

**Milton School Committee  
Regular Meeting  
Milton High School Library  
May 29, 2007**

**Meeting called to order at 5:00 p.m.**

**Committee Present:** Beirne Lovely, Chair, Lynda Lee Sheridan, Vice Chair, Chris Huban, Mary Kelly, Laurie Stillman 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)**

Kristine Hodlin, a Milton parent, mentioned many things that the Boosters fund to support athletics (Boosters help pay for uniforms, fund the athletic banquet, fund coaching clinics, work the concession stand, hold fundraisers, etc.). She feels that parents of athletes put out a great deal of money supporting these events in addition to paying high fees. She asked the Committee to look at a way to cut other places fairly so it is not the athletic program that feels the brunt. She also stated that the budget is requested by the Warrant Committee in January and numbers are available early in the year as to how much income the town will receive. She believes that forums to figure out how to live within our means should be held earlier.

Steve Morash, a Milton parent and Town Meeting member, stated he was saddened but not surprised at the outcome of the School Department's attempt to obtain additional funds at Town Meeting. He had been told by many long time school supporters at Town Meeting that the Milton School Department has lost credibility with them. Twice since the year 2000 it has been said there would be no high school athletics or activities. Overrides have been passed and students and parents have raised funds in the past; however, Mr. Morash and others do believe these cuts are necessary or credible. When Mr. Morash's comments became more of a personal nature, he was interrupted by Mr. Huban who asked that the Committee tread carefully if allowing these comments. Mr. Lovely informed Mr. Morash that his comments could be conveyed to the School Committee for their review.

Before discussing the budget Mr. Lovely reported that he had the pleasure of speaking at the Memorial Day exercises this week. On behalf of the School Committee and the School Department he thanked the Choral and Musical groups who performed under the direction of Dr. Noreen Diamond Burdett and Mr. Gary Goode and all other individuals who came out to march, play and sing.

2. **FY08 Budget** – Mr. Lovely thanked the principals for their attendance tonight. The principals also met with the Finance Subcommittee today to discuss some areas they felt should be re-examined. The position of the Finance Subcommittee is that it is important to avoid the significant disruption of elementary school. The proposed cut of 8 elementary staff would have necessitated the relocation of many students which would have had a significant emotional and societal impact. Administration was asked to go back to the table and look at all non-classroom positions, administrative positions, support personnel, coaches, assistant principals, etc. that could potentially limit the reductions at the elementary level. Administration has come back with a new proposal to present tonight. While this proposal will inconvenience some, Mr. Lovely stated it is a far cry from what may have happened.

Dr. Giffune showed some slides outlining the proposed reductions as compared to the reductions presented at the Annual Town Meeting: The 5/29/07 proposed reductions include: 2 additional custodial positions \$77,500 (the Custodial Union agreed to this after seeing our budget position); \$50,000 additional in district wide materials and supplies; an additional \$5,000 reduction in the technology budget; a reduction of attendance officers from 2 to 1 \$16,584; \$20,000 picked up through reorganization (1/2 of Rental Coordinator's salary moved to revolving account); 1 tech support position \$48,400; 2 additional reductions in elementary support \$102,064; and 2 classroom reductions at Collicot/Cunningham \$102,064. Dr. Giffune explained that the system will be strained and she is concerned there will not be enough support to maintain buildings and services.

Dr. Giffune then referred to another handout given to Committee members which delineates Elementary Administrative/Curriculum support. Currently Tucker has 2.25 Administrative/Curriculum support positions; Glover has 2.0; Collicot and Cunningham each have 1.5. District wide there is a 1.0 English/Language Arts Coordinator; a 1.0 Elementary Math Coordinator and 4.9 Literacy aides. At Town Meeting Administrative/Curriculum support positions were reduced to 1.5 at Tucker and Glover; 1.0 at both Collicot and Cunningham. Reductions at Town Meeting also included the 4.9 Literacy Aides. Dr. Giffune explained that tonight's proposal further reduces these positions. At Tucker and Glover there will be a .5 Assistant Principal and a .5 Instructional support position reducing them from 1.5 to 1.0. Collicot and Cunningham will each have a .5 Instructional support position reducing them from 1.0 to .5. The English/Language Arts Coordinator will be housed at the new building and will be able to provide administrative back up. The Instructional support person will also coordinate math support at Elementary and will be housed at the new building. The Administrative team felt strongly all levels must have some support. Dr. Giffune explained this is not ideal, but it does accomplish what has been asked. Mr. Lovely asked if the Committee had any questions or comments.

