

**Milton School Committee
Regular Meeting
Milton High School Library
April 26, 2007**

Meeting called to order at 7:30 p.m.

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

Staff Present: Dr. Magdalene Giffune, Superintendent; 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)

Dimitry Petion, a Milton parent, urged the Committee to strongly reconsider the idea of closing Tucker to meet the current budget shortfall.

Diane Di'Tullio-Agostino, a Milton parent and Town Meeting Member, referred to the budget and the need for line by line detail. She stated this line by line information was not available 48 hours prior to the public budget hearing. She hopes the Committee hosts another public hearing with this information available for parents to see exactly what their schools will have for funding next year. She has requested a copy of that information be made available to her, under Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 66, Public Records, and a copy of that request has been sent to the Superintendent. She does not require a copy of every document and has received the information given to the Board of Selectmen and some information has been sent by Mr. Lovely. She hopes the budget documents will be made public before Town Meeting.

Laurie Duro, a Milton parent, implored the School Committee to remove the discussion of closing Tucker from the table. She feels having a full time Principal and an Assistant Principal has been beneficial.

Karin Froom, a Milton parent, believes the proposal to close Tucker should be off the table. She stated that the new schools are here because of the Tucker community as it stands and the 90% reimbursement may be affected if it were to close.

The Committee normally does not respond to Citizen Speak on the same night a person speaks; however, Mr. Lovely would like to respond to Ms. Agostino's comments.

Motion was made to suspend the Committee's policy of not responding to Citizen Speak for this evening.

Move: C. Huban
Second: L. Sheridan
Vote 6-0-0

Mr. Lovely stated that the School Committee has received Ms. Agostino's Freedom of Information Act request, and will respond promptly. The Committee feels they have held the required public hearings with respect to the budget and have presented numerous opportunities for people to express their opinion. Secondly, there is no specific requirement as to the location or method of making the budget available; however, the budget was available in the Superintendent's office at least 48 hours in advance of the public hearing. Mr. Lovely stated we are facing serious budgetary issues and Ms. Agostino's comments are well taken since it is her hope for the public to have all the necessary information. The School Committee and the Superintendent's office will make every effort to make this information available. The Committee does not feel there has been any violation of the law, and feels the budget was available and substantial information has been presented to the Warrant Committee.

2. Chairman's Report

Dr. Giffune went over some slides showing the assumptions, premises, and implications of this budget. The assumptions are as follows: student achievement is the priority; Chapter 70 will be attributed to the school budget; additional revenue to the town will be attributed to the school budget (an additional \$100,000 as of 4/25/07 re: revised offsets on cherry sheet –House Ways and Means); Medicaid will continue to be an offset to the FY08 school budget; Medicaid projection will increase by \$83,000 given information as of 4/25/07. As requested by Mr. Huban, Dr. Giffune explained Chapter 70 funding and Medicaid. Chapter 70 funding is aide for education. Last year (late August or early September) we received an additional \$142,000 in Chapter 70 funding that was not used by the schools at the time. Since we did not use it at that time, we were hoping that \$142,000 would be available to our budget process this year and it was not. In addition, next year we anticipate \$229,996 in additional Chapter 70 funding. Medicaid money has always been available but Milton had not previously taken advantage of this benefit (we began doing so in 2005). Medicaid is money that comes in to the Town that is generated by the School Department. Mr. Lovely reported briefly on a discussion he had with Katie Conlon, Chair of the Warrant Committee regarding the Medicaid issue. Mr. Lovely felt the School Committee's understanding had been that they were going to be asked to forego the \$300,000 reimbursement they were going to get to offset remaining FY07 bills. It is Ms. Conlon's expectation that we will have a Fall Town Meeting regarding this matter. Mr. Lovely also asked Ms. Conlon if the \$31,336,032 presumes we will have an offset by having fall Town Meeting in FY09 to reallocate to FY08. The answer was no. Ms. Conlon advised Mr. Lovely that in the eyes of the Warrant Committee the School Department is not being asked to forego the benefit of Medicaid money in FY08. Based on projections of revenue the Warrant Committee has, Ms. Conlon feels the \$31,336,032 is a real number. Mr. Pavlicek also spoke with Katie Conlon regarding Medicaid. He feels if the \$300,000 is a pay forward for Medicaid, the situation is not as good as it sounds. Instead of an approximate \$800,000 what we really have is \$500,000. Mr. Lovely would like to invite Ms. Conlon to a Finance Subcommittee meeting.

