

**Milton School Committee
Regular Meeting
Milton High School Library
April 27, 2009**

Committee Present: Beirne Lovely, Chair, Lynda Lee Sheridan, Vice Chair, Mary Kelly, 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 6:30 p.m. and the School Committee voted unanimously to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing contract negotiations and to return to Open Session and to adjourn directly from Open Session. Open Session resumed at 7:15 p.m.

2. **Approval of April 27, 2009 Agenda**

With the Committee's consent, Mr. Lovely approved the agenda for April 27, 2009.

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

Maryann Rull and Julio Verella, chairpersons of the override committee, thanked the School Committee for the work it does for the students of Milton. Ms. Rull reported that members of the override committee have been attending recent School Committee meetings and are keeping up-to-date on the drastic cuts that will be made to the school system in the event an override does not pass. Mr. Verella stated that the override committee has created a website, www.investinmilton.org. He encouraged community members to view this website and to support the efforts of the override committee.

4. **Superintendent's Report
Personnel Matters**

Ms. Gormley reviewed the screening process used for the School Business Administrator position and informed the Committee that there are two finalists for this position; Samuel Rippin, Director of Finance at the Winchester Public Schools and Matthew Gillis, Chief Operations Financial Officer of the Town of Carver. The Administration is conducting reference and background checks and will schedule site visits. Once the selection has been made, Ms. Gormley will share this information with the Finance Subcommittee and the full School Committee and a salary will be discussed. Ms. Kelly suggested that the Finance Subcommittee can determine a salary range and bring a proposal to the full School Committee.

As a result of the recent response from the Massachusetts School Building Authority, Ms. Gormley asked that the Committee discuss the posting of the Tucker Principal position. Ms. Sheridan feels that this position should be posted now that we have received the MSBA reply. Ms. Bagley-Jones asked if the possible reconfiguration models at the elementary level would impact this job description. Ms. Gormley replied that she is willing to go ahead and post this position and explain the current situation we are facing to any potential candidate. Mr. Lovely agreed that the position should be posted. He asked if any Committee member felt that the four-principal model should not continue or if the possibility of sharing a principal between two elementary schools should be raised as an alternative. Although no one would want to have to share a principal, Mr. Lovely feels all alternatives should be discussed. Ms. Sheridan suggested that the Finance Subcommittee look at the implications of sharing a principal since that may result in having to hire an assistant principal due to the number of students in the building.

Before going on in the Superintendent's Report, Mr. Lovely informed the public that the School Committee has been looking at various ways to reduce the budget. The School Committee inquired if the Milton Educators Association would consider re-opening contract negotiations; however, this did not occur. At a recent Executive Session meeting of the School Committee raises for the leadership team and non-union personnel were discussed. Superintendent Gormley and Assistant Superintendent Phelan offered to take a \$0 raise for next year. The Committee also voted unanimously that the entire leadership team will not be granted any raises (wages will be frozen) for fiscal year 2010. In addition, the Committee voted unanimously to make the following changes for FY10 with regard to raises for the next tier of non-union personnel: (1) freeze steps; (2) any employee with an annual salary rate under \$50,000 will receive a 1% increase for FY10; and (3) any employee with an annual salary rate of \$50,000 or above will receive a \$0 raise for FY10.

A motion was made to sustain both of these School Committee votes in Open Session.

Move: K. Bagley-Jones

Second: M. Kelly

Vote: 4-0-0

When asked what was saved by these proposals, Mr. Hilton replied that this is a savings of approximately \$100,000.

