

**Milton School Committee
Regular Meeting
Milton High School Library
May 20, 2008**

Committee Present: Lynda Lee Sheridan, Vice Chair, C. Huban, M. Kelly, G. Pavlicek and K. Bagley-Jones

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

The meeting was called to order at 7:15 p.m.

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

Sandi Capplis spoke out against the reduction of 1st grade classes (and possibly a 2nd grade class). She brought a petition signed by 56 parents so far regarding this matter. This petition was started in response to the budget slides printed in the Milton Times. Ms. Capplis feels many Kindergarten parents feel left out of the budget process and do not know where to go to find information regarding the budget. She asked that the School Committee respond to her as to how parents can make their voices heard and become involved in this process. (Although the School Committee does not typically respond at Citizen Speak, Ms. Sheridan stated that there have been several meetings on the budget and a public forum was also held. All budget information can be found on the Milton Public School website, miltonps.org. All School Committee members can be reached via email).

Mandy Donovan came in opposition of increasing 1st grade class size to 27. She stated that historically if a class size were this large, there was also an aide in the class. She feels many parents are still under that impression. Ms. Donovan also stated that last year two elementary principals stated that a top priority is to have students reading on grade level by 2nd grade. She asked how such a top priority could become so irrelevant so quickly. Ms. Donovan feels reading skills will not be up to par by 2nd grade if 1st grade class size is 27. This decision could cost more money in the long run.

Reedy Kream feels it would be sad to have 27 students in any 1st grade class room. She hopes money can be found for another teacher or at least an aide.

Charles Winchester believes increasing class size to 25-27 in French and 21-22 in English is educationally unsound and should not be permitted, particularly in 1st grade. He also stated that while it is true an open forum was held regarding the budget, the ultimate decision to go with this reduced budget occurred at a meeting between the Finance Subcommittee, the Selectmen, and the Warrant Committee two weeks or so before Town Meeting. He does not feel the public had much notice of this reduced budget prior to it being advertised in the Milton Times.

Dianne Di'Tullio-Agostino feels the current budget situation is unacceptable. In order to avoid the "no budget, no override" mantra next year, she feels the public needs facts, not fiction. As she has stated in the past, Ms. Di'Tullio-Agostino feels a line item budget is necessary. She believes the Committee

should start working now for next year's budget and suggested that they open next year's budget meetings prior to January.

2. MASS Association of School Superintendents, Certificate of Academic Excellence

On behalf of Dr. Giffune and Superintendents across the state, Ms. Gormley proudly presented the Certificate of Academic Excellence to Milton High School senior, Alexa McKenzie. Ms. Gormley informed the Committee and the public of Ms. McKenzie's many academic accomplishments throughout her years at Milton High School in addition to the many clubs and extra curricular activities in which she participated. Ms. McKenzie plans to attend the University of Massachusetts at Amherst next year. She will be part of the Honors program and major in Biology. On behalf of the Milton Public Schools, Ms. Gormley extended congratulations and best wishes to Alexa and her family.

3. Science Presentation – Barbara Plonski, Director of Science

Mrs. Plonski reported on the results of the Science Curriculum Review Team for the school year 2007-2008. Mrs. Plonski went through each school level and discussed what was new within the science curriculum, what the successes have been and what the recommended areas of improvement would be. Elementary students have been involved in many programs which have contributed to the success of science. Some of these include "Experience Science" units; Trailside Naturalist visits; the Jr. Naturalist Program; "Engineering is Elementary" lessons; "Picture Perfect Science"; and the WISP (Watershed Integrated Science Partnership) program at Tucker School. Other successes include outdoor classrooms, the Street Tree Farm and Wakefield Explorers. 5th grade students also received new textbooks this year. When discussing areas needing improvement, Mrs. Plonski stated some teachers find some Experience Science activities too complicated to perform with students and are finding access to materials to be problematic. Teachers also need more professional development and more time to set up activities. Possible solutions would be to centralize equipment at each school and ask for a committee of parents to help organize. Also, Middle School and High School teachers could help with professional development. MCAS results at this level show we are better than the state; however, Mrs. Plonski feels scores should get better as teachers and students gain experience with the new science materials.

Middle School students have benefited from the integrated curriculum for grade 6 and 7; new classroom texts in grades 6-8; the introduction of more activity-based instruction in grades 6-8; "Introduction of Engineering" activity in grade 6; enhanced classroom technology; enhanced partnership with UMass Boston (WISP & COSEE); and the COWS initiative (curriculum on the walls). Among the areas that need improvement, Mrs. Plonski stated the loss of one teacher has resulted in increased class size and partial de-teaming; teachers need more time to collaborate to share best practices; teachers would like to take curriculum linked field trips (perhaps to Deer Island, the Blue Hill Observatory and the High School Biotech Lab). Next year grade 8 will also implement the integrated curriculum. Again, MCAS scores show that we are better than the state average. The Middle School teachers have worked hard with the integrated curriculum so we should see more improvement in the future.