Dr. Giffune explained some further assumptions regarding this budget. The School Committee had requested \$33,692,949; the Warrant Committee recommendation is \$31,336,032 leaving a difference of \$2,356,917. If we minus the additional Chapter 70 funding of \$229,996, the Medicaid Money of \$83,000 and the \$100,000 from the cherry sheet, the budget shortfall is \$1,943,921. In addition, we are hoping for \$600,000 from the landfill money which would reduce the shortfall to \$1,343,921. In an effort to explain the landfill money, Mr. Lovely explained there is an approximate \$1.1 million currently in the stabilization fund. It had previously been requested to add the landfill funds to the stabilization

fund; however, such requests must be approved by the Dept. of Revenue and the Dept of Environmental Protection. Two years ago such a request was denied. It has been requested again this year but has not been acted upon yet and will not be acted upon before Town Meeting. The Finance Subcommittee believes we should approach the Town Meeting, the Warrant Committee, and the Selectmen requesting a one time transfer from the stabilization fund. Our argument would be that we would like to temporarily borrow \$600,000 from the stabilization fund for the purposes of meeting operational needs in anticipation of that \$600,000 of landfill money ultimately being replaced in the stabilization fund.

Dr. Giffune went over other slides which explained the premises for paring down a budget and the implications it will have at all levels. She went over the necessary increases which have been included in the FY08 budget proposal which are needed to operate the school system next year. This includes \$1,600,000 for salary rollover; \$462,000 to open Collicot/Cunningham, \$485,612 in special education expenses and \$275,000 for various other general expenses. These necessary expenses total \$2,822,612. When looking at reducing the budget, the potential cuts have been broken down in to three levels: (1) what has been reduced from the original proposal; (2) reductions from existing resources – Level 1; and (3) reductions from the existing resources –Level 2. These reductions total \$1,957,079. Dr. Giffune explained that Level 2 are severe cuts which would include an estimated 5 positions at Pierce Middle School, the elimination of teaming in Grade 8, compromised teams in Grade 7 and increased class size everywhere at the Middle School. It would also include the elimination of clubs (with the exception of Student Government) or offering clubs with a fee for service option. At the High School, Level 2 reductions would include 3 full time teaching positions, the elimination of all clubs and activities (with the exception of the National Honor Society, Student Government and Class Advisorships) or the option of having clubs and activities on a fee based option. Dr. Giffune believes this would take the life of the school away since fees may limit participation. At the High School this scenario could also include the elimination of the athletic program. At the Elementary level, Level 2 reductions include all Elementary specials being reduced to ½ (FLES Grades 2-5, art and music); FLES eliminated in Grade 1; Physical Education will be restructured; and Literacy aides will be cut. Mr. Huban mentioned that the closing of Tucker was not listed on the sheet being discussed and asked if that was off the table. Dr. Giffune replied that closing Tucker would be a very difficult option and she would consider it to be off the table.

Also listed on this sheet is what could potentially be reinstated if we were to receive the \$600,000 from the landfill money. This would include: 3 positions at Pierce \$153,096; 2 positions at the High School \$82,000; the restoration of High School athletics \$346,000; and an additional \$18,904 for custodial staff.. The third column of this sheet shows what additional cuts would have to be made if we do not have the Medicaid money to use as an offset (\$383,000). This includes the elimination of all High School electives, 7 positions, and early release for many students. The other option if we do not have this \$383,000 as an offset would be the elimination of 8 elementary positions which would require a complete redistribution of elementary students. The Committee thanked Dr. Giffune for her presentation.

Mr. Lovely proposed the following committee assignments for the 2007-2008 year:

Finance Subcommittee -Beirne Lovely, Mary Kelly and Glen Pavlicek
Policy Subcommittee – Chris Huban and Laurie Stillman
Legislative Subcommittee – Mary Kelly and Laurie Stillman
Environmental Subcommittee – Laurie Stillman

School Building Committee – Glen Pavlicek and Lynda Lee Sheridan
Communication Subcommittee – Laurie Stillman and Lynda Lee Sheridan
Capital Planning Subcommittee Representative – Chris Huban
Milton Foundation for Education Representative – Lynda Lee Sheridan
Recreation Subcommittee – Beirne Lovely
Facilities Subcommittee – Mary Kelly and Chris Huban

Motion was made to approve the Subcommittee assignments for the 2007-2008 year.

Move: G. Pavlicek
Second: M. Kelly
Vote: 6-0-0

Ms. Sheridan and Mr. Lovely volunteered to sign and handle Payroll.

Motion was made to designate the Chair and Vice Chair of the School Committee to sign Payroll on behalf of the School Committee.

Move: G. Pavlicek
Second: M. Kelly
Vote: 6-0-0

Mr. Lovely mentioned other potential sources of revenue include the stabilization fund, the retirement fund, potential savings that may arise from necessary cuts and their related impact on the health insurance budget and potential savings that may be derived from the general insurance fund. Other minor sources of revenue include increased fees. Mr. Huban asked if we could survey surrounding towns and possibly raise athletic fees (currently \$175) in an effort to keep the athletic program. Ms. Stillman concurred that it may have to be a self pay/full fee option and suggested approaching some of the local Foundations to establish a scholarship fund. Ms. Kelly said the Finance Subcommittee can look at this fee for service for both athletics and clubs. Mr. Huban raised the question that if the fees paid to the Supervisors for these clubs were stipulated in the Union Contract, they may require negotiation. Dr. Giffune agreed that would require negotiation. Mr. Lovely suggested that if anyone watching had any suggestions for other possible sources of revenue, they should contact the School Committee members.

