

**Milton School Committee
Regular Meeting
Milton High School Library
December 16, 2008**

Committee Present: Lynda Lee Sheridan, Vice Chair, Mary Kelly, Chris Huban, Glenn Pavlicek and Kristan Bagley-Jones

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

- 1. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.**
- 2. Approval of December 16, 2008 Agenda** – Since there was no Old Business/Citizen Topic Response to discuss, this item was removed from the agenda. With the Committee’s consent, Ms. Sheridan approved the agenda for December 16, 2008 with this change.
- 3. Citizen Speak (Policy BEDH-Residents may speak for up to 3 minutes)**
As requested in a recent email to the Superintendent’s Office, Stacey Golden requested that a tax receipt be sent to her for donations made in memory of Claire Herlihy. Ms. Golden was informed by the Vice Chair that Citizen Speak is not a time that responses are given.
- 4. Approval of Minutes**
The minutes of the November 18, 2008 School Committee meeting were approved.
Move: G. Pavlicek
Second: M. Kelly
Vote: 5-0-0

The minutes of December 2, 2008 School Committee meeting were approved.
Move: M. Kelly
Second: G. Pavlicek
Vote: 4-0-1 (K. Bagley-Jones abstained from voting since she was not present at this meeting.)
- 5. Superintendent’s Report**
Cunningham School Site Council – Representing the Cunningham School Site Council, Principal Christine Gerber attended tonight’s meeting accompanied by Jeanne Conley and Andrew Flanagan. With regard to the Improvement Plan for Cunningham, Ms. Gerber explained that the Site Council reviewed 2007 MCAS data, did an item analysis by grade and content area, and developed four goals as a result of their findings. Each goal has specific objectives, and Ms. Gerber reviewed these objectives and explained the activities and professional development planned to reach each goal. The goals are as follows:
 - Goal #1, Mathematics Instruction - To develop and improve our mathematical instructional strategies in order to meet the needs of all students.
 - Goal #2, Literacy Instruction - To develop and improve our literacy (reading, writing, speaking and listening) instructional strategies in order to meet the needs of all students.
 - Goal #3, Diverse Learners - To improve instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners, with particular attention to students with disabilities.
 - Goal #4, Parental Involvement & Transparency - To further educate the parental community about the Cunningham experience with the goal of increasing parental involvement and creating transparency.

Questions and/or comments made by School Committee members included:

- With regard to Goal #3, explain what is meant by “diverse learners”. How are students who receive straight A’s challenged? Ms. Gerber explained that within each classroom there are many different performance levels and they want to make sure they are meeting every student’s needs. By targeting individual instruction, you can meet the needs of more students. Also, by having teachers mindful of the standards and aligning their instruction, teachers can differentiate instruction according to the students within their classroom.
- With regard to Goal #4 and parent involvement, is Cunningham involved in Math Leagues before or after school? Ms. Gerber mentioned that Cunningham is involved in parent-run Math Leagues on Friday mornings for grades 3 and 4; grades 2 and 5 will begin in January. For grades 3 and 4, this group consists of approximately 20 students and 10-12 parent volunteers doing Continental Math.
- One of the objectives in Goal #4 is to increase the use of Edline. Is there a way to estimate the number of families who check Edline? Mr. Flanagan replied they are unable to monitor that at this time. Mr. Huban suggested that this may be something Jack Rabbit (the company working on the Milton Public School website) could do.
- When asked for an update on the work being done by Jack Rabbit for the Milton Public School website, Ms. Gormley replied that Jack Rabbit made the new web pages available today and the staff is currently adding content to the site. She hopes to have this process complete by the beginning of January, 2009. Ms. Gormley will check with Bob Pattison about tracking hits to Edline since they are able to monitor how many families read Email Blasts and receive the Alert Now messages.
- When asked if a list had been compiled of families that have email addresses and those who need hard copies of notices, Ms. Gerber replied that this information is available. Currently, everything is sent electronically unless a family has requested paper copies.
- Is parental involvement up or down? Ms. Gerber replied that they have an average of 25-30 parents attending PTO meetings. Ms. Conley added that in addition to being involved in the PTO, there are many other ways that parents are involved and parents are always willing to help.
- When asked what her priority would be if funding became available, Ms. Gerber replied that a Literacy coach would be a priority.

