

Minutes of the Milton School Committee
Regular Meeting
Milton High School Library
January 26, 2011

Committee Present: Lynda-Lee Sheridan, Chair; Glenn Pavlicek, Vice Chair; Mary Kelly, Kristan Bagley-Jones, and Denis Keohane

Not Present: Chris Huban (due to prior commitment)

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

Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:05 P.M. and informed the assembled group that the proceedings would be videotaped.

Approve Agenda

Ms. Sheridan informed the group that the Executive Session would be postponed to a later meeting.

Citizen Speak

No citizens appeared before the committee.

Superintendent's Report

Ms. Gormley introduced Milton High School Principal, Dr. John Drottar, and the School Site Council teacher representative, Vernon Nelson, who presented the School Site Council process and goals, as well as the plans for the NEASC evaluation visit in early October. The Site Council is comprised of a member of the HS administration, teachers, student representatives from each grade, parent members, and members from the community at large—creating a group with broad representation, rich discussions, and innovative ideas. Dr. Drottar, who sees the ninth grade as a critical adaptive year for students, stated that the Milton High School Site Council has focused much of its effort on ninth grade reading, writing, and study skills. Mentoring programs for all students is also a Site Council priority.

Dr. Drottar reported on the success of the Bridge Program, a formal summer preparation program for students entering ninth grade, which has been in existence for four years. The program targets approximately 12 students entering high school and runs four days per week and four hours per day in the summer. Mr. Nelson stated that former Bridge Program participants see school as a positive place to be and are doing well in core subjects and problem solving. The Site Council would like to expand the Bridge Program, which is currently funded by grants available for mentoring and transition programs.

School Committee discussion focused on ways to provide a more formal, structured mentoring program in the high school using current internal resources like student leadership and peer-to-peer tutoring programs and guidance resources. Per Ms. Gormley, having a mentor for each student beyond the guidance resources is also a NEASC concern. She stated that the MFE has expressed interest in funding a mentoring program at the high school.

Milton High School teachers are already preparing for the NEASC visit in October. As reported by Dr. Drottar, much of the work, which involves surveys and self-study, must be completed by the end of the school year. With the input of parents and students, teachers compile a statement of strengths and weaknesses measured against NEASC's seven standards for accreditation. Teachers and school leaders are heading up committees to provide assessments addressing each of the seven standards. The overarching standard for NEASC is a mission-driven school, which provides quality programs for 21st century learning expectations for everyone.

Mr. Pavlicek commented that the NEASC process provides an opportunity for a thorough programmatic review, which demands justification and validation of what the institution is doing. He went on to say that this is not an easy exercise.

Ms. Kelly suggested that the internal survey for NEASC also include an assessment of how Milton High School serves the greater community. Ms. Gormley emphasized that the town and schools are interconnected —“the town is the schools and the schools are the town.” The NEASC process provides a roadmap for the schools and valuable feedback from outside experts. The self-reflection is a critical component of the exercise, which she fully supports.

In response to a question from Ms. Bagley-Jones regarding resources and proposed budget cuts for next year, Ms. Gormley responded that the proposed cuts at the high school were still works in progress. The 1.0 FTE proposed cut in MHS science would potentially impact those students who wished to add a fifth year of science to their course work and increase class sizes for those taking a fourth year of science. At the end of the school year, Dr. Drottar is required to notify NEASC about any major changes in the school's offerings.

Dr. Drottar ended his presentation by encouraging everyone to participate in the two big fundraisers at the high school—the student-driven Walkathon and the Faculty Talent Show.

Math Assessment

The Superintendent introduced Holly Concannon, the Elementary Math and K-8 Technology Coordinator, who updated the committee on the Elementary Mathematics and Common Assessment Project. The project was initiated to align the K-5 math curriculum with the state frameworks and common core requirements, as well as to develop collaborative, consistent, and rigorous guidelines for math instruction across all

four elementary schools. Ms. Concannon's presentation can be found on the MPS Web site homepage:

<http://www.miltonps.org/documents/ElemMathCommonAssessment.pdf>

School Committee discussion focused on the impact of the increased expectations of student performance on the pacing of the curriculum and on maintaining communication and timeframes among the schools. Ms. Concannon stated that the Everyday Math lessons currently used in the schools should be supplemented with Study Island, a great tool for both students and parents.

