 29th at 7 p.m. Both meetings are open to the public and will be held at Galvin Middle School.

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