Ms. Gormley informed the Committee that there was an opening for a Football Coach at Milton High School. Steve Traister had previously held this position in addition to his responsibilities as the Athletic Director. Mr. Phelan explained that the screening process for this position was similar to that used for the School Business Administrator. A screening committee was formed which included Mr. Phelan, Steve Traister, two students, a parent representative from the Boosters, and two coaches/teachers at Milton High School. Twenty-five candidates applied for this position and eight candidates were personally interviewed. The committee narrowed that down to four final candidates and these candidates were interviewed by Dr. John Drottar. Dr. Drottar appointed Jim Bowes, a current Milton High School teacher, as the Football Coach. The Committee congratulated Mr. Bowes, and Mr. Lovely took a moment to recognize and thank Steve Traister for the hard work he has done performing both of these jobs over the past few years.

FY10 Budget

Ms. Gormley invited Drew Echelson, Tucker Principal, Christine Gerber, Cunningham Principal, and Dr. John Drottar, Milton High School Principal to the table

Ms. Gormley reminded the public that the School Committee is having an Open Budget Hearing on Thursday, April 30, 2009 in the High School Auditorium at 7:30 p.m. Tonight's presentation will be reviewed at the Open Budget Hearing and will be posted on the website tomorrow. Letters explaining the budget process and the options to be presented will be sent out tomorrow via email and backpack express. Ms. Gormley reported that the Finance Subcommittee, the leadership team, and the School Committee have been working tirelessly on the budget cuts and to come up with alternative plans as the result of the response received by the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA). Ms. Gormley is planning to meet with staff members tomorrow and lay-off letters will go out Friday.

To begin her presentation, Ms. Gormley reviewed the budget history over the past several years and enrollment growth statistics and projections from NESDEC. Ms. Gormley stated that the Warrant Committee has recommended a non-contingent (without an override) budget of \$31,313,982. This is \$2,328,189 less than the FY10 level service budget of \$33,642,171 recommended by the School Committee and \$465,158 less than the FY09 base budget. This recommended non-contingent budget necessitates the reconfiguration of all four elementary schools in Milton and will result in the loss of 47-50 people (45.4 FTE positions). Ms. Gormley reviewed the positions to be lost at each level

(Elementary 11.0 positions; Middle School 11.5 positions; Milton High School 12.4 positions; District-wide 9.0 positions; and Administration 1.5 positions) in the event of a non-contingent budget and discussed the impact of these cuts at each level. The Finance Subcommittee and the leadership team have brainstormed eight different reconfiguration options for the elementary schools in an effort to achieve savings and have come up with two finalists. Ms. Gormley went over each plan in detail and discussed the pros and cons of each plan.

Option 1 - French Continuum Strands

- This option will only impact French Immersion students; the English program is maintained in the geographic “home schools”.
- This option will take all 1st grade French Immersion students and put them at Tucker; put all 2nd and 3rd grade French Immersion students at Collicot; put all 4th grade French Immersion students at Cunningham; and put all 5th grade French Immersion students at Glover.
- Kindergarten students will attend their neighborhood schools.
- Students will stay in the same school for the five year elementary experience.
- Families may have children in more than one elementary school if the French Immersion Program is chosen.
- Teachers will have the option to “loop” from one grade to the next within a school building.
- 1st grade class size at Tucker will be six classes of 33; 2nd grade class size at Collicot will be four classes of 30 and one class of 31; 3rd grade class size at Collicot will be one class of 31 and three classes of 32; 4th grade class size at Cunningham will be three classes of 27 and two classes of 28; and 5th grade class size at Glover will be three classes of 32.
- There are no moving costs anticipated and the impact on transportation is being explored.
- There are no class-size aides.
- This option maximizes efficiency in staff and student distribution.
- Possible loss of 4th grade integration opportunities (French and English programming)
- There is a reduction of 10.0 FTEs with this option.

