

**Milton School Committee
Regular Meeting
Milton High School Library
November 3, 2009**

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

Staff Present: Mary Gormley, Superintendent, John Phelan, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Personnel, Matthew Gillis, School Business Administrator

1. Meeting called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Before beginning the regular School Committee meeting, Mrs. Sheridan asked that a moment of silence be given in memory of Charles Winchester who recently passed away. Mr. Winchester served the Town of Milton in many capacities over the past thirty years. On behalf of the School Committee, Mrs. Sheridan expressed gratitude for having had the privilege of working with Mr. Winchester and offered the Committee's condolences to the Winchester family.

2. **Approval of November 3, 2009 Agenda**

With the Committee's consent, Mrs. Sheridan approved the agenda of November 3, 2009.

Prior to Citizen speak, three performers (Liana Ginettis, Lauren Stafford, and Nick Marinelli) from the upcoming Milton High School production, *The Music Man*, sang for the School Committee and the public. *The Music Man* will be performed at Milton High School on Friday, November 13, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. and Saturday, November 14, 2009 at 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.

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

Erika Donahue spoke of the importance of the Latin program both at the Middle School and the High School. Ms. Donahue reviewed the many activities students participation in as part of the Latin Club at Milton High School and asked that the School Committee not identify Latin as an enrichment activity but as an integral and necessary part of the curriculum for a significant portion of the student body.

Mary Ann Sullivan, Director of the Council on Aging, informed School Committee members of the work being done between the Council on Aging and students and teachers at Tucker School. Ms. Sullivan explained that the Pen Pal program is in its 15th year at Tucker. In this program, several 3rd grade students write letters to seniors and then have the opportunity to meet their pen pal later in the year. This year the Council on Aging is honoring Milton veterans at a luncheon on November 13, 2009. For this event 5th grade students at Tucker were asked to write letters or poems to veterans and several of these letters were put into a booklet which will be presented to the veterans at this luncheon. Ms. Sullivan thanked Ken Quigley of Curry College for making colored copies for this booklet.

Susan Young spoke of the importance of reading specialists in the classroom. Ms. Young stated that many parents are concerned that with large class sizes and the loss of these important resources. Ms. Young would appreciate the School Committee's consideration of this matter in future budgetary discussions or if stimulus funds are available.

Mary Ann Rull also spoke of the importance of reading specialists in the elementary schools. Ms. Rull requested that reading specialists be hired to assist the elementary grades, primarily 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grades. Ms. Rull is aware of the efforts of the School Committee and the Administration to work with a decreased budget; however, she asked that they re-prioritize resources and address the critical need to build strong readers in our elementary schools.

4. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the October 6, 2009 School Committee were approved.

Move: B. Lovely

Second: M. Kelly

Vote: 5-0-0

5. Superintendent's Report

National Achievement Scholarship Program Presentations

On behalf of the Milton Public Schools and the School Committee, Ms. Gormley and Mrs. Sheridan recognized several high school students for their academic accomplishments. Congratulations were extended to Jacqueline James who has been recognized for the National Achievement Scholarship Program. Congratulations were also extended to Samuel Shepard (not present), John Shields, Charlie Rosmarin, and Graham Strang. These students received Letters of Commendation from the National Achievement Scholarship Program for their academic achievements.

Milton Foundation for Education

Ms. Gormley introduced representatives of the Milton Foundation for Education (MFE) who were present to update the Committee on some events sponsored by the MFE. Representatives included Denise Queally, Margaret Eberhardt, Erika Donahue, Yoshi Belash, and Lisa Rask Viola.

Ms. Rask Viola stated that she and Ms. Belash chaired the recent annual Monster Dash held in memory of Sam Cichello. This year over 280 runners participated and over \$12,000 was raised from sponsors and registration. The proceeds from this event go towards the elementary Science program. For this year's event, the MFE partnered with the Park and Recreation Department to help coordinate activities. Also, an art competition was held to design T-shirts for the event and the winner was Max Mijal of Cunningham School. Ms. Rask Viola thanked all the sponsors of this event for their generosity.

