

Milton School Committee
Regular Meeting
Superintendent's Conference Room
April 23, 2009

Committee Present: Beirne Lovely, Chair, 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; Dr. John Drottar, Principal; Margaret Gibbons, Head Nurse

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 a.m.

Mr. Lovely informed the Committee that salary matters discussed in Executive Session on April 14, 2009 will be discussed publically at the April 27, 2009 School Committee meeting.

Ms. Gormley reported that the leadership team has gone over several options for reconfigurations to the elementary schools as a result of the response received from MSBA. The following two options were highlighted for the School Committee:

Option 1

- This option will only impact French Immersion students.
- This option will partner Glover with Tucker and Collicot with Cunningham. It will take all of the 1st grade French Immersion students from Collicot and Cunningham and start them at Cunningham; 2nd grade students from Collicot and Cunningham would go to Collicot; 3rd grade students from Collicot and Cunningham would go to Cunningham; 4th grade students from Collicot and Cunningham would go to Collicot; and 5th grade students from Collicot and Cunningham would go to Cunningham.
- This option will take all of the 1st grade French Immersion students from Tucker and Glover and start them at Tucker; 2nd grade students from Tucker and Glover would go to Glover; 3rd grade students from Tucker and Glover would go to Tucker; 4th grade students from Tucker and Glover would go to Glover; and 5th grade students from Tucker and Glover would go to Tucker.
- Teachers can “loop” with grades (grades 1 and 2; grades 3 and 4)
- Families may have students in two elementary schools; however, students will have the same start times and potentially ride the same bus.
- Kindergarten students will attend their neighborhood schools
- There is a reduction of eight teachers with this option.

Option 2

- This reconfiguration option will only impact French Immersion students.
- Take all 1st grade French Immersion students next year and put them at Tucker.
- Take all 2nd and 3rd grade French Immersion students next year and put them at Collicot.
- Take all 4th grade French Immersion students next year and put them at Cunningham.
- Take all 5th grade French Immersion students next year and put them at Glover.
- Kindergarten students will attend their neighborhood schools.
- There is a reduction of ten teachers with this option.

Questions and/or comments regarding this presentation included:

- Can families opt out of the French Immersion program due to these changes? What will be the impact on 1st grade?
- Option 1 reduces eight teachers; Option 2 reduces ten teachers. How do you achieve the extra savings if you were to use Option 1?
- Two additional buses (high estimate) could be needed for either plan.
- We will be asked why this only impacts French Immersion. Ms. Gormley replied that she will explain the integration of special needs students into mainstream classes in the English program and the fact that numbers in the English program typically do not decrease. A suggestion was made to include a chart of class sizes in both the English program and the French Immersion program as part of the presentation.
- Why does Collicot have two strands in Option 2 (grades 2&3)? Ms. Gormley replied that it was the size of the building and the consideration of co-taught classrooms.
- When asked to explain looping, Ms. Gormley gave an example of a 1st grade teacher staying with the class for 1st grade and 2nd grade. This teacher then goes back to a new 1st grade class. This would be the same for grades 3 and 4.
- In Option 2, what will the school environment look like when potentially 50% of the students are in one grade (or two grades at Collicot)? Ms. Gormley stated she would like to talk to elementary principals regarding this matter.
- All of the options should be briefly reviewed so it does not appear that we only considered the French Immersion program. The suggestion was made to post the various options on the website and to keep the presentation to two or three recommended options.
- The presentation should address why we cannot keep the current configuration.
- The presentation should emphasize the impact at the High School and Middle School. Ms. Gormley stated that impact statements for the High School and Middle School were provided to School Committee members in their packets and more information will be forwarded at the end of the week. When finalized, these impact statements will also be shared with Jeff Cruikshank.
- The request was made to post a notice on the front page of the website stating that the budget will be discussed at the School Committee meeting on Monday, April 27, 2009.
- Has any further consideration been given to reducing the Business Office? When will the MASBO study be completed?

Mr. Lovely stated that the Committee realizes that these options will be disruptive to many families and class size will be a serious issue (class sizes could increase to 35 students). This information will be presented at the School Committee meeting on April 27, 2009 and at the Open Budget Hearing. Ms. Kelly added that after meeting with the Warrant Committee this week, the bad news is that there will have to be more cuts (approximately \$90,000) since the numbers coming out of the House and Senate were lower than what the Governor had anticipated.