With regard to the stabilization fund as a potential source of revenue, Ms. Stillman feels it is wise to promote the use of the \$600,000 from the landfill money. As requested by Ms. Sheridan, Mr. Pavlicek explained the landfill money had been set aside when the Town capped the landfill. At that time, the Town did not use all the money and the remaining funds are in an escrow account. At some point the Dept. of Revenue and Dept. of Environmental Protection will have to release these funds. Ms. Stillman had mentioned earlier that she would promote the use of stabilization funds on a short term basis knowing that the \$600,000 of landfill money will be used to replenish the stabilization fund. Mr. Pavlicek stated the importance of having a long range plan which Mr. Lovely stated is something he and Town Administrator Mearn had previously discussed.

Motion was made that the School Committee will seek, support, and advocate for the use of stabilization funds in the approximate amount of \$600,000 to support the School Department budget for FY08.

Move: M. Kelly
Second: L. Sheridan
Vote: 6-0-0

With regard to the Retirement Fund, Ms. Kelly reported that she met with the Retirement Board and they stated they would not be able to reallocate any money to the schools at this time.

Health insurance was discussed and the fact that if we have to cut teachers the Town would not have to pay those health insurance premiums. Unemployment insurance costs of \$551 per person for 37 wks. plus \$25 per week per dependent would not completely offset the cost of health insurance but would offset a significant portion. With regard to open enrollment for insurance, there is no way of predicting who comes in or leaves the plan at that time. The possibility was discussed of polling employees in the community to see what their plans are for open enrollment. Mr. Pavlicek commented that unemployment costs per week could potentially cost more than health care if people remain unemployed for the entire 37 weeks. Mr. Lovely suggested putting health care costs on the long term agenda for the Finance Subcommittee. Ms. Kelly brought up Blue Hills Regional and the fact that we are paying in above what we are required to by the Dept. of Education's perspective. When looking at the Blue Hills budget, Ms. Kelly wondered if they were incurring the same type of cuts we are. She suggested inviting the representative from Blue Hill Regional to a Finance Subcommittee meeting to discuss their budget.

The general insurance fund does not seem promising as a source of revenue either. Ms. Stillman asked if the overlay reserve could be used. Mr. Pavlicek explained each year the Town sets aside a certain amount of money into the overlay reserve fund. The Town uses this in the event that people are late in making their property tax payments. Mr. Pavlicek assumes whatever could be released from this fund already has been but it is worth investigating. Fees for trash stickers and rental fees were also mentioned as a source of revenue.

Motion was made to appoint Glen Pavlicek as our School Committee Representative and to reaffirm Lynda Lee Sheridan as our School Committee Representative on the Building Committee.

Move: M. Kelly
Second: L. Stillman
Vote: 6-0-0

Mr. Lovely stated that by appointing Mr. Pavlicek as a Representative to the Building Committee, Mr. Winchester feels he can add another member. He has Paul Hogan in mind for that position.

Mr. Lovely requested that Ms. Sheridan and a representative (s) of the Finance Subcommittee attend the Warrant Committee Meeting Monday, April 30, 2007. This will be posted as a School Committee meeting in case anyone else wishes to attend. Also on Monday morning (7:30 a.m.), Mr. Lovely suggested that a representative of the School Committee meet with Dr. Giffune and department heads including the Town Administrator and the Chair of the Warrant Committee to go over Town Meeting matters. Ms. Kelly volunteered to attend this meeting and this will be posted as a Finance Subcommittee

meeting. A Principals' meeting will be held at 8:30 a.m. Ms. Kelly, Ms. Sheridan and Mr. Pavlicek volunteered to approach members of the Board of Selectmen individually to let them know we want them involved in our decision making process. If the Selectmen would like, they can meet with Dr. Giffune to discuss the budget. A regular School Committee Meeting will be posted for Tuesday, May 1, 2007, at 8:00 p.m.

With regard to Medicaid, Mr. Pavlicek suggested having one more meetings regarding this matter and how it will be addressed with the auditors going forward. Ms. Kelly and Ms. Stillman are working on legislature to allow Milton to utilize Medicaid money more immediately. Mr. Lovely suggested reaching out to Senator Joyce, Representatives Timilty and Forry to see if they could offer any suggestions. Ms. Stillman suggested having a Legislative Breakfast in the future. Ms. Kelly suggested posting all the budget handouts discussed this evening on the website.

Motion was made to approve the 2007-2008 School Calendar as presented at the School Committee Meeting April 10, 2007.

Move: L. Stillman
Second: L. Sheridan
Vote: 5-0-1

Motion was made to adjourn.

Move: C. Huban
Second: L. Stillman
Vote: 6-0-0

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.