Ms. Queally, Ms. Eberhardt, and Ms. Donahue will be co-chairs for the upcoming 11th annual Celebration for Education being held November 21, 2009 at Lombardo's. This year's theme is "Up and Away, Beyond the Basics", and the focus will be on enrichment programs during the day for all six schools. Ms. Donahue explained that this year they will once again have the casino night and volunteer dealers are needed. Training will be provided to volunteers on November 17th in the High School cafeteria. Ms. Queally reviewed several of the live auction items and reported that Jim Wells will be the Auctioneer for this event. In addition, entertainment will be provided by comedian Paul Nardizzi and a video presentation is being put together by Tom Fahey to highlight the various ways the MFE has assisted the Milton Public Schools in the past. Anyone wishing to volunteer for this event can contact miltoncfe2009@gmail.com and tickets can be purchased at www.miltonfoundationforeducation.org

Cunningham Site Council

Ms. Gormley introduced Principal Christine Gerber and parent representatives Jeanne Conley and Drew Flanagan. Teacher representatives Kathy Mulligan and Roberta Williams were unable to attend. Ms. Gerber reviewed the Improvement Plan for Cunningham School. With respect to AYP and MCAS, Ms. Gerber reported that in 2009 Cunningham met all AYP targets. After being in AYP status for subgroups in English Language Arts (ELA) in 2008, the Cunningham School is now listed as No Status for both ELA and Math. Ms. Gerber stated that the goals of the Cunningham Improvement Plan are to: (1) improve student achievement; and (2) increase teacher, parent, and community engagement. Ms. Gerber reviewed the targeted initiatives to help reach these goals. The Power Point presentation shown tonight and the Cunningham School Improvement Plan can be found on the website, www.miltonps.org under the Cunningham Elementary School Edline web page. Some questions and/or comments from School Committee members and the Administration as a result of this presentation included:

- What benchmark assessments are being used? Ms. Gerber replied that they are using Darnell/Finnell assessments and over the summer Tufts consultants came in and did voluntary training with the teachers.
- Describe the assessment process. Ms. Conley replied that the assessment is an individual one-on-one test with the teacher. The teacher grades the test and the assessment tells the student's reading level (A-Z). In the Book Room at Cunningham there are leveled sets of books (thanks to the Milton Foundation for Education). The leveled books share the same content but are at varying reading levels.
- Explain differentiated instruction and what it involves from the teachers' perspective. Ms. Gerber stated that teachers plan their class lessons the same way. From the data collected from assessments, a teacher may pull a group of students and do alternate tasks with them while at the same time other students in the class are working independently at their own level. Teachers have received training through Tufts as part of the Professional Development and 3 half-days per year consultants from Tufts come in and work with teachers on a grade level basis to discuss any problems and model possible solutions.
- Ms. Gerber stated that the goal is to eventually have these assessments done for K-5 students at the beginning of each year, mid-year, and the end of the year. The feedback from teachers is that although these assessments take a great deal of time, the information received is invaluable.
- Do we have a French set of texts as part of this assessment process? Yes, there are French texts as well as English. Gracie Burke, Director of World Language, has worked with teachers and has found similar assessments from Canada that the teachers are using as well as similar leveled text.
- This is a system-wide initiative so there are leveled readers at every school and all teachers participate in the Professional Development.
- With regard to the Open Response initiative in both English and Math, is this process teaching to the test? Ms. Gerber replied that the structure of Open Response is a type of question that is on the test; however, when we are working on Open Response questions they are aligned with the standards. Students are being asked to respond to questions that are standards-based in a format they will see on the test. Also, answering questions in an Open Response format shows that a student understands a concept and can explain it in written form.

The Committee thanked the Cunningham Site Council for this presentation.

Before ending the Superintendent's report, Ms. Gormley responded to questions raised at the last School Committee meeting. With regard to the after school library hours at Pierce and Milton High School, Ms. Gormley reported that this year the library at Pierce is open from 2:30-3:30 p.m. with a library/homework advisor. At Milton High School, the librarian comes in from 12:30-4:30 p.m. although

classes come to the library prior to 12:30 p.m. under the supervision of administration. With regard to the Open Houses for the community to view our new schools, these will take place on Saturday, November 14, 2009. All six schools will be open to the public either at 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. or 12:00 p.m.-2:00 p.m. The schedule is as follows: Collicot Elementary 12:00 p.m.-2:00 p.m.; Cunningham Elementary 12:00 p.m.-2:00 p.m.; Glover Elementary 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.; Tucker Elementary 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.; Pierce Middle School 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.; and Milton High School 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. This information will be posted on the website, advertised on Cable, and posted in the local paper.

Ms. Gormley gave an athletic update on the various sports teams at Milton High School and stated that this information was detailed in a recent Email Blast. Ms. Gormley also informed the Committee and the public that Coach Sean LoPresti was recently selected by the Massachusetts Basketball Coaches Association as Division 2 South Boys' Basketball Coach of the Year for the 2008/2009 year. Coach LoPresti will receive this award on Sunday, November 22, 2009 at Holy Cross.