Mr. Lovely excused himself from this meeting to attend a prior commitment.

For the purpose of this meeting, Mr. Huban suggested that the School Committee should vote to suspend its normal rule of not allowing the public to speak during a School Committee meeting (other than at Citizen Speak).

Motion was made that for the April 23, 2009 School Committee meeting, the School Committee's normal rule of only allowing the public to speak at Citizen Speak will be suspended.

Move: C. Huban

Second: L. Sheridan

Vote 5-0-0

Discussion topics and questions regarding the impact of the reductions to be made at Milton High School

With regard to the impact of the reductions to be made at Milton High School, Dr. Drottar and the Committee discussed the following:

- The problems with unscheduled students as a result of teacher reductions will bring up the issue of study halls.
- Milton High School will not be the same school next year. Dr. Drottar explained that the High School will not make the state-mandated 990 hours or meet NEASC requirements.
- There will be lost opportunities – labs may have to be canceled due to safety concerns with large class size.
- Graduation requirements may have to be changed by the School Committee
- Scheduling – is there any other possibility for scheduling? Dr. Drottar and Ms. Gormley both replied that there are contractual issues with scheduling. Ms. Gormley stated that this could be researched; however, it would mean that the contract would have to be re-opened.
- Ms. Sheridan suggested preparing a list showing how many teachers were at Milton High five years ago and how many there are currently so the public is aware of the cuts made over the past several years.

Discussion topics and questions regarding the impact of the reductions to be made at Pierce Middle School

Mr. Phelan reviewed the impact of the reductions to be made at Pierce Middle School.

- The loss of six team teachers will negatively impact the corrective action status at Pierce and will dismantle the team model at grades 7 and 8.
- The loss of these teachers will result in decreased offerings for grade 6 students and will reduce common planning time for teachers.
- Class size will increase and it is possible that leveling would be eliminated in Math and English in all three grades.
- Latin will be eliminated due to the reduction in World Language, and the French Immersion program will be changed with the loss of one French teacher.
- With the reduction of an Art teacher the ACE program will be eliminated. (It was later suggested by Mr. Huban that ACE could become a before or after school club.)
- Study halls may be necessary to accommodate students. The Middle School has the same state-mandated 990 hours and study halls do not count toward DOE requirements.
- It was suggested that more information be presented at the Open Budget Hearing with regard to the ramification of these reductions on the corrective action status and AYP.
- Can any of these reductions be temporarily fixed with stimulus funds (i.e. Writing Workshop for 6th grade)? How stimulus funds can be used should be clearly defined at the Open Budget Hearing.
- Prepare a list of how many teachers were at Pierce Middle School five years ago and how many there are currently so the public is aware of the cuts made over the past several years.

Other Discussion Topics

- Ms. Gormley reported that Mr. Rubin will meet with the Finance Subcommittee to discuss how special education stimulus funds will be used.
- A community member attending this meeting asked if a one-day furlough for school and town employees had been considered. Mr. Pavlicek stated that the School Committee cannot answer for the Town; however, the School Committee has discussed this possibility. This issue is subject to the collective bargaining agreement and would require that contracts be re-negotiated.
- A community member attending this meeting felt that there are redundant positions within the Business office. Ms. Gormley explained that MASBO came in to review the Business office and will be making recommendations. Once hired, the new School Business Administrator will also be reviewing that office structure.
- A community member attending this meeting requested that the class aide policy be clearly stated at the School Committee meeting on Monday.
- For the Open Budget Hearing presentation it was suggested that the High School and Middle School information be presented prior to the information regarding elementary school reconfiguration. This will allow the public to be informed as to what will occur at all levels absent an override.
- The Warrant Committee approved the Reserve Fund transfer of approximately \$22,000 to help with the reductions in Circuit Breaker reimbursement.
- For the Attendance Officers, the Warrant Committee will put the amount requested by the School Committee in a set-aside and would like further information from the School Committee.

Motion was made to adjourn.

Move: C. Huban

Second: M. Kelly

Vote: 5-0-0

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 a.m.