

**Milton School Committee
Regular Meeting
Milton High School Library
February 3, 2009**

Committee Present: Beirne Lovely, Chair, Lynda Lee Sheridan, Vice Chair, Chris Huban, Mary Kelly, 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 February 3, 2009 Agenda

Ms. Kelly stated that the Finance Subcommittee will be adding a motion under their report with regard to a reserve fund transfer. With the Committee's approval, Mr. Lovely approved the agenda for February 3, 2009 with this addition.

3. Citizen Speak (Policy BEDH-Residents may speak for up to 3 minutes)

Mike Kelley came to speak of the potential building planned for the land on Governor Stoughton Lane. He urged the School Committee to be in tune to what is being proposed for that land and how it may impact the schools.

4. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of January 14, 2009 were approved.

Move: C. Huban

Second: L. Sheridan

Vote: 5-0-0 (Ms. Bagley-Jones arrived shortly after this vote)

5. Superintendent's Report

French Teacher Exchange Program- World Language Director, Gracie Burke

Ms. Burke reported that five students are here from France as part of an exchange program. Four of these students, who plan to become Elementary teachers, will be spending three weeks in the various elementary schools in Milton. One student is assigned to Pierce Middle School. Ludivine Murat is assigned to Tucker and is being mentored by Marie-Laure Brown; Mathilde Toffoli is assigned to Pierce Middle School and is mentored by Claude Bird and Jean Roulleau; Romain Trollat is assigned to Glover and is being mentored by Mary Cate Theobald and Kathy Spinks; Celine Coustaut is assigned to Cunningham and is being mentored by Josh Coben and Jennifer Whelan; and Emilie Decoux is assigned to Collicot and is being mentored by Dianne Walcott and Anne Kelley. The hosts for these students include Marie-Laure Brown, Jeanne Roulleau, Claude Bird, Adina O'Neill, Jeffrey Stoodt, Patricia Menard and Judy Werner. After introducing each student and providing the Committee with some brief background information on them, Ms. Burke stated that she hopes these students will profit from this experience. Ms. Burke would like to continue this exchange on an annual basis, with the possibility of our teachers going to France. The students all expressed their thanks to Ms. Burke for making this program possible. They made the following comments about their experience so far and the differences they see between classrooms in Milton as compared to those in France:

- There are fewer students in our classrooms when compared to France
- It is not possible for students in France to receive as much extra one-on-one help from their teachers (before or after school)
- In France there is not enough time to learn a second language; our type of language immersion program does not exist
- School classes in France are held for six hours/4 days per week

- Teachers do a very good job in Milton
- They were surprised at how well our students speak and write French

On behalf of the Committee, Mr. Lovely thanked the students for coming and thanked Ms. Burke for being such a “treasure” to the Milton Public School system.

Milton High School Guidance Department - Ken Aubert, Director

Mr. Aubert attended the meeting to provide the School Committee with an update on the processes for college admissions, course selection, and scheduling at Milton High School. With regard to the college application process, Mr. Aubert highlighted that:

- 1,459 college applications have been processed to date for the current senior class.
- The number of college applications per student ranges from one to 20 or more.
- There has been a significant increase in the number of seniors who have applied to schools under early decision/action plans.
- The percentage of students applying to state schools has remained steady, but those applying are applying to a larger number of campuses.
- 92 seniors have already received acceptances from over 60 schools.
- Counselors have used comparative data from the past three graduation classes using MCP, a computer program that compiles GPA's, class ranks and admission test scores for individual students, where they apply, the admission decision and where they matriculated. This effort has resulted in a higher acceptance rate among our students.
- A survey done by the Guidance Department shows that seniors are starting their college search earlier and are better informed about the colleges to which they are applying.
- Juniors and seniors have had expanded opportunities to conduct web-based research during additional group guidance sessions with the assistance of the school librarian.
- At evening programs being scheduled throughout the year, parents will continue to receive more detailed and important information regarding the college application process.
- Interest in financial aid has increased, and parents and students have been provided with a variety of information through group guidance and parent presentations.
- This year the Guidance Department will pilot an additional college fair specifically for juniors on April 6th. Parents are welcome to attend.

Mr. Aubert also provided School Committee members with a copy of the scheduling timetable for the 2009/2010 school year and explained this process. The Program of Studies Booklet along with the Course Selection Worksheet will be provided to High School students and 8th grade students throughout this next week. A Program of Studies Assembly for 8th grade students is scheduled for February 5, 2009 at Pierce Middle School and a Program of Studies night for parents and students in grades 8-11 is scheduled for February 9, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. at the High School Auditorium. In March they begin to construct the master schedule after determining the final number of sections necessary.