Ms. Gormley reported that the World Language Committee will be co-chaired by John Phelan and Gracie Burke (World Language Director). This committee will consist of teachers, principals, and parents, and Kristan Bagley-Jones will be the School Committee representative. Meetings for this committee will be held bi-weekly from 4:00-6:00 p.m. and there will be representation from both the French Immersion and English programs. The following parents were selected to participate in this committee. Cunningham representatives include Andrew Cantillon and Courtney Affanato, Collicot representatives include Mary Ann Rull and Marietta Surette; Glover representatives include Raju Pathak and Margaret Eberhardt; and Tucker representatives include Rachel Schewe and Rachel Shanor. Mrs. Sheridan thanked all parents for volunteering their time and efforts to this committee. The World Language Committee will give a report to the School Committee in February, 2010.

Ms. Gormley thanked everyone involved in the recent Swing for Sports fundraiser for their hard work. Special recognition was given to Karen DeLuca, Kevin Walsh, John and Laura Phelan, John Davis, Kara Russo, and Fran Launie for their tireless efforts. Over \$30,000 was raised at the Golf/Tennis Tournament to help support athletics and everyone involved was appreciative of the support given. Ms. Gormley thanked Beirne Lovely for arranging the use of Wollaston Golf Course and Ken Quigley for donating the Curry College facilities for the banquet and for the very generous donation made to the athletic program. Ms. Gormley also informed the Committee that November is National Reading in our Schools Month, and she presented School Committee members with invitations to the Tucker School read-aloud event to be held during the school day on November 13, 2009.

6. Chairman's Report

With regard to Draft #2 of the School Committee calendar, Mrs. Sheridan stated that the World Language Final Review Report should be moved from December 8th to February, 2010. Also, the Superintendent's goals will be presented at the next School Committee meeting. Ms. Gormley stated that Draft #3 of the calendar will be prepared to reflect these changes. Mrs. Sheridan thanked Don Roine, Executive Director at Milton Access TV and welcomed new volunteer Karen Miller. Mrs. Sheridan commented on the improved quality of Cable due to an added camera and stated that additional volunteers would be welcome. Any community member wishing to help with Cable can contact www.miltonaccesstv.org. Mrs. Sheridan also addressed an advertisement in a recent issue of the Milton Times from the opponents of the development at the Town Farm. One sub-headings in this article read "*Save Milton Public Schools, Save the Milton Town Farm*". Many phone calls and emails were received by the School Committee and the Superintendent asking if the School Committee was

supporting the opposition for this development. Mrs. Sheridan clarified that the Milton School Committee has not taken a stand on this matter nor did it have input to the advertisement. Ms. Kelly suggested that the Milton Public Schools should communicate with the Board of Selectmen to insure that a study be done as how the schools will be impacted by whatever is proposed for that land.

7. Finance Subcommittee Report

Ms. Kelly reported that the Finance Subcommittee has been working to prepare the final FY11 budget number for the Warrant Committee. The number to be submitted is \$35,533,187, a \$2,557,149 increase from this year's budget. Ms. Kelly reviewed the mandated increases which were considered when preparing this number and explained other proposed additions that were considered. The proposed additions included anticipated legal fees due to contract negotiations in FY11; assigning 2 teachers at different grade levels to address enrollment; and assigning 2 teachers to address achievement issues. As requested by the Warrant Committee, Ms. Kelly stated that the Finance Subcommittee will continue to work on the details of what the impact of a level dollar budget will be on the school system. School Committee members agreed that they should clarify what number the Warrant Committee is referring to as a starting point for a level dollar budget. Ms. Bagley-Jones commended the Finance Subcommittee and the Administration for the amount of time they spend working on these budget matters.

Motion was made to approve the FY11 budget number of \$35,533,187 and to forward this to the Warrant Committee.

Move: G. Pavlicek

Second: K. Bagley-Jones

Vote: 5-0-0

8. Old Business/Citizen Speak Topic Response

Ms. Bagley Jones thanked parents for attending School Committee meetings to voice their concerns at Citizen Speak. Although the School Committee does understand the importance of their concerns, Ms. Bagley-Jones stated that it is a grim budget picture.

8. Next Meeting Agenda Items

- Superintendent's goals
- Review School Committee goals

Motion was made to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing contract negotiations and to adjourn directly from Executive Session and not to return to Open Session.

Move: B. Lovely

Second: M. Kelly

By a roll call voice vote, the School Committee voted unanimously to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing contract negotiations and to adjourn directly from Executive Session and not to return to Open Session.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.