

**Milton School Committee
Regular Meeting
Milton High School Library
May 1, 2008**

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

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

Meeting called to order at 6:45 p.m.

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

Jim Smith spoke out against the redistribution of 16 students in the Tucker School 2nd grade French Immersion class.

Giliian Najarian spoke of the need to make all new students feel welcome in the event they have to move from their original school district. She feels Tucker does an excellent job doing this and she will personally reach out to all new families coming to Tucker School.

Rob Cormack, as a parent and an educator, feels removing French Immersion is something that should not be done lightly.

2. Field Trip Approval

Motion was made to approve the second reading for the 8th Grade Washington, DC trip May 26-28, 2007.

Move: C. Huban

Second: G. Pavlicek

Vote: 4-0-2 (M. Kelly, K. Bagley-Jones)

*Prior to this motion Ms. Gormley had stated students do fundraising for this trip on their own. Ms. Kelly hopes that next year we become more organized with fundraising and have some adult help in coordinating fundraising opportunities.

With regard to the High School trip to Maine, last week a question had been raised about having an insurance rider since these students are going in individual vehicles. Ms. Gormley informed the Committee a release form has been prepared and sent to the Attorney for review.

Motion was made to approve the second reading for the Milton High School Outdoors Club field trip to The Forks, Kennebunk River, Maine on May 17-18, 2007.

Move: L. Sheridan

Second: C. Huban

Before voting Ms. Kelly made a friendly amendment that this be approved predicated on the approval of the release form by the Attorney. This friendly amendment was accepted by Committee members.
Vote: 5-0-1 (K. Bagley-Jones)

3. FY09 Budget- Mary Gormley, John Phelan and Dr. John Drottar

In reviewing the budget process, Ms. Gormley stated a total of 37 positions were lost last year. During the year 10 positions were added back due to contractual obligations and special education needs. This year the school system is faced with the task of determining another \$1.8 million in reductions. The Superintendent and the leadership team have met several times and come up with various renditions for a budget. There had been 4 options for eliminations at the Elementary level. The present version, Option G, contains 2 positions being eliminated at the Elementary level. This was a decision the team anguished over; however, there are no good answers. For the Tucker parents, the 2nd grade French Immersion class will not be eliminated. The team is deliberating on what two positions this will be. The cuts will include one 1st grade French Immersion class; one 1st grade English and one 2nd grade English class. When asked by Mr. Huban about additional transportation costs associated with moving students, Mr. Hilton replied no matter where students go there will be some additional cost. Their goal was to look at the least number of students impacted by a move and the lowest grades impacted. Ms. Gormley added there is also a 5th grade class at Tucker with 16 students that could have been another option but the team felt moving students at that level was not fair. By not moving the class of 16 at Tucker, approximately 17 other students throughout the district will be displaced. Ms. Gormley plans to contact every incoming French Immersion parent to explain class size has been adjusted and to also re-outline the FLES program to them. Ms. Kelly asked if it was possible that the 2nd grade English class will not be able to be cut due to new students moving in to the district. She believes we should be looking at consolidation in some 3rd or 4th grade French Immersion classes as well. Ms. Bagley-Jones feels it is important to not cut a program unfairly. Eliminating the class of 16 would result in no 2nd grade French Immersion at Tucker. She asked if that was the reason the team decided to leave this class at Tucker. Ms. Gormley replied that the 4 options for Elementary were prioritized by the team. Everyone agreed to start French Immersion with class sizes at 25/26.

Mr. Lovely mentioned a letter received by the school department from a local law firm on behalf of a client who believes the transportation bidding process is flawed. We were notified of this since it impacts the Charms Collaborative transportation. Mr. Lovely will look into this.

Budget Presentation - Similar to what was shown at the 4/15/08 meeting, this list shows the level of cuts necessary to reach the \$1.8 million. Ms. Gormley went through all items on the list and Dr. Drottar and Mr. Phelan explained how the cuts will impact students at their schools. Dr. Drottar explained the loss of 4 positions at the High School will impact English, Math, Science and World Language. It will decrease upper offerings (AP level 3 & 4 options) and eliminate AP Chemistry. When asked what the level 3 & 4 option meant, Dr. Drottar explained they take into consideration if a course has a 3 or 4 year graduation requirement. Ms. Kelly feels there are several AP Foreign Language classes which should be in the pool. Dr. Drottar replied the list does reflect the elimination of one World Language teacher. Dr. Drottar also addressed the class size issue. Proposed cuts could cause some classes at the High School to reach 40. When discussing potential study halls, Ms. Kelly pointed out that although the Dept. of Education does not allow study halls, many schools have “directed study”. Ms Gormley said we do not plan on doing that. Dr. Drottar also reminded everyone that last year the High School had to cut \$80,000 out of athletics and had to charge higher fees for clubs and activities. Trying to collect money for these has been difficult; therefore, there are other deficits being carried forward that are not shown