Ms. Kelly inquired about class size due to the reduction of 2 classrooms (grades 4 and 5 at Collicot/Cunningham). She stated the numbers don't look good, particularly for next year's 5<sup>th</sup> grade which looks to have class sizes of 26, 26, 25 and 26. She asked if there was any possibility to open that up to see if anyone would want to move to improve class

size across the board. Comparatively, on the French side next year's 5<sup>th</sup> grade would be classes of 18 and 20; 4<sup>th</sup> grade 21 and 21. Ms. Kelly stated that is a large discrepancy in class size. Dr. Giffune replied they will see where the openings are and alert parents of children in those classes who may want to avail themselves to the possibility of moving. Also, Ms. Kelly mentioned a class of 16 at Glover for next year's 5<sup>th</sup> grade and asked if there would be any opportunities there to mix things up to balance class sizes. Mr. Lovely suggested that the Committee may want to express a policy decision that it would be their desire to have the capacity for voluntary transfers and make it clear that this would be within the Superintendent's authority. The Committee would entertain those transfers but would prefer them to first be on a voluntary basis.

Ms. Sheridan stated that once students reach grades 4 and 5 in the French program they are spending half of the day in French and the other half learning English. At one point the Committee had discussed the possibility of combining the French classes with the English classes for the time they spend learning English. Doing this would not only solve the issue of French students only being with other French students but could alleviate some of the high numbers. Ms. Sheridan feels this possibility should be explored. Ms. Sheridan also asked if it would be possible to have the full Rental Coordinator position funded by the revolving account. Dr. Giffune replied she should have to wait until she sees this year's receipts. Mr. Lovely explained that the revolving account can only be used for rental related services. Expenses must be covered first (lights, extra custodians, etc.) before we can determine if there is enough surplus for the remainder of that position to be fully funded.

Ms. Stillman thanked everyone involved for proposing what looks to be a much more tolerable way to approach this difficult situation. She asked if Dr. Giffune could sum up what this means and asked if there were any other major bullet points the Committee should understand. Dr. Giffune explained this proposal involved a compromise on everyone's part. She did not want to lose support nor did the principals and the School Committee did not want to lose classroom teachers. She explained that class size will remain about the same in K & 1; the number of teachers will be 2 less so class size may increase slightly; some classes (4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> grades in the new building) may have to be closed; Elementary buildings may close when students leave the afternoon program since there will not be adequate custodial staff.

Mr. Huban applauded the Custodial Union for negotiating into their contract the team custodial work. He believes we need to strictly enforce the 2 mile busing limit this year. Mr. Huban also asked since Glover and Collicot are the two largest schools why the Assistant Principal would not be assigned to those two schools instead of Tucker and Glover. Also, in looking through the budget materials he noticed the School Committee's expense line remains the same from last year. Mr. Huban stated that since Dr. Giffune will be retiring there will have to be some type of Superintendent search which in the past has cost about \$20,000-\$25,000. He suggested that before we advertise for this position, we should look within our own ranks. In response to Mr. Huban's question regarding the Assistant Principal at Glover and Collicot, Dr. Giffune explained that the thought was having Maryellen McDermott and Martha Sherman housed at the

new buildings would be an efficient way to provide instructional and administrative back up. This is still under discussion.

Mr. Lovely mentioned that the previous plan would have involved the movement of many elementary students from their existing districts which would have contradicted the grandfathering concept. Although this new approach may require some movement, Mr. Lovely asked Dr. Giffune if she felt we could substantially avoid all of that movement with what we are doing now; Dr. Giffune replied yes.

Ms. Kelly asked if Dr. Giffune anticipated any other increases in class size with the exception of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades at Cunningham/Collicot. Dr. Giffune replied that when she stated class size may increase slightly she was referring to people who may move in to town. Ms. Gormley stated that the Cunningham/Collicot 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes being referred to are new classes that were created last year. These students are in fact just moving back to their home schools. At Mr. Lovely's request, Mr. Schultz gave a further explanation of these two classes. Mr. Schultz explained that two years ago they noticed that class size was increasing in grades 3 and 4. They were able to assign two new teachers to alleviate this increase. Four students from each of the English classes were designated to join the new classes (16 students per grade). Knowing that there are necessary cuts, Mr. Schultz stated these students will go back to their original classes. Although an increase of 4 students per class seems high, Mr. Schultz already has a list of students who are leaving school for various reasons.

Ms. Kelly also asked Dr. Giffune to explain what the Elementary specialist and the PE restructure will look like next year. Ms. Gormley responded that Art and Music will be cut in half; there will be one Art teacher to service all Elementary and we will have a 1.2 Music teacher. After meeting with department heads for each of those areas, it was determined to be more effective to have Art for one half of the year and Music the other half instead of doing this every other week. Chorus is eliminated in grades 4 and 5; Strings and Band will remain at lunch time. Ms. Gormley explained that Physical Education has not been reduced. They are meeting as a leadership team to try to equalize the prep time between French and English teachers and effectively use that PE time to make the prep time around lunch. Ms. Kelly wants to make sure that they coordinate this so it does not overlap with Strings and Band at lunch time.