Questions and/or comments from the School Committee included:

- Is looping an option or can a principal mandate looping? Ms. Gormley replied this is a union issue. It would have to be mutually agreed upon between the teacher and the principal. Principal Gerber stated that she has participated in looping in the past and feels that it saves time at the beginning of the year as far as management issues, communication with families, and knowing the students as learners.
- Does the union contract preclude mandating looping? Ms. Gormley stated that looping is not addressed in the contract. Principal Echelson pointed out that when you transfer a teacher, you can assign them to one grade level above or one grade level below their existing grade level.
- Can you explain how there would be no moving cost associated with this plan? Mr. Hilton believes that with the equipment we have in the buildings this move could take place during the summer.
- Add a slide to the presentation that a family may have children at two different elementary schools with two different start times for school.
- The option of eliminating Foreign Language (French Immersion and FLES) at the elementary level was not presented as an option. Presenting these class sizes of 30 and above is a horrible situation. Ms. Gormley commented that when you compare these class sizes to those in the English program (which are in the high 20’s), you also have to keep in mind that the English program has inclusion for special education students which adds another few students to classrooms for a portion of the day.

Option 2 – French Partner Strands

- This option will only impact French Immersion students; the English program is maintained in the geographic “home schools”.
- Students will stay in the same school for the five year elementary experience; however, there could be some re-assignment issues (outside partner schools) at implementation.
- This option gains efficiency in staff and student distribution.
- 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
- 1st grade class size at Tucker would be two classes of 31 and one class of 32; 2nd grade class size at Glover would be one class of 30 and one class of 31; 3rd grade class size at Tucker would be two classes of 30; 4th grade class size at Glover would be two classes of 30; and 5th grade class size at Tucker would be two classes of 27.
- 1st grade class size at Cunningham would be two classes of 35 and one class of 34; 2nd grade class size at Collicot would be three classes of 30; 3rd grade class size at Cunningham would be one class of 33 and one class of 34; 4th grade class size at Collicot would be three classes of 26; and 5th grade class size at Cunningham would be two classes of 21.
- Teachers will have the option to “loop” from one grade to the next within a school building.
- Families may have children in more than one elementary school if the French Immersion Program is chosen; however, the partner schools have the same start time and students could be on the same bus (more family friendly).
- Kindergarten students will attend their neighborhood schools.
- There are no class-size aides.
- There are no moving costs anticipated and the impact on transportation is being explored.
- There is a reduction of 8.0 FTEs with this option.

Ms. Gormley stated that by eliminating ten teachers (French Continuum Option), we are still approximately \$8,000 short of the number we need to reach. Eliminating eight teachers (French Partner Strands) leaves us approximately \$60,000 short.

Even with the FY10 contingent budget of \$33,086,627 recommended by the Warrant Committee, Ms. Gormley stated that we are still \$555,544 less than the FY10 level services budget recommended by the School Committee. This will necessitate a reduction of 13 people (12.5 FTEs). These reductions will be 9.0 positions District-wide; 1.5 positions at the Middle School; and 2.0 positions at the High School. The last slide of Ms. Gormley’s presentation outlined what the result of both the contingent and non-contingent budgets would be to the Milton Public Schools. In summary, the contingent budget will result in a \$1,307,487 increase in funding and some reductions in staff will be necessary; however, the system will operate in the same manner as FY09. With the non-contingent budget, there will be significantly less funding than this year. A non-contingent budget will result in significant reductions; significant increases to class size; a reconfiguration of elementary programs; AYP concerns at the Middle School; NEASC accreditation concerns at the High School (School Committee may have to

change graduation requirements); and decreased class offerings at the Middle and High schools. Mr. Lovely stated that this last slide doesn't in any way tell the whole story; this is "major surgery" to the school system. The attractiveness of the Milton Public Schools will be seriously diminished which will unquestionably impact the property values in Milton.

