

Minutes of the Milton School Committee
Regular Meeting
Milton High School Library
November 17, 2010

Committee Present: Lynda-Lee Sheridan, Chair; Glenn Pavlicek, Vice Chair; Chris Huban, Mary Kelly, Kristan Bagley-Jones, Denis Keohane, John Savino, Student Representative

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

Call to Order

Ms. Sheridan convened the School Committee meeting at 7:00 P.M.

The committee held a moment of silence for Linda Finn, an employee of the Glover School After School Program who recently passed away.

Approval of Agenda

The committee approved the November 17th agenda with these changes:

- The addition of an item under the Finance Subcommittee Report for a vote on the drafts of the FY12 level-service and level-dollar budgets to be presented to the Warrant Committee
- The deferral of the second reading of the Gift Policy
- The substitution of an update from the Consolidated Facilities Committee in place of the Facilities Committee Report

Citizen's Speak

Tricia Heelen spoke to the committee in support of restoring the art program at the elementary schools.

Superintendent's Report

Ms. Gormley deferred discussion and vote on the Superintendent's Goals until the next meeting.

Announcements

- Ms. Gormley commended the students who participated in the production of *Anything Goes* – a great show and huge success.
- The Superintendent recognized Dr. Greg Hall, who presented a powerful, positive anti-bullying program with Bentley and MPS students, who subsequently held a “One School One Community” rally at each school with huge student support.
- The Superintendent commended Margaret Gibbons and the school nurses for a successful flu clinic on November 8th, which delivered 250 immunizations.

- She recognized the success of the Pierce Middle School’s robotics tournament and stated that new science coordinator has a potential funding source for starting a high school robotics club.
- The Superintendent announced that November is Literacy Month.
- The administration is waiting for the final report from the Coordinated Program Review.
- Northeast District music auditions are to be held this month at MHS.
- Pierce Middle School and Milton High School are holding parent-teacher conferences this week. Ms. Gormley strongly encouraged parents to call the school if they are unable to attend a scheduled conference.
- She reported that the new surveillance and security system is currently being installed and thanked Mr. Gillis for his effort.
- She announced that quarterly meetings of School Site Councils are underway.
- She reported on the Veterans’ Day ceremony, which began at MHS where a plaque of MHS students who died in WW2 was presented to the school. The Superintendent recognized Milton High student Emily McClellan, who was chosen to read, and the band, which played during the ceremony.
- The Milton Visual Arts Alliance is inviting the public to attend their event on November 28th at the Milton Library.
- The first trial of the Pierce Middle School Mock Trial program will be held on December 15th at Quincy District Court. Judge Robert Baylor from Milton will preside over the Trial—Stacy Franks vs. Pierce Middle School. (In the scenario Franks was expelled on a school weapons policy.) Members of the School Committee are invited to be on the jury.
- The school administration has received a communication from Rabbi Benjamin of Temple Shalom. His concerns were referred to the Policy Subcommittee.

Chairman’s Report

Denis Keohane, the School Committee’s representative to the MASC, reported on the Annual Meeting, which he found to be informative and educational. He represented Milton’s position on seven resolutions and participated in courses on social media use, special education cost control, and wellness and obesity programs.

Finance Subcommittee

Athletics

Mr. Steve Traister, Director of Milton High School Athletics, reported on the athletic budget and on current sports offerings and participation levels. He recognized the organizers, participants, and sponsors of the recent Booster Swing for Sports fundraiser. He also announced that three

MHS teams made the state tournaments this year: golf, volleyball, and girls' cross-country. He reported that sign-ups for winter sports were underway and that Milton alum, Ted Carol, was trying to drum up interest in wrestling. The Athletic Department has implemented a concussions impact testing system in response to federal guidelines, funded by a donation from the Monack Foundation, starting November 29th.

Mr. Gillis gave an overview of the Athletic Department budget, which is funded through four sources: the general fund, revolving funds, student fundraising, and Milton High School Boosters' fundraising. He reported that the athletic budget had a beginning balance of \$115,000, which prevented a shortfall of \$56,000 this year.

Only 33% of the athletic budget comes from the general fund. The rest is comprised of organized fundraising, user fees, and gate receipts. Current user fees are \$250 per sport with the exception of hockey, which is \$500. Students who qualify for reduced lunch may obtain a waiver of the user fees. This year 11% of student athletes qualified for a waiver.

Mr. Traister stated that income from user fees was down by \$7,000 this fall. He and Ms. Gormley expressed concern that participation numbers are down because of the user fees, which are among the highest in the area—\$1,250 per family (\$1,500 for hockey). Milton families have contributed approximately \$300,000, supporting 997 athletes, to keep the athletic program going.

In response to a question from Ms. Sheridan, Mr. Traister outlined the process for obtaining a waiver from user fees. The process is coordinated between the Athletic Director and Food Services Director and is entirely confidential. No one is turned away. With each announcement for seasonal sports sign-ups, Mr. Traister also informs families about the fee waivers. Flexible payment plans are available if families do not qualify for the waivers. Information and forms are available on the Athletic Department page of the MPS Web site.

<http://www.miltonps.org/departments-mhs-athletic.php>

Mr. Traister reported on the effort this year to reduce the number of the individual student fundraising activities, in response to input from parents, which now places an added burden on the Milton High School Boosters to cover the gap. Income from gate receipts for night football and basketball games help, but there are expenses, such as police details, associated with these events.

Citing a strong correlation between student success and participation in school activities, Ms. Gormley stated her goal was to eliminate user fees so that all students could have the opportunity to participate in the athletic program. She is seeking grants from citizens and foundations in her effort to achieve this objective. She reiterated that tax dollars fund only 33% of the athletic budget.

