

**Milton School Committee
Regular Meeting
Milton High School Library
November 13, 2007**

Meeting called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Committee Present: Beirne Lovely, Chair, Lynda Lee Sheridan, Vice Chair, Chris Huban, Mary Kelly and Glenn Pavlicek

Staff Present: Mary Gormley, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Personnel; Paul Hilton, Assistant Superintendent for Business

1. Citizen Speak (Policy BEDH-Residents may speak for up to 3 minutes) –No one came forward

2. Approval of Minutes

Minutes of 10/16/07 were approved*

Move: M. Kelly

Second: G. Pavlicek

Vote: 4-0-0

Minutes of 10/30/07 were approved*

Move: M. Kelly

Second: C. Huban

Vote: 4-0-0

*Ms. Sheridan was not present for the approval of these minutes

3. Pierce Middle School Improvement Plan, John Phelan, Principal

Mr. Phelan went over several slides showing MCAS statistics for grades 6-8 for English/Language Arts and Math over the past few years. He stated the loss of seven positions this year has negatively impacted the Middle School's ability to make the progress they made last year. In going through the slides, Mr. Phelan pointed out the direct correlation between funding programs and student achievement. For example, improvements were made in math scores during the time there was an infusion of programs and focus placed on math (Math Investigations, math coaches and the restructuring of levels to 2/3's above level and 1/3 on level). With regard to Adequate Yearly Progress and the corrective action status, Mr. Phelan explained that Pierce did make AYP in the aggregate; however, they did not make AYP for subgroups. Current subgroups at Pierce include Special Education; African American/Black and Low Income. Mr. Lovely stated he would be interested in knowing if there was a predominance of any one group of students (special education students, students of color or students on free and reduced lunch) who are scoring in the Warning and Needs Improvement categories. Mr. Phelan did not have that information tonight, but will provide the Committee with that data. Mr. Lovely feels the disaggregation of data would be important for the Committee to have when they make their presentation to the Town as to why declining staff is impeding our ability to fight the achievement gap.

Mr. Phelan discussed the corrective action status and the initiatives that have been developed to address this issue. A Leadership Team has been formed and has met several times to discuss programming, curriculum/instruction, student mentoring, parent engagement, professional development and special education. Within each of these areas initiatives have been developed which will target not only the subgroups but all students so everyone can achieve a higher level of success. Mr. Phelan provided the Committee with a packet (Pierce AYP Time Table Accountability Chart) explaining each of these initiatives. For example, under the Programming category 3.4 positions are listed which Pierce would like to add back if funding becomes available. After reviewing the initiatives for Curriculum/Instruction and Special Education, the Committee requested that Mr. Phelan post all the information from this presentation on the website. Mr. Lovely commended Mr. Phelan and his staff for their hard work. He stated the Finance Subcommittee discussed the additional 3.4 FTEs (1.7 for half of the year). After taking into account the impact the reductions in staff have had and recognizing that the necessity of these positions is unexpected and unbudgeted, the Finance Subcommittee believes this situation is a perfect example of a circumstance that would allow the School Committee to approach the Warrant Committee for an allocation from the Reserve Fund. It is the recommendation of the Finance Subcommittee to approach the Warrant Committee for the cost of sustaining the 1.7 FTEs for the remainder of the year. The Committee also discussed the Saturday Pierce Achievers Program and the funding component associated with that program. Mr. Phelan stated the Saturday Pierce Achievers is not included in the 3.4 FTEs; however, they will be drafting a proposal for that program for the Superintendent to review and will look for alternative funding sources. Mr. Lovely asked if members had any comments regarding this plan and if they felt the Committee should approach the Warrant Committee for this transfer from the Reserve Fund. It was the consensus of the Committee that these positions were needed. The Committee and Administration are also in support of the Saturday Achievers Program if alternative sources of funding can be found. Mr. Lovely clarified that if the School Committee cannot obtain these funds, something else may have to give. He requested Administration and Mr. Phelan make a presentation to the Finance Subcommittee on Monday as to how much this request will cost for the remainder of this year and what the impact might be to the system if additional funds are not received from the Reserve Fund. Information regarding the Saturday Achievers Program will be incorporated into this presentation.

Motion was made that subject to the approval of the Finance Subcommittee, the School Committee authorizes Administration and Mr. Phelan to seek to fill the positions articulated on the Accountability Chart. On behalf of the School Committee and Administration, the Finance Subcommittee will approach the Warrant Committee for a Reserve Fund transfer for up to the full amount of those positions as soon as possible.

