

Minutes of the School Committee  
Regular Meeting  
Milton High Library  
January 18, 2012

**Committee Present:** Glenn Pavlicek, Chair; Denis Keohane, Vice Chair; Mary Kelly; Leroy Walker; and MHS Rep: Steven Pierre.

**Not Present:** Lynda Lee Sheridan. Kristan Bagley-Jones (late)

**Staff Present:** Mary Gormley, Superintendent; John Phelan, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Personnel; Matthew Gillis, Assistant Superintendent for Business.

**Call to Order:** The Chair called the January 18th meeting of the School Committee to order at 7:10 pm

**Approve Agenda:** The committee approved the agenda.

**Citizens Speak:**

Laura Kessler, Rene Taber and Maureen Griffin came to announce that Saturday, February 11th would be the High School's Annual Walkathon. Ms. Kessler gave a brief presentation about the event, to held at Milton High from 1 to 4 pm. She urged students, parents and community members to support this by sponsoring the event or sponsoring an individual student. Ms.Kessler showed a Power Point demonstration as to why this fundraiser is a critical source of revenue for high school athletes and members of clubs. Forms are available on the website, and this year's theme is "All in For Sports and Clubs." Next, John Gillooly came to speak about the potential cuts to the visual arts program. As a member of the Milton Visual Arts Alliance, he urged School Committee members not only to preserve the number of art teachers now employed, but to increase it. He compared Milton to the "peer town" of Belmont, which has a similar operating budget and student enrollment, but has 11 art teachers on staff, compared to six in Milton.

**Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Pavlicek entertained a motion to approve the November 30th minutes of the Milton School Committee.

Move: Keohane  
Second: Walker  
Vote: 4-0

Mr. Pavlicek entertained a motion to approve the December 14th minutes of the School Committee

Move: Keohane  
Second: Kelly  
Vote: 4-0

## **Superintendent's Report**

Topic One: Collicot Site Council. Led by Principal Janet Sheehan, parents Sheila Paolucci, and Patti Facey, along with teachers Zena Hamada and Kathy Caccamo, the site council presented the Collicot School Improvement Plan. First, Ms. Sheehan presented AYP data, in which Collicot made AYP in the aggregate in many categories and achieved “considerable growth” in our SPED subgroup. The Collicot school received a commendation for high growth from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Collicot students met all three criteria for commendation. In preparation for this year’s MCAS, the focus is still on the learning standards. The goal is to increase the number of students scoring at proficient and advanced levels. Ms. Sheehan pointed out that Holly Concannon has been working with our teams to develop common math assessments, as well as using Open Court and administering multiple assessments. Another goal is to provide curriculum summaries. Also, along with the World Language team, Martine Fisher has provided additional curriculum summaries. Another goal is to use data to provide differentiated and targeted instruction. Also, they aim to increase inclusion by maintaining its co-taught classrooms, increasing opportunities for in-class instruction and delivery of services in the classroom. Ms. Sheehan also spoke about the school’s success with enrichment programs, such as before-school math leagues, before-school Study Island sessions, Future Problem Solvers and Meet the Artist programs. Ms. Sheehan said she hopes to increase the number of Smart Boards at Collicot and she also talked about the success of the “One Book, One School,” program. She showed a picture of the new “council ring,” installed on the Collicot campus in the fall, which is used by teachers as an outdoor meeting space for students. Also, Collicot has coordinated an MCAS workshop for parents. They want to continue to communicate through EdLine as well as weekly bulletins and Ms. Concannon is planning a Study Island workshop for parents. Ms. Sheehan explained the staff training in accordance with anti-bullying laws, and the assemblies they have held on this topic. Another goal is to make a welcome packet for new families and initiate a “buddy family” system to match a current Collicot family with an incoming family. Also, they plan to create opportunities for students who do not have access to technology in the home. Finally, she discussed the timeline and portfolio preparation for the upcoming NAEYC accreditation visit.

After the presentation, Mr. Walker praised the site council, and said the overall achievement at Collicot is quite impressive. He asked about what strategies are being used to sustain high achievement and improve differentiated instruction. Ms. Sheehan said that, for example, bringing parents into the school to learn about Study Island improves the link between student achievement and parental involvement.

Mr. Keohane asked about the difference in AYP reporting and asked for an explanation of the difference between state levels and “in-house” levels. Ms. Sheehan explained according to the scores, the administration comes up with an improvement target. If they improve by 2.5 each year, they’ll meet the target.

Ms. Kelly thanked the site council and said that “great things are happening at Collicot.” She said that she noticed in grade five, scores seemed to improve drastically and asked if this was a cohort. Ms. Sheehan agreed that we have seen significant growth in the past two years, with a huge jump in math. John Phelan pointed out that

there has been a jump in math scores across the district and added, "My personal favorite of the scores from the Collicot is that we made AYP in all of the subgroups, which means that all students are moving forward."

Ms. Gormley added that Principal Sheehan has been a strong advocate for the extra support in math which is now reflected in the scores.