The School Committee thanked Ms. Gerber and members of the Site Council for their presentation.

Tucker School Site Council – Representing the Tucker School Site Council, Principal Drew Echelson updated the Committee on the goals of the Tucker School Improvement Plan. These goals include:

- Increase the percent of students who perform at the “Advanced” or “Proficient” category in ELA and mathematics.
- Accelerate the improvement targets of African-American and low-income students so that improvement targets of these subgroups outpace the aggregate.
- Recruit and retain the most outstanding teachers selected through a rigorous interview process.
- Support teachers to develop three collaborative units of study per grade level focused on the identified areas for improvement.
- Increase parental participation by providing more thoughtful and engaging ways for families of ELL (English Language Learners) students to access the school and school personnel.

Mr. Echelson explained that the three initiatives relating to these goals include:

- Designing a Mission/Vision statement – This process started last spring after families and teachers were surveyed on what they would like Tucker School to be. Results showed that they wanted children to have a high level of intellect and a high level of character. Copies of the Mission Statement have been provided to School Committee members.

- Rigor – When looking at MCAS scores across the district, Tucker lags behind the other schools in the percentage of students in the Advanced category. Mr. Echelson explained that in order to improve this, they need to increase the access to more rigorous tasks
- Family Book Club – For this initiative every student in a grade level is provided with a specific text and is asked to read that text with a member of their family. Students and families then come together for book discussions and to complete academic tasks. This year Family Book Club Night was a K-5 school-wide event with approximately 150 students and families participating.

Questions and/or comments from School Committee members included:

- With regard to parental involvement, having 150 students and families attend the Family Book Club event is exceptional.
- When asked what his priority would be if funding became available, Mr. Echelson replied he would like a 1.0 position for a reading coach and could also use an Assistant Principal.

The School Committee thanked Mr. Echelson for his presentation.

Athletic/Activities Fee Update-Ms. Gormley reported that after reading a recent article in the Milton Times regarding the status of the Milton Athletic Program, a generous donation of \$5,000 was made to the Athletic Program by Susan Coleman, a Class of 1981 graduate of Milton High School. Ms. Gormley also announced that there will be a meeting on Saturday, December 20, 2008, at 10:00 a.m. at Milton High School at which Kate Sumner and her organization will outline their plans for selling banners.

Motion was made to accept the \$5,000 donation made by Susan Coleman to the Milton Athletic Program.

Move: C. Huban

Second: G. Pavlicek

Vote: 5-0-0

Steve Traister, Athletic Director, updated the Committee on the status of the athletic program. Mr. Traister explained that \$142,400 needed to be raised through fundraising efforts. To date \$31,000 was raised at the Golf/Tennis event; \$30,000 is the amount the Boosters plan to contribute; a \$10,000 donation was made to the athletic program by the Monack family; approximately \$7,000-\$10,000 will hopefully be raised at two spring fundraisers; and \$12,000 has been raised by the sale of banners for Brooks Field. This still leaves a \$52,400 shortfall (not including the \$5,000 donation mentioned above and estimating \$7,000 will be raised through spring fundraisers). Teams are still doing their own fundraising to cover the cost of officials, buses, etc. It is hoped that more monies will be raised through the new project with Kate Sumner and the selling of banners for the Copeland Field House. Mr. Traister also reported that at a recent meeting of Bay State Coaches he informed other athletic directors of our situation since it does impact several other towns in our league. It was evident at this meeting that many towns are beginning to struggle with how to fund their athletic programs.

With regard to spring sports, Mr. Traister discussed what could happen if the fundraising target is not met. The options would be to cut sub-varsity sports (no freshman and no junior varsity), cut some programs, or cut the full spring sports program. By cutting JV and freshman sports, this would impact seven teams and only save approximately \$11,818. Mr. Traister stated it will be a hard decision to cut one group; he feels we are all in or all out. Ms. Gormley added that in speaking with the fundraising committee, they feel they will be able to raise \$10,000 through the spring fundraisers (these fundraisers are scheduled before the spring). With that \$10,000 and the \$5,000 donation made by Ms. Coleman, approximately \$44,000 will be the amount we need to fundraise. Mr. Lovely has informed Administration that they have to let students and coaches know about spring sports as soon as possible. Ms. Sheridan agreed that by the January 6th or January 20th School Committee meeting we should have

a good sense of where we stand with fundraising. She also stated later in the meeting that it is important to note that this budget does not reflect the entire cost of the athletic program. She feels it would be beneficial to put all the numbers down (what actual teams fundraise themselves, cost of uniforms, etc.) so an accurate cost analysis can be shown of what it takes to run the athletic program.