At Milton High a MCAS Biology review class has been added for students who failed last year and have to retake this test; the Biotech Lab (funded through Milton Foundation for Education grants and Biotech) has been a remarkable success. There is also increased collaboration between teachers at the High School. Mrs. Plonski stated enrollment in AP courses has increased and there has not been a

decrease in these test scores. The number of students taking science courses is up 6%. Some areas that need improvement are class size; dealing with the achievement gap (staff would like to see more boys in upper level classes); and the MCAS Remediation Class needs to be refined. Mrs. Plonski was happy to report that Milton High students did phenomenally well on the MCAS. The following questions were raised by Committee members:

- At the Elementary level, teachers stated access to supplies as a problem – does that mean there is a problem with teachers having adequate supplies or is it more a problem of assembling/disassembling? – Ms. Plonski replied it is a little of both. We don't have enough for everyone to have what they need in their classrooms so we are sharing supplies; we also don't have enough room to store supplies.
- At the Middle School, the percentage of students in the Needs Improvement category was higher than the state. What do you attribute that to? Ms. Plonski replied the students who took this last year in 8th grade had not seen any of the benefits of the integrated curriculum. You won't see the benefit of these improvements until this year's 7th grade class takes the test in 8th grade.
- How do you feel the option of not offering a 4th year of science at the High School will impact students? Do you feel we will have to cut an AP science class if this is done? Ms. Plonski replied not having the 4th year of science would have a negative impact on students when applying for college. To cut the AP program now when so many students are taking this challenge would be horrible; however, we are faced with many horrible choices. We also cannot have an unsafe level of students in class.
- In many ways the math MCAS for 8th grade is harder than the 10th grade MCAS. Do you see the same in science? Ms. Plonski replied the science MCAS test is 3 years worth of information. It is next to impossible for students to recall this vast amount of information.
- Is this a 2 year study of the science curriculum? In terms of the vision for future years, will this be something that can translate in to an action plan for parents to see on the website? Mrs. Plonski replied this is the second year of the review of the science curriculum. This year was going over what had been implemented the first year to see what was working. An action plan, along with the elementary curriculum can be posted on the website.
- Regarding the High School remediation class for MCAS, do students actually repeat the science class? Ms. Plonski replied students in this class go over MCAS questions and review material. Only six or seven students (for whom it counted) did not pass. Ms. Plonski feels we need to have a better way to handle this. Currently, the remediation class is for one semester; this could possibly be a Saturday class in the future.

Ms. Gormley and all Committee members commended Mrs. Plonski and the entire review team for their hard work in improving the science curriculum. The slides from this presentation will be posted on the website.

4. Approval of Minutes

Minutes of the 4/1/08 Open Budget Hearing were approved.

Move: C. Huban

Second: G. Pavlicek

Vote: 4-0-1 (K. Bagley-Jones)

Minutes of the 4/1/08 School Committee meeting were approved.

Move: M. Kelly

Second: C. Huban

Vote: 4-0-1 (K. Bagley-Jones)

Minutes of 4/15/08 School Committee were approved as amended.*

Move: M. Kelly

Second: C. Huban

Vote: 4-0-1 (K. Bagley-Jones)

*Ms. Kelly requested these minutes be amended to show the names of Committee members either abstaining or voting against a motion. She asked that this be done for all minutes going forward.

Minutes of the 5/1/08 School Committee Reorganizational Meeting were approved.

Move: C. Huban

Second: G. Pavlicek

Vote: 5-0-0

Minutes of the 5/1/08 School Committee Meeting were approved as amended.*

Move: M. Kelly

Second: G. Pavlicek

Vote: 5-0-0

*Note: These minutes will be amended according to Ms. Kelly's above-mentioned request.

5. Field Trip-First Reading for MHS Cape Verdean Club Field Trip – According to School Committee policy, Ms. Gormley stated this does not need School Committee approval since the trip is within Massachusetts.

6. School Committee Subcommittees – Ms. Sheridan verified the appointments of School Committee members to the following subcommittees.