Ms. Sheridan inquired about the Nurse position being cut back. She asked if there was a nurse available to fill in the event of an absence. Dr. Giffune explained they are allowing for a .4 position among the nursing staff to handle these situations. There are also nursing subs if needed. Ms. Stillman stated that we have worked hard to get Enhanced Nursing Grants and these grants come with certain requirements. She feels we should check with Margaret Gibbons to make sure the grants would not be compromised. Dr. Giffune does not believe they would be jeopardized in any way.

Mr. Lovely asked the Committee if they should authorize Dr. Giffune to move forward with these proposed reductions. Since a possible School Committee meeting had been discussed for Thursday evening, Ms. Kelly stated she would like to have this time to go

back and look at retirement and replacement numbers which Dr. Giffune said were not included in these numbers. Ms. Kelly would also like to look at some possible savings in the Employee Benefit line (shown on back up material provided to Committee members by Mr. Hilton). Mr. Huban stated that he was not aware of a possible meeting for Thursday and has another commitment. He feels Administration has done an excellent job mitigating the impact on the Elementary schools and feels the Committee should give them the go ahead to implement this plan as they see fit. Ms. Stillman supports Mr. Huban's suggestion and feels that Administration and the staff need to move ahead. She respects the compromises made and stated that anything within the context of this budget is within the School Committee's purview to amend. Ms. Stillman will also be unable to attend a meeting on Thursday. Ms. Kelly voiced her concern over changes being proposed at the Middle School level, in particular the dismantling of teams. Dr. Giffune said this would be the next place they would look since the proposal as it exists erodes the character of the Middle School.

Motion was made to give Administration the authorization to implement the proposals presented tonight for the Elementary School level.

Move: C. Huban  
Second: G. Pavlicek  
Vote: 5-1-0 (M. Kelly)

The Committee then discussed the proposed fees for clubs and activities. The proposed fee for clubs and activities at the High School is \$100. This \$100 will be a one-time fee for the year and will allow a student to participate in all clubs and activities offered. The one-time fee proposed for the Middle School is \$75.

Motion was made to approve the \$100 fee for clubs and activities at Milton High School and the \$75 fee for clubs and activities at Pierce Middle School.

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

Mr. Lovely reported that he and Ms. Sheridan have been talking with the Boosters and others in an effort to save the athletic program. They have developed some proposals and Dr. Giffune has also developed a proposal. Dr. Giffune reported that she discussed the athletic program with Dr. Drottter and Mr. Phelan who agreed that a High School without an athletic program is greatly diminished. They discussed the necessity to raise the fees and the sentiment being expressed that the School Committee should support the athletic program to some degree. Each principal brought a proposal to restore some funding. In Dr. Drottter's absence, Dr. Giffune explained that Dr. Drottter said he would be willing to look at his Wood Technology program and the Automotive Technology Program. One of the staff is duly certified so Dr. Drottter felt he could keep some semblance of those programs; however, the CAD (Computer Assisted Design) program could not be scheduled. Dr. Drottter had stated he would be willing to do this to help reinstate the

athletic program In addition to this Mr. Phelan reported he will volunteer a position that is becoming available due to a retirement in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. They are working to reorganize the grade 6 teams so they can perhaps go without this position at Pierce. Mr. Phelan explained that it was felt that the schools should put something on the table in an effort to share the burden of athletics. By brainstorming and coming up with these suggestions, the hope is that athletics can be partially funded by the schools. Mr. Phelan stated we can then reach out to the community to be part of this process as well.

It was the general consensus of the Committee to authorize Mr. Lovely and Ms. Sheridan to continue to negotiate with the Superintendent to develop a proposal with respect to athletics and to continue discussions with the Boosters and other interested parties. Mr. Lovely mentioned he would also like to develop a proposal on how the schools can reach out to the community for volunteer support on a broader basis. He would like to discuss this with the Superintendent and would like all Committee members to offer any suggestions. With regard to the 2 mile transportation limit, Ms. Kelly mentioned that this will be a hardship for many families. She feels some effort should be made to encourage networking with regard to transportation and suggested that the PTO's could help with this.

A Finance Subcommittee meeting will be scheduled for Friday morning and the next regular School Committee meeting will be June 5, 2007.

Motion was made to temporarily adjourn and to re-adjourn in Executive session immediately following the Awards Night ceremony and not to return to Open session.

Move: M. Kelly  
Second: C. Huban

By a roll call vote, the Committee voted unanimously to adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.