Before ending the Superintendent's Report, Ms. Gormley discussed a field trip that had been planned for the High School hockey team. Two years ago the hockey coach, Paul Noonan, took the hockey team to Notre Dame. Mr. Noonan does not work for the Milton Public Schools and was unaware of the School Committee's regulations around planning field trips. Mr. Noonan planned a trip for January 16-19, 2009 for the hockey team to travel to Notre Dame (students will miss one school day). Airline tickets were purchased and hotel accommodations have been made; however, they did not fill out permission slips. Ms. Gormley stated that she takes full responsibility for this and Mr. Noonan has since sat down to review the field trip procedures with Steve Traister. Students have fundraised for this trip by selling raffle tickets, holding car washes, etc. The cost of this trip is approximately \$1,000 per family and there are 34 students who will attend, many with their parents. Per Mr. Traister, permissions slips were given to students yesterday.

Motion was made to waive the first reading for this field trip and approve the Milton High School Hockey Team's trip to Notre Dame.

Move: C. Huban

Second: G. Pavlicek

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

6. Town Wide Facilities - Tony Cichello, Chair of the Consolidated Facilities Exploratory Committee

Mr. Cichello stated that he has been involved with the School Building Committee for several years and during that time has seen 6 new or renovated schools for Milton, a new Library, and a new Senior Center. Given the current budget situation, Mr. Cichello feels the Town will be hard pressed to maintain these new buildings. He explained that many towns are moving to a consolidated model where all town buildings are maintained by a town-wide Facilities Department. This type of model is more efficient when addressing cleaning, maintenance, and repair and it allows towns to do more comprehensive capitol planning. Therefore, the Consolidated Facilities Exploratory Committee recommends that the school buildings and most of the Town buildings go under a consolidated Facilities Department. In this model there will be a Facilities Director who will report to both the Superintendent and the Town Administrator. Before this can be done, the School Committee has to enter into an agreement with the Town that allows this process to go forward. This requires a vote by the School Committee; however, it also allows the option to opt out again if this is not working. Also, Town Meeting has to approve an article allowing Town buildings and school buildings to be centrally managed. The Consolidated Facilities Exploratory Committee is recommending that the Board of Selectmen submit an article for Town Meeting that will authorize this process going forward. When asked for her opinion, Ms. Gormley stated that this committee has been keeping in close contact with Administration. On behalf of the schools, Ms. Gormley stated that it will be necessary for the schools to maintain control over the custodians who are in the school buildings during the day with children. She feels it is debatable as to who the Facilities Director should directly report to since the School Department owns the majority of the buildings in Town. Ms. Gormley stated that she looks forward to being involved in the process of joining facilities with the Town with the caveat mentioned above. The School Committee thanked Mr. Cichello for his presentation.

7. **Field Trips** – Mr. Phelan reported that this is the first reading for the Milton High School Music Department’s field trip to New York City, March 20-22, 2009. No school is missed since Friday, March 20, 2009 is a Professional Day. The trip has the appropriate chaperone-to-student ratio and fundraising is currently being done.

Motion was made to accept the first reading of the Milton High School Music Department’s field trip to New York City, March 20-22, 2009.

Move: C. Huban

Second: M. Kelly

Vote: 4-0-1 (G. Pavlicek abstained since he has a child attending this trip.)

Mr. Phelan stated that the only field trip needing a second reading is the trip to Canada, and this will be on the agenda for the next meeting.

8. **Finance Subcommittee Update** - Mr. Hilton explained that they have been reviewing the full day Kindergarten invoicing and receivable status. There had been 12-14 families with outstanding payments; however, these payments are beginning to come in. It is anticipated that we will reach our target of over \$500,000 collected in tuition payments. Ms. Gormley added that the Kindergarten and First Grade Information Nights will be held in January. Specific times and dates for these Information Nights can be found on the front page of the website. With regard to FDK, the Finance Subcommittee has asked Administration to review the cost structure moving forward in order to present what the tuition costs will be at these scheduled Information Nights. Any changes to tuition would have to be approved by the School Committee. Ms. Sheridan stated that they would have to approve this by January 6, 2009 in order to present the tuition costs at Information Night. She will add this to the January 6, 2009 meeting agenda.