Move: C. Huban
Second: L. Sheridan
Vote: 5-0-0

4. **FY09 Budget** – The Finance Subcommittee met with Administration to discuss the budget since an amount must be presented to the Warrant Committee by December 1. It was their decision to present a budget which rolls forward the current staff without reflecting any pay raises for the teachers. The amount to carry forward the existing staff and accommodate step increases would be \$717,415. In addition, the Finance Subcommittee asked the Superintendent to take into consideration the following when presenting the budget: the reinstatement of 1.7 FTEs at Pierce Middle School; 5% utility increase;

4% Special Education out of district tuition increases; \$25,000 regular transportation increase and \$7,500 for Technology/Bandwidth expansion. Mr. Lovely explained that with those assumptions we would be presenting a budget of \$32,560,056, a \$901,086 differential when compared to the revised FY08 appropriation. The Warrant Committee will also be shown what a 1% increase of the personnel cost would be and that has been calculated as \$258,082. Additional budget assumptions/proposals include the reinstatement of 3.0 at Milton High; 1.5 Reading Specialists at the elementary level; 1.5 Math Specialists at the elementary level; 1.0 Special Education instructor at Pierce; 1.0 Special Education instructor at Milton High School; \$400,500 to expand full day Kindergarten district wide (22.0); 2.0 for the expansion of Co-taught classrooms; 1.0 Occupational Therapist district wide; elimination of athletic dependence upon outside resources (user fees, Hillside money, Boosters and fund raising) \$286,000; elimination of transportation fees \$181,896; and the elimination of activity fees \$138,000. The Committee discussed that the Occupational Therapy position as well as the 2 for the co-taught classrooms are necessities; due to budget constraints it is unlikely this will be the year fees for sports and activities are eliminated; the 1.0 Special Education teacher at Pierce is needed to meet the inclusion needs of language-based students; the 1.0 FTE at the High School is to assist students in the Alternative Program in an effort to keep students in the Milton school system; the 1.5 Reading Specialists and 1.5 Math Specialists are the coaches; and the 3.0 at the High School are needed to meet the needs of the growing enrollment. Everyone agreed most of these assumptions are not likely to happen absent an override.

With regard to full day Kindergarten, the Committee discussed the costs that would be involved after the grants (approximately \$400,000) and the additional costs to the Town's budget for health care costs. In addition, they discussed the increase in Chapter 70 funding associated with providing a free full day Kindergarten; the possibility of having this be a fee based program (however a ½ day program would still have to be offered for those who could not pay); and the possibility of partially rolling out the implementation to one other school within the town on a full pay basis and the issues that would involve. Ms. Sheridan asked if there was data on what surrounding towns charge for a full day program; Mr. Hilton replied it is approximately \$3,000. Mr. Huban does not believe this would be feasible with the budget we have. He would support a full fee program; however, he would rather see the \$400,000 go into existing overcrowded classrooms. In order to make an informed decision Ms. Kelly feels it would be beneficial to have the comparative data on what other towns charge and get a proposal for a fee based program with some type of sliding scale. It was the general consensus of the Committee that a partial roll out option would cause far too many challenges and inequities.

In summary, Mr. Lovely stated they should look at the costs associated with rolling this out fully and also determine the numbers for a fee based program with a sliding scale. Those numbers would be based on the number of students enrolling. Ms. Kelly mentioned that December or January is the deadline for accepting the grants and asked if an earlier Kindergarten Information night would be necessary. Mr. Lovely asked that Administration (1) start figuring the numbers and (2) that they get an absolute understanding of what our commitments would be in the event the applications for grants are accepted and what commitments we are making once we accept the grant. He suggested they work with Ada Rosmarin to understand the "rules of the road" and develop a memo laying this information out for the Finance Subcommittee meeting on Monday.

5. **MRSA Infection** – Ms. Gormley reported that Margaret Gibbons, Head Nurse, has prepared information regarding MRSA which is posted on each school website. The Athletic Director has addressed this with athletes and coaches and has made it clear that it is mandatory for athletes to take equipment home and clean it. Mr. Lovely inquired if the schools use hand sanitizer dispensers and suggested the possibility of using this in the cafeteria since this infection is transmitted by touch. Mr. Hilton replied that hand sanitizer dispensers are not currently used although many teachers have hand sanitizer in their classrooms. The use of anti-bacterial soap is sufficient as long as people wash their hands. The School Nurses have emphasized the importance of hand washing and not sharing drinks. It was suggested to reach out to Milton Hospital to see if they have resources available and to have an Alert Now message sent from Margaret Gibbons. It was also suggested that information regarding MRSA be sent home in back packs and put in the local paper.

6. **Field Trip – Costa Rica, April 13-26, 2008**

Motion was made to approve the first reading of the Middle School field trip to Costa Rica, April 13-26, 2008.

Move: G. Pavlicek
Second: C. Huban

Some members voiced their concerns regarding this trip. Concerns included the number of school days missed (5), time out of school before MCAS and the cost of this trip may exclude many students. Ms. Gormley stated she will bring more information regarding this trip for the second reading.

Vote: 4-1-0 (M. Kelly)

Mr. Pavlicek gave a brief update from the School Building Committee. The 1909 is ready for paving, and the hope is to have that done by early December. The Collicot Gym floor will be ready for use after Thanksgiving. They are looking at fencing for the front of the building for safety reasons and debating on either fencing the back or using some other type of security (i.e. cameras). It was suggested that the School Building Committee check with the Police Department to see what they would recommend.

Ms. Kelly referred to the Special Education Parent Advisory Council's presentation from the last meeting and encouraged Administration to reach out to the PAC to work through some of these issues. Mr. Lovely stated he had a lengthy discussion with Mr. Fay, Chairman of the PAC, and he will discuss those issues with Administration and Jeff Rubin. Ms. Kelly requested the Diversity and MCAS Reports from the last meeting be posted on the website in addition to Mr. Phelan's presentation.

Motion was made to adjourn.

Move: M. Kelly
Second: C. Huban
Vote 5-0-0

The meeting adjourned at 9:50 p.m.