on this sheet. Mr. Hilton explained that last year in an effort to help with the cost of athletics the Boosters raised \$85,000-\$90,000; advertising banners raised \$17,000-\$20,000; gate fees increased bringing a total of \$14,000-\$20,000; user fees raised \$160,000-\$190,000; the town contributed \$197,000 and more money was raised by other non-appropriated sources. Ms. Sheridan requested this information be put on the sheet as well so people understand other areas we need to continue to look at. Ms. Kelly requested the Physical Education issue be revisited and was informed that Steve Traister is checking on this. With regard to advertising banners, Ms. Kelly inquired if they were only there during the fall season. Mr. Hilton replied they were there in the fall and they have not been put back up at this time. Ms. Kelly asked to revisit that idea. Ms. Bagley-Jones asked how the process works when a student cannot afford the cost of athletics. Is the process confidential? Dr. Drott explained the student would have to come in to school and request assistance. There is a sliding scale fee for those students participating in the free or reduced lunch program.

One difference on this list compared to the 4/15/08 presentation was the reduction in long-term building substitutes totaling \$10,000. Subs will be reduced to 1 at the High School; 1 at the Middle School; and 2 shared among the Elementary schools. The \$10,000 saved in this area was applied to the reorganization of facilities decreasing that cut from \$91,000 to \$81,000. Mr. Phelan explained these long-term subs are considered part of the staff and have been invaluable to the Principals. These subs are the ones who cover when teachers are out sick, on leave, etc. They are there within the buildings to step in when necessary so there is never a day of missed instruction. Mr. Phelan explained the cuts at the Middle School level. Last year Pierce lost 1 Special Education teacher; 1 English teacher; 2 Math teachers; 1 World Language teacher; 1 PE teacher; and 1 Science teacher. In January, 3 teachers were reinstated to help with AYP issues. Going into next year Pierce will lose 1 Math teacher; 1 English teacher, 2 Elective teachers (Art/Computer/PE) and the Library will close. Class sizes will be large, and every child will have a study hall. Mr. Phelan stated this is a very big step for a school in corrective action. Ms. Kelly suggested the Committee revisit the Elementary teachers to balance out what will happen at the Middle School. She also suggested reassigning some Title 1 money to Pierce. After completing her review of this list, Ms. Gormley stated there will be a total of 28.8 positions cut in order to reach the \$1.8 million.

Mr. Lovely reported a joint meeting was held with the Warrant Committee and the Board of Selectmen to discuss the contingent and non-contingent budgets. At a Finance Subcommittee meeting preceding that meeting, it was the unanimous consent by the Finance Subcommittee and the Administrative team to look at the hard question of where we go from here. How do we find \$150,000-\$200,000 to reinstate some teachers? Despite repeated efforts to get people to step up and support an override, the Finance Subcommittee does not see that happening. The Warrant Committee is undertaking the task of considering a contingent budget for FY09 and a non-contingent budget. They are also looking at a 3 year projected budget with the view of advocating for a 3 year override. It was the view of the Finance Subcommittee that absent a significant effort from the public, they did not think it was realistic that an override would pass for FY09. The Warrant Committee was caught off guard when this was mentioned. Mr. Lovely asked the Committee if they felt they should go in to Town Meeting and support an override or live with this budget for next year and recommend that they establish a committee to look at the town to develop the construct of a sound plan to carry us to FY10 and FY011. Mr. Pavlicek feels the prospects of an additional \$150,000-\$200,000 are not high. This may leave us in the position of riding this year out. Although there may be other places to look (overlay reserve, extra money in the health insurance fund, Home Rule Petition), that has not happened yet. Mr. Huban feels unless the townspeople realize the impact of these cuts, they will not have the incentive for an override. He feels

this is not the year for an override, and he would not vote for one at this time. Ms. Bagley-Jones feels credibility is an issue for the School Department and the School Committee. She believes Ms. Gormley and Mr. Phelan meeting with all the Principals regarding the budget and then having a follow-up meeting with the School Committee is a huge step in improving the credibility issue. She asked how the School Committee can get the message across at Town Meeting that we need this money and applauded Administration for coming up with something we can live with for this year. Ms. Kelly feels the economy weighs on the decision for an override. She asked how the schools can come out of Town Meeting with a non-contingent budget that is palatable to parents. Ms. Sheridan believes in going forward with an override even if it is just to educate the community. She feels a limited number of households get information about the needs of the school system and it is important to let every person in this town understand how extreme those needs are. This budget is not in the best interest of the children.