Mr. Pavlicek asked for more information about the NAEYC accreditation. Ms. Sheehan explained that the National Association for the Education of Young Children is professional organization which promotes excellence in early childhood education. The group has 10 standards and uses 400 criteria by which they assess school districts. She said it is "very involved, very time consuming and very rewarding in many ways."

Mr. Phelan added that the team of Stacia Kates, Ada Rosmarin and Janet Sheehan have been working hard on this process and said that Ms. Sheehan chaired a committee on this process in her prior school district. He said this accreditation is a worthwhile goal and it will boost the respect levels for our staff. Not only is it beneficial for the Milton Public Schools, it is also expected by the state as part of the FDK grants.

Ms. Gormley said that the parental surveys, which are part of the process, gives legitimacy to the grant money, since every dollar is accounted for and parents can review how the money is spent.

Topic Two: Special Education Parent Advisory Council Presentation. Chairman Jerry Vitti, Vice Chair Venita Russell director of Pupil Personnel Karen Clasby came to discuss the work of the Milton PAC and to publicly unveil their new logo, which was created by Emma Jehanno, a Milton High senior who also serves as President of Best Buddies at Milton High. Mr. Vitti presented a PowerPoint, with informative details about how the PAC operates. They provide support to parents and guardians receiving special education services, advise the district on educational and safety matters; and work on development and evaluation of special education programs. Ms. Russell said the PAC offers three types of meetings: PAC meetings, where parents meet and a speaker is often brought in; Pre-K through 12 Roundtables, which are informational sessions attended by Mary Gormley, Karen Clasby and other administrators, where parents can get questions answered; and Parent Speak, which is an opportunity for parents to share concerns with one another. The PAC also publishes a Special Education Guide available to parents. Next, the PAC discussed some of their concerns about the potential cuts to the FY13 budget and outlined how the reduction of six educational assistants and SPED-related services would have a negative impact. They also expressed concern about the potential reduction of Pre-School supervision, paraprofessional cuts, reduction of a SPED teacher and an alternative education program teacher.

After the presentation, Ms. Bagley-Jones asked what percentage of our student body is in substantially separate classrooms. She also inquired whether parents in the MPS know what services to ask for. Mr. Vitti responded that there is a large gap. Parents either entering or already in the system may still have significant gaps in knowledge of what services their children are entitled to. Ms. Jones inquired if our schools identify children with special needs early enough, and if so, do those parents know how to obtain services? Ms. Russell responded that it is often difficult for parents of special needs students to find a babysitter to attend meetings and this can be very

isolating. She estimated there are approximately 600 students in the district on IEPs. Ms. Clasby stated her opinion that, due to thorough kindergarten screening programs and other interventions, there are very few children with an undiagnosed major disability who “fall through the cracks” here in Milton.

Mr. Walker asked what are the common themes in Parent Speak sessions and Mr. Vitti said that it is communication. “We work hard to get our message out, as does the administration, but the main issue is information, and knowing what to ask and knowing what their rights are.”

Mary Gormley remarked how the building principals are very involved in the plans of the SPED students in their schools. “Our principals are vested.....they know every child, every child’s IEP, who the SPED teachers are.” Ms. Gormley noted that SPED students are completely integrated. “SPED isn’t a different program in each of our schools. She said parents who may have questions about the PAC should reach out to Ms Russell or Mr. Vitti or call her office and she will put them in touch with the right person.

Mr. Walker said that the PAC did a good job of presenting their issues with the budget cuts. Ms. Bagley-Jones wondered if there were any interventions to help students in French Immersion who were struggling with learning issues such as dyslexia. Ms. Clasby said that right now, there is not, but it is something they have discussed. Ms. Kelly praised the logo and said it brought “joy in her heart” to hear the presentation, since there was a time when the relationship between the administration and the PAC was more difficult. Ms. Gormley pointed out that our SPED program would not be where it is today without the long-term support of the School Committee, who have committed to and prioritized the SPED programs.

Topic Three: Happenings. Ms. Gormley thanked the parents, guardians and staff who attended the recent budget presentations and noted that the entire presentation is on the school website. She reminded the School Committee about the Pierce Players performance of Guys and Dolls on January 19th. Kindergarten Info night will be held on January 25th. Also the next PAC meeting will be held on January 26th at Pierce at 7 pm. The PAC Roundtable for middle school will be held on February 9th. She said to “circle the date” for March 10th -- the night of the MFE celebration, “The Big Beach Ball,” targeting literacy in our classrooms. Also, this year’s MHS Faculty Talent Show will be held on two nights, March 29 and 30th. On March 31st, Milton is hosting the Massachusetts Best Buddies prom in the Copeland Field House. Ms. Gormley then asked Kristan Bagley-Jones to talk about the recent art exhibit hosted by MassArt. Ms. Bagley-Jones said the exhibit, entitled “Big Problems,” was recently shown at the Arnheim Gallery at MassArt. “It was not just an art event, it was a community service event,” she said. Milton High students in Kassandra Derby’s class displayed artwork with the themes of hunger, violence, poverty, environmental issue, etc. This exhibit runs from from January 18th to February 2nd. Ms. Gormley reminded the school committee that the Forbes House would be holding several events on Lincoln’s birthday, February 12th, including a Civil War concert at the Pierce Middle School. Ms. Kelly requested a date change in the draft 2012-13 school year calendar, pointing out that the week of November 12th is a difficult one for conferences.