Finance Subcommittee- Mary Kelly, Glenn Pavlicek and Chris Huban

Policy Subcommittee-Chris Huban and Kristan Bagley-Jones

Legislative Subcommittee-Mary Kelly

Consolidated Facilities Exploratory Committee-Chris Huban and Lynda Lee Sheridan

Capital Planning Subcommittee-Chris Huban

Recreation Subcommittee-Beirne Lovely

Environmental Subcommittee-Kristan Bagley-Jones

School Building Subcommittee-Glenn Pavlicek and Lynda Lee Sheridan

Communications Subcommittee-Kristan Bagley-Jones

Milton Foundation for Education Representative-Lynda Lee Sheridan
Facilities Subcommittee-Lynda Lee Sheridan and Kristan Bagley-Jones

Before moving on to the FY09 budget discussion, Ms. Sheridan took a moment to address the three separate indictments for larceny over \$250 for thefts from the Milton schools by a former cafeteria director. This matter was brought to the attention of the Milton Police Department by school Administration in May of 2007. The total figure of stolen receipts is \$83,548. Ms. Sheridan explained this is still a pending litigation so no further comments will be made by the School Committee until this is resolved. She asked Mr. Hilton to discuss the controls that have been put in place as a result of this matter. Mr. Hilton began by stating that Administration appreciates the honor, diligence, and commitment of the line staff associated with the Milton Food Service program. Since this occurred, the school system began centralizing the cash management; automated the food service operation to a point of sale system; enhanced the tracking of inventory, receipts, vending machines, and snack bars. Vending machines and snack bars operate separately from the point of sale system; however, they will also be automated by next September. In addition, we enhanced the separation of duties and internal controls associated with food service so people separate from the food service area reconcile the funds to insure that receipts and sales are reconciled on a daily, weekly, monthly, and annual basis. Mr. Huban asked if the School Department is seeking full restitution; Mr. Hilton replied yes. Ms. Bagley-Jones asked how often the schools are audited, and Mr. Hilton replied audits are performed annually. The last audit was in the summer of 2007. At that time auditors were informed of what had occurred within the food service program and they viewed our food service program in operation and noted some areas we should improve. Ms. Kelly asked if it would be possible to generate a report on a monthly basis showing cash/sales inventory reconciliation. Mr. Hilton replied he currently reviews Food Service reports on a monthly basis. In the future he will share the reports with the Finance Subcommittee and then present them to the full School Committee.

7. **FY09 Budget** – Ms. Gormley, Mr. Hilton and Mr. Phelan reviewed the budget reductions in detail and addressed the additional \$200,000 added to the school budget at Town Meeting. Ms. Gormley began by reviewing the necessary additions for FY09. These include special education tuitions; 2 teachers for co-taught classrooms moving to 2nd grade at Tucker and 4th grade at Glover; and the adjustment of the Warrant Committee for Piece Middle School. This totals \$258,491. There are also general increases to take in to consideration which include district wide utilities, transportation, and technology. These general increases total \$101,107. Another necessary addition to consider is the amount needed to meet contractual obligations. This amount is \$517,000. All necessary additions for FY09 total \$876,598. Using a power point presentation, Mr. Hilton showed the request at Annual Town Meeting had been \$33,834,463; Town Meeting funded a budget of \$32,061,120. This resulted in a necessary reduction of \$1,773,343. Union contract savings amounted to \$132,972, decreasing the necessary reduction to \$1,640,371. Town Meeting increased the appropriation to the Milton Public Schools by \$200,000. This will allow two teachers to be added back to both the Middle School and the High School. The next slide was a summary of FY09 staffing reductions. A total of 17.3 FTEs will be eliminated. The slide showed the Elementary level will be reduced by 4.0 FTEs (2 classroom teachers, 1 Instructional Specialist, .5 Assistant Principal, and a .5 music teacher). Ms. Gormley took a moment to share with the Committee a letter from the Leadership Team addressed to all families of incoming Grade 1 students. This letter explains certain changes being made for the 2008-2009 school year in an attempt to balance the French and English classes. If after reading this letter any parent has a question or wishes to make changes to the program they had chosen for 1st grade, they should contact Sean Walsh at Central Office. The

changes being made include additional Spanish time – currently FLES students in grades 3-5 receive two 30 minute sessions of Spanish instruction per week. The Leadership team devised a plan to provide Spanish instruction in grade 2 one time per week for 30 minutes and to increase grades 3-5 to three 30 minute sessions per week. This will be done using existing staff. There will be no FLES in 1st grade. The letter also addressed the issue of smaller class size in grade 1 for English. English class size for grade 1 will be a maximum of 22 students to allow for the possibility of adding new students at later grades. Due to high enrollment in French Immersion and budget limitations, French Immersion classes are expected to be between 25-27 students. Every attempt will be made to keep students at their home schools; however, this cannot be guaranteed. The letter also addresses the integration of 4th grade in English and French. Next year 4th grade students will be mixed together for math. Ms. Gormley added that Principals would like to explore other possible areas for 4th grade integration as well. Questions and comments were raised by Committee members regarding this letter from the Leadership team and other Elementary reductions.