Mr. Lovely asked if the Committee should support an override for FY09 assuming \$150,000 is added back to the school budget. On the other hand if we do not receive \$150,000 this year, how many people believe we should have an override next year? Mr. Pavlicek commented that a non-contingent budget may mean the closing of the Fire House. He doesn't want to be in the position that it becomes a Police and Fire override. He feels his decision regarding the above questions will be affected by what comes out at Town Meeting. Mr. Lovely stated the School Committee is posted for every night at Town Meeting. They can take a vote on this as it gets closer to that time. Ms. Kelly believes the Committee should meet again as early as possible to go over their strategy for Town Meeting (Mr. Lovely stated they could not meet before the Monday posted meeting). Mr. Lovely feels that if Committee members feel they should advocate for an override, it will be the School Committee who takes the lead. When asked if the Committee thought they could get the support to pass an override this year, the response was no. Ms. Bagley-Jones asked if there had to be leadership by the Committee if Town Meeting wants the override. Mr. Lovely feels if the Committee is advocating for children, there is no one but them who can do this. Committee members have all been involved in past overrides; the difference is that they have many supporters investing their time and efforts. Ms. Bagley-Jones feels this goes back to the credibility issue. She asked Ms. Gormley if we could live with this budget this year. What would we add back if we received any additional money? She feels if we can live with this, we have to live without an override this year. Ms. Gormley emphasized that these cuts are in addition to what was cut last year. In total this means 49 positions over 2 years. The School Committee understands this budget, and the Warrant Committee agreed we need this money. Ms. Gormley is not saying they could live with this budget; however, if they could at 1 position back to Elementary; 2 to Pierce Middle School and 2 to Milton High, they could implement this. She cannot endorse this budget for the children of Milton. Ms. Kelly requested that they also look at the set aside money in FY08 (\$62,000). She hopes that before Town Meeting they have an FY08 budget update that projects forward.

A motion was made that to the extent we believe we do not need the approximate \$62,000 in set aside money from FY08; the School Committee will carry that from the FY08 budget to FY09.

Move: M. Kelly
Second: C. Huban

Further discussion followed regarding the above motion. Mr. Hilton stated there may be some liabilities; he will go through this information. Ms. Kelly withdrew her motion with the caveat they discuss this further. Mr. Huban mentioned School Choice as an option for additional revenue. He

would like to discuss this further. With regard to the money received for Pierce Middle School, we reduced that from \$92,000 to \$62,000. Mr. Hilton expects we may have to spend approximately \$45,000 of that leaving a balance of \$17,000. Mr. Pavlicek suggested we may have more bargaining power if we can give back the \$17,000 to receive some additional funds from the health insurance fund. He suggested that the Committee arrange a meeting with the Warrant Committee prior to the first session of Town Meeting. Mr. Lovely will contact Katie Conlon. Ms. Kelly requested to see the Power Point presentation prior to Town Meeting. Mr. Hilton is working on that and will send it via email to all Committee members. The School Committee will meet at 6 p.m. Monday, May 5th, Tuesday, May 6th and Thursday, May 8th at 6:00 p.m. in the Superintendent's Conference Room. Following tonight's meeting the Finance Subcommittee will hold a brief meeting.

4. Other Topics of Discussion

Mr. Lovely announced that he has received an email from Dr. Giffune regarding the appointment of the Pierce Principal. Dr. Giffune has delegated all authority to Mary Gormley as far as filling this vacancy.

Mr. Lovely would like to start addressing School Committee subcommittee assignments. This year he would like to form a Communications Subcommittee which would consist of one School Committee member and one representative from each school.

Dr. Drottar has received a letter from NEASC stating that the Commission on Public Secondary Schools has reviewed the Milton High School's self-study and Milton High's accreditation will continue. Mr. Lovely congratulated Dr. Drottar and Administration.

The Milton Foundation for Education has awarded the 2008 Outstanding Teacher of the Year Awards to Emmanuelle Segall, Collicot; Sabrina O'Neil, Cunningham; Amanda Brink and Gina Piazza, Glover; Joanne Magliozzi, Tucker; Larry Dorr, Pierce; and Dr. Noreen Diamond Burdett, Milton High School. The Mary Grassa O'Neill Leadership Award was presented to Josh Coben, Cunningham. A reception will be held at 6:00 p.m. at Milton High School Auditorium on May 15, 2008, with an awards presentation to follow at 7:00 p.m.

Motion was made to adjourn:

Move: C. Huban

Second: M. Kelly

Vote: 6-0-0

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.