Questions regarding the Committee Role

1. **What is the role of the consultant, and the sub-consultants?**

The consultant is to work with, guide and advise the Long Range Planning Committee, and is expected to:

- Review, verify, and analyze school enrollment projections, population trends, and forecasted demographics.
- Examine all school facilities, resources, and technology infrastructure with respect to current and future condition and capacity.
- Consider various options for grade and geographic educational grouping, configuration, and organization.
- Identify other potential opportunities beyond the existing programs that are offered.
- Prepare a recommended strategic plan with timelines for the immediate and long term future.
- Examine implications of the recommendations on academic achievement, budget, infrastructure, facilities, and transportation, as well as impact on children and families.

The consultant provides the technical expertise to the all-volunteer committee. The committee will make the recommendations to the Board of Education. Along with Milone and MacBroom (MMI), the sub-consultants to MMI are Silver Petrucelli Architects (Bill Silver) and Dr. Tom Jokubaitis. Silver Petrucelli provides expertise regarding the facilities and sites, and Dr. Tom Jokubaitis provides expertise regarding programming.

2. **I have tried to review the website and the data is confusing. Some plans contradict other plans. How can someone follow this data?**

The data on the website is all of the data that the committee has received from the consultants. At each meeting, the consultants provide data and information, and the committee reviews, responds, and gives the consultants a charge for the next meeting. Therefore, if the Committee responds strongly against a concept given one meeting, the same concept may be completely reconfigured for the next meeting. It is best to review the data in order, beginning in June, to understand the progression of the proposals and alternatives.

3. **How were the enrollment projections done? How do we know that the school population will decline? Do they take into account potential "turn over" in neighborhoods?**

Please review that PowerPoint from October 15, Existing Conditions PowerPoint to the Board of Education. It includes all the most recent data included in the enrollment projections along with an explanation of the consultant’s methodology. It can be found at [http://www.milforded.org/page.cfm?p=10014](http://www.milforded.org/page.cfm?p=10014).
4. **Who is on the Committee? Who attends the meetings? Are there alternates?**

The Committee Member list is available on the Long Range Planning Committee website. [http://www.milforded.org/uploaded/MPSBoard/long_range_planning/20130709_LRPC_members.pdf](http://www.milforded.org/uploaded/MPSBoard/long_range_planning/20130709_LRPC_members.pdf)

Committee member attendance for each meeting is noted in the minutes of that meeting. There are no alternate members.

The meetings are open to the public, and on average 15 community members attend each meeting.

**What is being decided and when?**

5. **What is the timeline for decisions?**

The Long Range Planning Committee will present several recommendations to the Board of Education in March. It is expected the Board of Education will take the necessary time to evaluating these recommendations.

6. **What has been decided already?**

The Long Range Planning Committee has made no decisions except to reduce the number of transitions.

7. **Will a Long Term decision be made prior to the Near Term decision on elementary schools being implemented? What is the nature of the Long Term versus Short Term? Is the committee not focused on the Long Range plan?**

The Long Range Planning Committee is very clear that it does not want a short term decision to be made without the Long Term plan and a clear transition path to make sure that the two work as seamlessly as possible.

However, Long Term changes that include any facility renovations, additions, construction, or reconfiguration will have a long time frame for completion. Therefore there will most likely be interim short term changes to reduce the number of transitions. Again, the Committee is clear that it wishes any short term changes will be part of the long range plan.

8. **Will there be another public forum?**

The Long Range Planning Committee will not be holding an additional public forum. However, once the Long Range Planning Committee presents its recommendations to the Board of Education, there will be additional opportunity for the public to comment. Meanwhile, members of the public can always express their thinking at Board of Education meetings.
Where is the K-8 option?

9. Why did the Committee not review any K-8 configurations? Have you read the literature regarding K-8?

The K-8 model was considered early on in the process, but was thought not to fit well in the existing buildings due to the modern needs of middle school students, such as for Science labs, Band and String rooms, and computer labs, as well as most elementary schools relying on multi-function rooms rather than standalone auditoriums, cafeterias, or gymnasiums. Additionally, some committee members were hesitant to mix Kindergarteners with 8th graders.

The consultants are aware of literature regarding the use of K-8 in schools. Please keep in mind that many of these studies look at the effects on large urban school districts that transition to K-8, and there is far less information on the effects to suburban districts. Here in Connecticut, K-8 programs are exclusively found in large urban districts or in very small districts, where the K-8 schools is the only school in the community, and 9-12 grades are served by regional high schools. In the urban districts, the K-8 schools are recently built and designed specifically for the K-8 population. Many balance enrollment through inter and intra district magnet programs.

Given comments heard at the Public Forum, the K-8 model will be presented in various configurations to the committee.

Questions regarding Closing of Schools

10. What options for school closing are being considered?

The Committee is looking at the full range of options, including closing schools. This is not taken lightly.

11. Have you determined which schools will be closed?

No. All the facilities have been analyzed but none has, as of this time, been recommended to be closed.

12. Why is there no 8 elementary school model?

The existing 8 elementary schools are considered “status quo.” (The three existing middle schools and two high schools are also considered status quo). All options that have been presented are alternatives to the status quo.

13. Why can’t we just change back to the way the system was in 2009? Why do we need redistricting if we are going back to the old arrangement?
In 2009, there were 9 elementary schools; there are now 8 elementary schools. With the closing of Simon Lake and demographic changes in the past five years, simply “going back” to the previous configurations would not be possible.