Year-to-Date Budget – Mr. Hilton discussed the projection to date for what expenditures have been through December 8, 2008. He reported that we have been conservative with spending and seem to be on target at this time. With regard to clubs and activities, Ms. Gormley reported that bills have gone out to the High School and Middle School families and these families will be re-billed after the first of the year. Based on receipts and invoicing, Mr. Hilton stated that they anticipate a shortfall of approximately \$69,000 for clubs and activities. This information will be updated at each School Committee Meeting. Ms. Kelly inquired if the total amount billed equaled this approximate \$70,000. Mr. Hilton replied that it did not; however he did not have the actual number for the amount billed.

Ms. Gormley stated that she has contacted FAME and FAVA to see what supplemental help they could contribute to this bottom line as the Boosters do for athletics. The cut-off for providing clubs and activities for the second half of the year would be the end of second term. Ms. Gormley explained that the plan will be to look at every club to see if we have to refund monies to families who have already paid. The Committee and the Administration discussed that going forward club and activity fees will have to be paid before a student can participate (as is done with sports).

Since we have passed the deadline for joining the GIC, Ms. Kelly asked if the School Committee would be willing to send a joint letter with the Board of Selectmen to the Governor stating that we are not at the necessary point to be able to participate in GIC. This letter would state that whatever methodology he and the Legislature could use to move that forward for the benefit of the finances of the Town would be appreciated. It was the consensus of the Committee to send such a letter. The Finance Subcommittee will meet Thursday at 7:00 a.m. and January 5, 2009 at 7:00 a.m.

9. **Communication Subcommittee Report** – Ms. Bagley-Jones stated that anyone wishing to make suggestions regarding the updated website should contact Sean Walsh at swalsh@miltonps.org. She reported that the PAC (Parent Advisory Council) would like to explore a non-Department of Education

Grievance process and that she and Ms. Gormley will discuss this with Jeff Rubin. Ms. Bagley-Jones also stated that she would like to see a list showing the chain of command for both Administration and the School Committee added to the website. The Policy Subcommittee and the Communication Subcommittee have discussed the fact that there is not a formal written policy for responding to residents when they send emails to the School Committee or to individual members. Mr. Huban stated that it was his understanding that if an email is sent to an individual member, he or she can personally respond. If an email is sent to the schoolcommittee@miltonps.org, it is the Chair or his/her designee who will respond. Mr. Huban was not certain if Administration had a policy delineating who responds to emails and what the timeframe should be for responding; however, he feels there should be a written procedure. The Policy Subcommittee and the Communication Subcommittee will work on this with the Administration and bring this matter back to the table at a future meeting. Ms. Kelly suggested contacting MASC to see if they have a template policy on communication. Mr. Pavlicek added that the Secretary of State's Office may be another place to check since they may have regulations regarding the Open Meeting Law. Mr. Pavlicek explained that the Committee must keep the Open Meeting Law in mind when responding to emails. If an individual School Committee member responds to an email, that response should be copied to the archive file since it is public communication.

10. Annual Report 2007-2008

Motion was made to accept and approve the 2007-2008 Annual Report and cover letters.

Move: G. Pavlicek

Second: C. Huban

Before voting Mr. Huban requested that Paul Hilton's name be added to paragraph 5 on Page 1 of both cover letters (letters addressed to the Board of Selectmen and to the Students and the Schools). He also suggested having the full day Kindergarten paragraph be the second paragraph on the letter to the Students and Schools.

Vote 5-0-0

11. Next Agenda Items - Items for the next agenda include

- School Choice
- Site Council Reports
- Update from the MASC meeting
- Update from the Policy Subcommittee
- Update on athletics, clubs, and activities

Motion was made to enter Executive Session for the purpose of discussing contract negotiations and possible litigation and not to return to Open Session and to adjourn directly from Executive Session.

By a roll call voice vote, the Committee unanimously voted to enter Executive Session and not to return to Open Session.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.