## **Chairman's Report**

Topic One: Mr. Pavlicek thanked parents and guardians for coming to the recent School Committee budget presentations. He said that the state will release some information this week regarding local aid and encouraged parents and guardians to contact their local legislators. He informed the committee that at a recent School Building Subcommittee meeting, the Milton Public Schools were offered a gift from a local builder. The construction company offered to put signage on each of the spaces in the MPS that have been "named" in honor of a resident. He requested that the policy subcommittee review this issue, since he was unaware of any policy governing the naming of public buildings. Ms. Bagley Jones asked for clarification of the Copeland family requests on the naming of the buildings. Mr. Pavlicek responded that while the Copeland family did request naming rights and provided for interior signage, there was no mention of signage on building's exteriors.

## **Finance Subcommittee Report:**

Topic One: FY13 Budget. Mary Kelly thanked parents who came to the recent budget talks. She commented that the letter from the Glover PTO requesting that parents and guardians contact their local legislators was outstanding and wondered whether or not this should be a townwide effort. "We are asking for an increase in a portion of the state 'pie,' not only to benefit the schools, but also to benefit the town." She asked if the school committee could write a letter to our state legislators as well as the governor and ask for cooperation from other town departments, for example, the Council on Aging, Milton Public Library, Parks & Rec, etc.

Mr. Walker agreed that a letter should be sent. Mr. Keohane wondered if writing a letter would make a difference in our portion of state aid. Ms. Kelly said there is only a short window of time to accomplish this if the committee decides to proceed. She also noted that there is money in the budget for the stabilization fund and asked if the schools should request a portion of those funds. Ms. Sheridan agreed, saying that if the school is considering laying off teaches, no money should go into a stabilization fund. Ms. Gormley responded by saying that letter-writing campaigns can be very effective and described a recent group of letters sent to Gov. Patrick to lobby for the continuation of Full Day Kindergarten funding. "The power of these letters is real," she said.

**Policy Subcommittee:** In the absence of Ms. Sheridan, Mr. Walker updated the committee on the review of several SC policies:

- A. MPS Athletic Concussion Policy, first reading, Policy JJIF. Mr. Walker he asked Nurse Margaret Gibbons and Athletic Director Steve Traister to review the policy and both agreed that our current approach exceeds the requirements of the policy. They recommended that on the last page of the policy, under the "clearance/authorization form:", they do not think "Athletic Trainer" should be on the list. Mr. Walker recommend the committee go forward with this and approve it as recommended. No vote, first reading.
- B. School District Legal Status, Policy AA. Mr. Walker recommend to update and approve again with no changes.
- C. The People and Their School District. Policy AB. The request was made to change "problems" to "challenges."

- D. Nondiscrimination Policy AC. The request was made to change “society” to “school community.”
- E. Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Gender. Policy AC. No changes.
- F. Sexual Harassment, Policy ACAA. The request was made to add “individuals with whom we do business.”
- G. Complaint Procedure, Resolution of Discrimination Complaints. Policy ACG. No edits.
- H. Drug Free Schools. Policy ADB. No edits.

Mr. Pavlicek reminded the committee that the purpose of the policy readings is to “take a periodic walk through our policies and make sure they’re sound.” Ms. Kelly said she remembers that the last time policies were reviewed, members could see the changes made to each policy and requested that technique be used again so members could track changes. She also questioned how big a project this might be and wondered if perhaps a consultant could be used. Mr. Walker agreed to create a timetable for policy review. Regarding the Sexual Harassment Policy, Ms. Bagley Jones wanted to confirm that CORI checks will also apply to vendors who work in the schools. Ms. Kelly remarked that the Class Size Policy posted on the website is already outdated and suggested the committee change those before moving onto other policies. Ms. Gormley reminded the committee that School Committee Policy books are not available online and will no longer be kept in the offices of each school. Ms. Kelly requested that the online policies be organized as separate PDFs in order to make it easier to update.

**New Business:** The Next School Committee meetings are scheduled for February 1st and 15th.

**Old Business:** There was no Citizen Speak topic response.

**Next Meeting Agenda Items:** For the February 15th agenda, the SC will target Mr. Phelan’s update on the Start Time Committee and hear from the School Building and Health & Wellness subcommittees.

The Chair entertained a motion to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing contract negotiations with Council 93 and to adjourn directly from Executive Session and not return to Open Session.

Move: Walker

Second: Keohane

Roll Call vote: 5-0-0

The Chair, after being informed that the contract negotiation session had been postponed, instead entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Move: Walker

Second: Bagley Jones

Vote: 5-0-0

**The meeting adjourned at 9:47 pm.**