- When looking at class sizes of 25-27 in French Immersion, is the commitment of Administration to equalize these class sizes and to what extent will this go? For example, if one school has a class of 25 and another has a class of 27, will people be notified of this and asked if they want to move? Ms. Gormley replied they would first ask for volunteers and then look at the student assignment plan to see what students would be closest.
- Is the 4th grade integration of French and English a pilot program? Why not also do this for 5th grade? Ms. Gormley replied contractual prep time for teachers has to be considered and they would first like to insure the success of this integration at the 4th grade level next year.
- 4th grade integration of French and English is a great idea. We should keep studying this and perhaps look for 5th grade teachers who also may want to pilot this idea.
- There is one 1st grade French Immersion classroom teacher being eliminated; where is the other? Ms. Gormley replied the other is a 2nd grade English teacher at Glover.
- Can a sheet be shown at the next School Committee meeting detailing projected class sizes for next year? Ms. Gormley stated one had been done but will need to be revised. She will bring it for the next meeting.

Mr. Phelan addressed reductions being made at the Middle School. The Middle School is reducing the staff by 3 FTEs (1 English/Language Arts support teacher, 1 Math support teacher and the library will be closed). The decision to close the library was difficult; however, Mr. Phelan explained Pierce is in corrective action and he feels it is necessary to put every single teacher in front of students. These reductions will enable Pierce to survive one year during correction action and allow the school to regain the team model that had been lost in the previous year of cuts. Mr. Phelan pointed out that last year Pierce lost 7 teachers and class size in electives is high (some class sizes between 30 and 35). The two positions obtained from Town Meeting will reduce elective numbers in grades 7 and 8 and allow Pierce to keep some math support in place. Questions raised by Committee members regarding the Middle School reductions included:

- What will the loss of these two support teachers mean at the Middle School? Mr. Phelan replied there are currently students who receive a second period of English or Math Investigations. These students have been identified as students in need of support. After these cuts there will be 1 Math Investigations program to service a smaller portion of grade 6-8 students. Pierce will return to the team structure it had two years ago which provides 2 periods of English/Language Arts in 6th grade. He will send out a letter detailing these eliminations and the impact they will have on Pierce students. This letter will also be posted on the website.

- What is the impact of closing the library? Mr. Phelan explained at any point of the day there are 1-2 classrooms each period in the library using the computers, Smartboards, doing research, etc. The Librarian is a technology expert who does Edline, newsletters, prepares lessons in advance for teachers, trains other teachers on the use of Edline, etc. This will be a great loss to Pierce and he hopes to have that resource replenished as soon as possible.
- Will the loss of the English/Math support positions impact the corrective action status? Mr. Phelan replied it would since those positions directly benefit those students whose MCAS scores are in need of improvement. However, he is hoping that the initiatives being put in place (teaming, two periods of English in 6th grade and COWS) will enhance the instruction for all students.

The High School will be reduced by 6.8 FTEs: 2.0 classroom teachers (World Language and English); 1.8 Unit B positions; 1.0 Guidance/Adjustment position; 1.0 secretarial support in Guidance; and 1.0 Security position. Ms. Sheridan pointed out that the safety officer positions at Pierce and the High School are not shown on this list. These were positions that had been cut this year. Ms. Gormley is speaking with Chief Wells about the safety officer at Milton High being replaced. Ms. Bagley-Jones verified that adding back the math and science teacher at the High School from the money received at Town Meeting will allow us to continue to provide the 4 years of science at Milton High.

District wide 3.5 FTEs will be eliminated (1.0 Speech specialist; 1.0 in Facilities; 1.0 in the Business office; and a .5 secretarial position). Ms. Gormley explained other reductions being made include long term subs – there will be 1 at the High School, 1 at the Middle School, and Elementary will share 2. This is a savings of \$10,000. A reduction will also be made in content stipends some teachers receive for a savings of \$26,000. Text, materials and supplies will be reduced by \$200,000. Mr. Hilton explained this cut will increase the need for parents and teachers to provide their own materials in classrooms. Ms. Gormley briefly discussed the Athletic Program and what it costs to run. The Athletic program costs approximately \$550,000 per year; \$198,000 of that is in the budget. We receive \$190,000 in athletic fees; \$20,000 in gate fees and we will continue to rely heavily on the Boosters and other outside sources to make up the remaining \$142,000. Fees for athletics, transportation, activities will be discussed and voted on at a future meeting.

Before adjourning Ms. Kelly stated the Finance Subcommittee will meet on the off weeks of the School Committee. She hopes to have minutes produced for those meetings as well and post as much information as possible on the website. The next School Committee meeting will be June 3, 2008.

Motion was made to adjourn.

Move: C. Huban
 Second: G. Pavlicek
 Vote: 5-0-0

The meeting adjourned at 9:45.