Questions/comments from School Committee members included:

- Has there been any discussion on waiving the Physical Education requirement for student athletes? Mr. Aubert replied that this has been discussed; however, Federal law does require PE for grades 9 and 10. Ms. Gormley added that waiving this requirement is not recommended by Dr. Drottar, the Milton High School Principal.
- How do outside organizations get the names and phone numbers of students? Mr. Aubert replied that with the exception of the military, Milton High School does not provide any outside group with protected student information. Parents can remove their child's name from the list provided to the military. Some outside groups may obtain this information from the College Board when students take their PSATs.
- What is the impact on your office of having to process nearly 2,000 college applications? Mr. Aubert stated that they are fortunate to have a part-time person who coordinates the application

process. Along with the applications, postcards are sent requesting each Admissions Office to stamp the postcard and return it so we can verify that the application is received. Since we have had this additional assistance, we have not misplaced any applications.

- The option of doing away with class rank has been discussed. Has any consideration been given to pursuing this idea? Mr. Aubert replied that he would be in support of that; he feels the GPA is a more accurate indicator. He has discussed this with the Administration and has offered to chair a committee if the leadership team wishes to pursue this matter.
- Many students are using the common application form and many colleges are encouraging on-line submission of applications, teacher recommendations, etc. Some colleges are even waiving the application fee if information is submitted on-line. How is that affecting the way Guidance is working? Mr. Aubert replied that we cannot yet produce an electronic transcript that is identical to our paper transcript. When asked what is holding up the ability to do this, Mr. Aubert replied that lack of available technology is holding this up since the program used to submit information has to interface with the programs we use.
- Were any new courses added to the Program of Studies Booklet? Mr. Aubert replied that a new Science MCAS class (1/2 yr. course) was added.
- How is information shared once teachers make their 8th grade recommendations? Mr. Aubert replied that the Course Selection Sheet is sent home for parents to review. Parents are required to have discussions with teachers before overriding a leveling recommendation; however, parents always have the final say. Changes to course selections can be made up until June. Ms. Gormley added that the course selection process coincides with parent/teacher conferences so she encourages parents to participate in conferences.
- We have added on-line scheduling for parent/teacher conferences. Has any thought been given to on-line course selection? Mr. Aubert replied this could be a possibility using Edline and it would provide a better return rate.

The Committee thanked Mr. Aubert for his presentation and asked that he extend thanks to his colleagues as well.

Town Planning Committee – Emily Innes, Chairperson, Planning Board

Ms. Innes presented the School Committee with a questionnaire that has also been given to the Board of Selectmen, the Warrant Committee, and will be given to department heads tomorrow. This questionnaire is part of a proposal she has made to other members of the Planning Board to do a town-wide survey related to issues that would go into a master plan. Ms. Innes would appreciate this form being returned to Bill Clark at Town Hall by Friday. Ms. Innes hopes to have this questionnaire approved by the Planning Board at their next meeting on February 12, 2009 and have it on-line and the results announced at the special Town Meeting on February 23, 2009 with more information to be presented at the Annual Town Meeting. While she was present, Mr. Huban asked if the Planning Board had taken any position regarding the use of the Governor Stoughton land. Ms. Innes replied that the Planning Board had not taken any position on this since the Planning Board has not received any final report. The Committee thanked Ms. Innes for attending.

Field Trip

Motion was made to approve the second reading of the Milton High School Outdoors Club field trip to New Hampshire, March 7-8, 2009.

Move: C. Huban

Second: G. Pavlicek

Vote: 6-0-0

Ms. Gormley took a moment to recap some events held within the Milton Public Schools during the past week. These included the Pierce Players presentation of “The Secret School”; a Drama production at the High School; the first round of the Future Problem Solving Bowl held at Glover; and the first annual Walk-A-Thon held last Saturday at the Copeland Field House. With regard to the Walk-A-Thon, Ms. Bagley-Jones reported that almost 300 students participated in this event and 90 or more parents signed up to help. \$32,000 (which includes \$10,000 in outstanding pledges) was raised. Ms. Gormley stated that Laura Kessler, Kristan Bagley-Jones and Don Jones deserve a great deal of credit for organizing this event. Other events held within the past two weeks include the Kindergarten and 1st Grade Information Nights, Kindergarten screening, and Milton High School’s participation in the Massachusetts All State Music Festival. Also, students from the High School and Middle School recently won the Globe Scholastic Art Competition. Ms. Gormley informed the Committee that Music and Art in our schools will be highlighted at their next School Committee meeting. With regard to fundraising efforts, Ms. Gormley reported that Collicot students also joined in to help. Anne McIntyre and Tom Mullen, both 5th grade teachers and parents of student athletes at Milton High School, initiated an event at Collicot where students paid to wear a hat for a day. As a result of this fundraiser, \$1,225 was donated by Collicot students to help support athletics. One of the last fundraisers scheduled is a Comedy Night on February 7, 2009 at the Milton Hoosic Club. Mr. Phelan thanked Leslie Durgin and Debbie Higgins for their work in this event.