First Grade Student Assignment and Tucker/Glover Mixed District

The Superintendent presented proposed revisions to the current elementary school assignment process and invited School Committee feedback. The proposed changes included 1) a Glover/Tucker shared enrollment area similar to one in existence for the Collicot/Cunningham schools and 2) a change in the lottery system for children entering first grade in the 2011-2012 school year. Details of the plan can be found on the MPS Web site:

<http://www.miltonps.org/documents/Gr1InfoNight2011StudAssign2-18-11.pdf>

In establishing the Glover/Tucker shared area, the Superintendent reported that she was formalizing an informal process used successfully to maintain lower class sizes across the elementary schools. Mr. Pavlicek moved to authorize the administration to incorporate the Glover/Tucker shared enrollment area in the current school assignment policy.

Move: Pavlicek

Second: ?

Vote: 5-0-0

Ms. Gormley then presented proposed changes to the French Immersion lottery system in the first grade student assignment process. School committee discussion focused on the impact of the lottery on class size, families, and neighborhoods. Ms. Kelly expressed concern about the impact of the large class sizes for French Immersion on educational outcomes. She also voiced support for one lottery to include all families meeting the required time frame for registration, as opposed to the current proposal, which places current MPS kindergartners before placing new students to the district. She stated that treatment of newly entering families should be the same as for those already enrolled in the system. Mr. Keohane expressed his preference to keep siblings together in same school and same program if possible.

Mr. Phelan reported that 96% of students were placed last year in the school or program of their choice. Ms. Gormley stated that, while the French Immersion classes start out being larger, they tend to lose students by attrition over time. Ms. Gormley also recommended that she and the administration reconvene to review School Committee input and try to minimize the variables in the assignment process. She would then report back to the committee.

Ms. Sheridan thanked the leadership team for the difficult, comprehensive work they've done to address this complicated issue.

Superintendent's Update

Ms. Gormley made the following announcements:

- Glover informational budget meeting has been rescheduled.
- Tucker informational budget meeting has been rescheduled.
- Kindergarten Information Night will be held on February 10th at MHS.
- First Grade Information Night will be held on February 3rd at each individual elementary school.
- Pierce production of State Fair was a huge success, involving 100 Pierce students. She thanked PMS teacher Bill Deschenes for his hard work in the ambitious program and eagerly anticipates the production of the Wizard of Oz scheduled for the spring.
- She thanked the Milton DPW and Joe Lynch, who have been unbelievable resources in managing snow removal for the schools.

In response to a question from Ms. Kelly, Ms. Gormley stated she would look into regulations around filming student activities.

Ms. Gormley also presented the draft of a proposed process for starting a new athletic team, which she will move to the Finance Subcommittee for review.

Chairman's Report

Ms. Sheridan reported on date changes for upcoming School Committee presentations. She also commended the Superintendent on the recent e-mail blasts, which are detailed and offer a great service to the community in communicating the myriad of activities going on in the schools.

Finance Subcommittee

Mr. Gillis reviewed the second quarter financial update with the committee. He reported that expenditures were generally on pace with the budget. The report can be found online:

<http://www.miltonps.org/documents/2ndqtrexprptandmemo.pdf>

Mr. Gillis also sought School Committee approval to enter into a contract for purchasing electricity supply at a reduced kilowatt per hour rate. He would like to lock in the new rate for two years and anticipates a savings of \$66,983. Although costs of energy delivery may change, by locking in the rate of the supply portion of electricity now, the administration can maintain some control over energy costs,

Ms. Sheridan entertained a motion to approve the two-year contract beginning January 2010, with a price of \$.067 cents per kilowatt-hour for the supply of electricity from Direct Energy.

Move: Pavlicek

Second: Keohane

Vote: 5-0-0

Ms. Kelly reported that the Finance Subcommittee is in process of reviewing the binders of budget information for the Warrant Committee. Any edits will be voted at the next meeting.

Consolidated Facilities Update

Ms. Sheridan reported that the committee interviewed 17 out of 72 applicants for the Director of Facilities position narrowing the field to 4 finalists. She will present more details about the process at the next meeting.

Other Business

Ms. Kelly requested to have a current class size list available online or as a hard copy in the next School Committee packet.

Mr. Pavlicek reported preliminary estimates are for a \$250K decrease in state aid to Milton. The Warrant Committee has conservatively projected a \$450K decrease. However, the situation remains unpredictable and hard to track.

Ms. Sheridan entertained a motion to adjourn the regular meeting at 9:45 P.M.

Move:

Second:

Vote: 5-0-0