Ms. Bagley-Jones followed up by emphasizing that Milton had some of the highest fees in the league, and that these fees are on the backs of parents and student athletes. However, the community is in the forefront of successful fundraising, and other communities facing similar budget difficulties have looked to Milton for guidance. Ms. Bagley-Jones also recognized the

work of the coaches, who are mentors to the students. Ms. Bagley Jones emphasized the need for citizen awareness and involvement in fundraising activities, which are key to maintaining the athletic budget.

Ms. Kelly pointed out that financial reality may necessitate continuation of user fees, although she felt eliminating them was a laudable goal. This year resources are limited. Mr. Traister noted that there had been no significant increase in coaches' salaries and minimal additions to the athletic staff. The Superintendent requested that Mrs. Traister and Gillis prepare a four-year history of athletic department salaries for the committee.

The committee requested that the documents from the athletic budget discussion be posted on the Web site.

Personnel

Mr. Gillis reported that he had completed the rollover of the FY11 personnel salaries, which totaled \$26,519,000, without adding in the positions funded by the federal stimulus monies. With the addition of the stimulus funded FTEs, personnel salaries totaled \$28,302,000. Non-salary budget lines represented a net decrease of \$16,504.

Per Mr. Gillis, the total projected budget increase in FY12, including the stimulus positions, is \$1,766,485, or 5.3%. If these positions are culled out, the budget increase is \$919,769, or 2.75%.

Student Activities

Mr. Gillis also summarized the student activities budget, which will not change significantly in FY12.

Level Funded/Service Budget

As reported by Ms. Kelly, the Finance Subcommittee and the school administration have been working to draft provisional level-service and level-funded FY12 budgets for the Warrant Committee. Ms. Kelly stated that in this effort the administration and subcommittee have carefully reviewed each position in FY11 and FY12. She hopes that this detailed information, once finalized, can be posted online.

Ms. Kelly requested that the School Committee vote on the provisional level-funded and level-service budgets for the Warrant Committee.

The Superintendent reviewed the process of preparing the FY12 budgets. She stated that she and her team began with certain "non-negotiables," like the co-taught classrooms and special education costs, and then worked from there to identify areas to cut in the personnel and non-salaried lines.

In the level-service scenario, Ms. Gormley presented a budget of \$35,158,521, which includes positions funded by stimulus and jobs bill dollars spread out over the past two years.

The level-funded FY12 budget of \$33,392,036— a cut of \$1.7 million—eliminates 17.1 FTEs (teachers, aides, administrators, and other non-salaried positions.)

Mr. Gillis presented \$948,000 in projected savings and budget reductions from non-personnel accounts, which include:

- The planned solar panel project lease agreement and energy buy back program (to be presented in detail at the next School Committee meeting)
- Changes in the state special education circuit breaker formula
- Cuts in materials, supplies, and technology
- Jobs bill carry over into FY12
- Retirements
- Increased fees and charge backs
- Contract renegotiation with current provider of sped transportation
- Custodial reorganization and contract renegotiation
- Administrative reorganization
- Surplus in the lunch program
- Electricity reduction

Mr. Phelan spoke about efforts to reduce personnel costs including 1) stretching the stimulus funds over two years and 2) pushing contracted wage increases forward into the next fiscal year. He reported that the administration, department heads, and principals had met several times to make the hard choices necessary to complete a draft for the Warrant Committee by the December 1st deadline. He stated that the details of the proposed personnel cuts would be presented at the next School Committee meeting.

School Committee discussion focused on the difficult financial picture. Ms. Kelly reported that the Warrant Committee had \$800,000 in stabilization funds to meet the needs of all town departments, not only the schools. Mr. Pavlicek commented that the Warrant Committee was estimating a 5-10% reduction in state aid.

Ms. Kelly made a motion to vote to present a draft level-service budget of \$35,158,521 to Warrant Committee as requested. The Superintendent recommended a yes vote on the motion.

Move: Kelly

Second: Pavlicek

Vote: 6-0-0

Ms. Kelly made a motion to vote to present a draft level-funded budget of \$33,392,036 to Warrant Committee as requested. The Superintendent recommended a yes vote on the motion.

Move: Kelly

Second: Pavlicek

Vote: 6-0-0

Ms. Kelly stated that during the ongoing budget process, the School Committee should try to adjust art offerings to deliver a full program at the elementary level.

Ms. Sheridan thanked the leadership team for their proactive efforts in crafting budget information for the Warrant Committee so early in the year.

Consolidated Facilities Subcommittee Update

Ms. Sheridan reported that the screening committee was beginning the interview process to hire a Director of Facilities. The final two candidates will be presented to the Superintendent and Town Administrator. In response to Ms. Kelly's question about the School Committee role in the process, Ms. Sheridan clarified that the Facilities Director would report to the Board of Selectmen. Due to job obligations, Mr. Huban tendered his resignation from the subcommittee and recommended that Mr. Keohane replace him. Mr. Keohane accepted the position.

Move: Huban

Second: Pavlicek

Vote 6-0-0

Ms. Sheridan thanked Mr. Huban for his great work on the Consolidated Facilities Committee.

Next Meeting Agenda Items

The committee will hear a presentation on the solar panel project at the next meeting.

Ms. Sheridan reported that due to technical problems, the November 3rd School Committee meeting was not recorded.

Ms. Sheridan entertained a motion to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing pending litigation and contract negotiations and to adjourn directly from Executive Session and not to return to Open Session.

Move: Pavlicek

Second: Huban

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