Other discussion topics regarding this presentation included:

- Mr. Lovely stated that the School Committee should start weighing in on these options tonight. The School Committee has to be ready for the Open Budget Hearing.
- Ms. Bagley-Jones asked what response should be given to people who say that the School Department is "crying wolf". Ms. Gormley responded that we are victims of our own resourcefulness. The School Committee had said there would be no spring sports if funds were not received and the community got together and held several fundraisers for this effort. There is no way to fundraise the kind of money needed to negate the impact this will have on teaching and learning in the Milton Public Schools.
- Mr. Lovely emphasized that this budget problem is a town-wide issue. The Board of Selectmen is facing the same issues. (Mr. Lovely acknowledged that John Shields, Board of Selectmen Chair was in the audience listening to this presentation).
- Ms. Bagley-Jones asked what the current class sizes are at the Middle and High Schools and what will they be in a non-contingent scenario? Ms. Gormley replied that Principal Jette and Dr. Drottar are working on mock schedules and a slide will be added to the presentation showing this information and it will be included in the letter sent home to families. Dr. Drottar added that after taking a quick look at the mock schedule, every class will be at maximum capacity (currently 30) and many classes at the High School are already there. There are also safety concerns with having large class size in certain classes such as Science lab, Woodshop, and Auto.
- Dr. Drottar stated that if we have study halls at Milton High School we will not meet the state's minimum requirement for instruction time or the requirements of NEASC.
- Dr. Drottar stated that college acceptance for Milton High School students would definitely be impacted if the School Committee had to change graduation requirements.
- In Mr. Pavlicek's absence, Mr. Lovely informed the Committee and the public that Mr. Pavlicek has said that out of the two options he would favor the French Partner Strands. He feels that having French Immersion students start every other year in a building allows teachers to have a simple two-year loop. If we only use one school (French Continuum Strand option), after two years of looping the teacher would have to move to a different school which would be disruptive. Also, Mr. Pavlicek feels that we must consider what a school will look like if 50% of the school population is one grade; the social dynamic is flawed.
- Ms. Sheridan agrees with Mr. Pavlicek that having teachers move after two years is disruptive to the whole school community. The challenge with the French Partner Strand option is that we still need more cuts since this option only reduces 8.0 teachers.
- Ms. Kelly reported that the Warrant Committee is coming back with a new recommendation for a non-contingent budget which is \$90,000 less than we are currently working with.
- Mr. Lovely asked that Ms. Gormley post the revised MDESE guidelines of 4/17/09 with regard to how stimulus funds can be used. He feels there may be some hope that stimulus funds could be used to make up for the two additional FTEs needed with the French Partner Strand option. Ms. Sheridan stated that the School Committee should clearly articulate to the community how stimulus funds can be used.
- Ms. Kelly stated that she had previously mentioned looking at the Business Office for some savings. Ms. Gormley suggested posting a Finance Subcommittee for Thursday prior to the Open Budget Hearing and this can be discussed along with other suggestions made tonight.

- Ms. Sheridan asked that the principals present weigh in on their preference. Principal Echelson and Principal Gerber both stated that this is being done for purely budgetary reasons and Option 1 (French Continuum Strands) gets us closer to the target number; however, Option 2 is more educationally sound.
- Ms. Kelly stated that she could not vote for either option. She believes we could achieve better class size and better distribution of students by eliminating Foreign Language at the elementary level. In preparation of the Open Budget Hearing, Mr. Lovely asked that the Administration prepare a spreadsheet showing what the numbers would be if this were to be considered as an option.

Mr. Lovely thanked the principals, the Administration, and the leadership team for their hard work.

Ms. Kelly reported that the Warrant Committee funded the School Committee's request for a Reserve Fund Transfer to help with the reductions made in Medicaid reimbursement this year (approximately \$22,000). With regard to the School Committee's request for a Reserve Fund Transfer to fund Attendance Officers for the remainder of the year (approximately \$13,000), the Warrant Committee has voted this amount as a set-aside and has requested more information from the School Committee.

Ms. Kelly requested that the budget back-up documentation be added to the new school website. Ms. Gormley stated that this would be done and that the budget back-up information will be available at every school and at the Milton libraries tomorrow.

Motion was made to adjourn.

Move: L. Sheridan

Second: K. Bagley-Jones

Vote: 4-0-0

Meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.