14. **Why is Live Oaks singled out? What will happen to the programming at Live Oaks? Live Oaks is full, why close it? When will Live Oaks close?**

First of all, no decision has been made to close Live Oaks School. In the Power Point, Live Oaks closing was presented as a possibility. Having said this, the planning study included an assessment of the condition of every school facility. This facility evaluation determined schools most in need of facility upgrades. The needed upgrades include instructional areas, for example, undersized media centers as well as the need for new roofs, new boilers and other major systems. Live Oaks has more facility needs than most other elementary schools.

Additionally, the population of Milford is not spread evenly, and there are far less students on the East side of Milford than on the West side. In order to keep more equity in the size of schools and classes, it makes more sense to close an Elementary School on the East side of Milford.

If the Board of Education ultimately decides on a Long Range Plan that closes Live Oaks, it is expected that the programs that are offered in that school would be relocated.

15. **Do you remember what happened to Simon Lake? How much did the closing of Simon Lake cost? What is Simon Lake currently being used for?**

Simon Lake was closed because the Board of Education faced a $2.2 million cut in the School System’s budget. This decision was not taken lightly, and the effect to that community has been considered by the Committee. Closing Simon Lake did not cost anything. There were costs associated with the reconfiguration, e.g., moving costs, compensation to teachers to pack and unpack their classrooms, overtime costs for custodians/maintenance workers, additional transportation costs.

The building is used partly the Milford Police Department for Police Training; partly by the Boys and Girls Club; and partly by the school district for a materials resource center. Until last fall, it was also used as the FEMA disaster recovery center.

**Questions regarding High School Options**

16. **Could you consider 1.5 High Schools, one being general education, the other a magnet or specialty?**

That is an interesting option that we will bring up at the next meeting.
17. How can you consider an option that would cost $250 million? Who will pay $250 million for a new High School? Have you considered the effect on taxes?

The Committee is very concerned with the cost of any facility investment, including a new high school. It is considering cost, programming, and the effect on the community with all options it is considering. However, it is appropriate that the Committee at least look at an option of a single high school, as again, it was charged to look at various options.

18. Please explain the notion that a student population of 700 - 800 high school students will adversely affect programming when compared to a population of 1400 - 1600 students.

In High School, students are offered far more specialty programs, such as AP classes. Providing all the programs for a small population at two schools is far less efficient than for a larger population in one school. For example, a course may attract only 4 or 5 students at each of Foran and Law, and, therefore, because of the small enrollment may not be able to be offered. The same course that attracts 10 students at a larger school would have a far greater chance of being offered.

19. What information has been evaluated in an effort to improve the retention of Milford High School students?

This topic was discussed at the November meeting, and the reference material can be found in the PowerPoint titled Alternatives PowerPoint, on the Committee website, http://www.milforded.org/page.cfm?p=10014.

Questions Regarding Redistricting

20. Why does my child have to move? Why do these boundaries unfairly affect some neighborhoods? Why is my street unfairly effected? Will you consider students ability to walk and stay in their neighborhoods? Can you provide a redistricting map?

No redistricting has been proposed or decided. The attendance lines on the Power Point are conceptual. Boundary maps are drawn to test certain configuration models and to make sure that these configurations would work now and in the long-term. Any redistricting, which includes defining attendance areas, would happen AFTER a plan is recommended by this Committee to the Board of Education, and would involve more parent input and outreach to determine boundaries.

21. Have you considered the effect of so many transitions on the students?

The Committee has made it a priority to make this plan work in the Long Term to prevent future unnecessary reconfigurations. It is well understood by the Committee that changing schools are not easy on families, especially those with special needs.
22. **Why is Harborside not in its own District?**

Again, no redistricting has been proposed or decided. Initially there was strong interest to establish a direct feeder pattern from Elementary to Middle schools. In order to do so, while attaining class size parity and efficient facility utilization at the elementary schools, the middle school districts were affected and Harborside would be outside of its district. The Committee came to consensus that the direct feeder was not as important, and rather than a direct feed into Harborside, larger cohorts would be split into Harborside.

23. **Will grandfathering of students be considered?**

Again, no redistricting plan has yet been recommended by the Committee. When the recommendations are made, issues like grandfathering would be taken up, and the Board of Education would engage in parent outreach if a redistricting plan were to be considered. Additionally it is well understood by the Committee and by the Board of Education that some students have already been attended more than two schools in their elementary careers and that all attempts to mitigate their further redistricting should be considered.

**Questions Regarding the Online Survey**

24. **Why is the survey different for students versus parents? Why are you allowing non-parents to take the survey?**

The survey has logic built in that is triggered by certain answers to certain questions. If you answered that you are a parent, for example, you will be asked additional questions regarding choices that only a parent would make. We believe that different groups can offer different insight into their thoughts for the future of Milford Public Schools.

25. **Why is the survey so vague?**

The survey was designed to be completed in less than five minutes. It was intended to get as many responses as possible. Detailed feedback is expected to come via participation in meetings, the public forum, written submissions such as email and letters, and direct conversations.

26. **How do you know the same people don’t submit over and over again?**

The survey records the IP address of each respondent. This allows us to make sure this is not taking place on a large scale. If this proves to be a problem, responses will be redacted. We expect some families will submit more than one survey, and therefore a large overall respondent pool will even out those responses.
27. *Why have paper copies of the survey not been distributed?*

It is expected that most people will be able to access a computer during the time the survey is open. Again, comments and questions are welcome at meetings, the public forum, by writing, or by phone to their elected representatives.

28. *Why can’t we “write-in” responses?*

With thousands of responses, it becomes impossible to tabulate write-in responses. Again, additional comments are welcome via other media.

29. *Why is there no K-8 option?*

Please see the response to question 8.