Before moving on in the agenda, Mr. Lovely announced that Assistant Superintendent Paul Hilton will be leaving the Milton Public School system to take a job as the Executive Director of the Cape Cod Collaborative. He thanked Mr. Hilton for the exceptional job he has done for Milton, particularly through the transition of the new Administration and for the work he has done with the Finance Subcommittee. Mr. Lovely reported that Mr. Hilton will “phase out” by June, and the School Committee and the Superintendent will evaluate alternatives for filling his position. Personally and professionally, Ms. Gormley expressed her gratitude to Mr. Hilton. She stated that he has been her right hand, never says “no”, and has given Milton 150%. Mr. Hilton thanked everyone for their good wishes and stated that he will whole-heartedly continue to give the Milton Public Schools 150% until his departure in June.

6. Finance Subcommittee Report

Ms. Kelly stated that the Finance Subcommittee had a meeting with the Warrant Committee and was informed that the 9C cuts (mid-year cuts to local aid) were not as large as originally anticipated. Mr. Pavlicek explained that the cuts to Milton are approximately \$389,000, with an additional \$40,000 cut to the Circuit Breaker. Per Ms. Kelly, the School Department had been anticipating a cut to the FY09 budget of \$204,000. Mr. Lovely reported that he is meeting with the Chairs of the Warrant Committee and Board of Selectmen tomorrow and that they will discuss the amount that the schools may have to cut from the FY09 budget. Since this is the last scheduled School Committee meeting before the February 23, 2009 Town Meeting, Ms. Kelly felt any issues involving the warrant articles should be discussed. Ms. Kelly also informed the Committee that the \$40,000 cut to the Circuit Breaker had been decreased to \$22,869 per Mr. Hilton. Since this was an unexpected situation, the Finance Subcommittee recommends requesting a reserve fund transfer from the Warrant Committee for that amount.

A motion was made that, due to an unanticipated loss of revenue, the recommendation of the Finance Subcommittee that the School Committee request a reserve fund transfer in the amount of \$22,869 from the Warrant Committee be, and it hereby is, approved.

Move: C. Huban

Second: M. Kelly

Vote: 6-0-0

With regard to the special Town Meeting and the article related to entering into an energy contract for more than a three-year term (the School Committee had proposed a 10-year contract), Ms. Kelly voiced her concern after reading some Warrant Committee minutes that reflected the Warrant Committee's recommendation that this contract not go beyond four years. Mr. Hilton stated that he contacted Town Counsel and that he and Ms. Gormley met with Tom Hurley, Chair of the Warrant Committee, to discuss this matter. Mr. Hurley agreed to bring this matter back to the Warrant Committee to discuss modifying the Warrant Committee's recommendation so as to permit this contract to be entered into for a 10-year period.

FY10 Budget

The Warrant Committee will have a presentation at the special Town Meeting regarding the FY10 budget. Ms. Gormley stated that she has been told that the School Department can contribute slides to this presentation. The letter to the School Building Authority regarding the potential closing of an elementary school has been sent and once a reply is received, the discussion on what school will close can begin. When meeting with the Warrant Committee, Ms. Kelly suggested discussing other avenues to assist with the budget (Stabilization Fund, PILOT program, GIC, and retirement fund).

7. Communication Subcommittee

Ms. Bagley-Jones will distribute the PTO schedule to School Committee members to verify the dates they plan to attend PTO meetings with members of the Administration to discuss the budget. Ms. Kelly added that they are working on consolidating budget information on the website so everything is available by clicking on one spot. The budget Q&A can also be found on the website and any further budget questions can be directed to philton@miltonps.org.

8. Old Business/Citizen Speak Topic Response

Per Earl Fay's discussion at a recent Citizen Speak, Mr. Huban stated that the School Committee and the Administration are continuing their discussion on school choice. With regard to the GIC, Mr. Huban stated that this is not in the purview of the School Committee; GIC is negotiated through the Town Administrator. Ms. Gormley reported that she has met twice with the parents who attended a previous Citizen Speak with regard to transportation issues for their children who are placed out-of-district. She will continue to work on this matter so as to provide the parents with an acceptable response. With regard to tonight's Citizen Speak, Ms. Kelly agreed that someone should be looking at the impact on the schools of the potential building at Governor Stoughton Lane.

9. Next Meeting Agenda

Mr. Huban suggested moving the March 17, 2009 School Committee meeting to Monday, March 16, 2009. Mr. Lovely suggested having Bev Quinn check with School Committee members on their availability for that date.

Motion was made to enter Executive Session for the purpose of discussing contract negotiations 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 and to adjourn directly from Executive Session.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.