

Minutes of the Milton School Committee  
Milton High School Library  
Regular Meeting  
December 14, 2011

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

**Student Representatives:** Darren Johnson, Steven Pierre, Acadia Ryder

**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 December 14, 2011 meeting of the School Committee to order at 7:11 P.M.

The Chair then requested a moment of silence in memory of Theresa Phelan, mother of Assistant Superintendent John Phelan.

### **Approve Agenda**

The committee approved the December 14, 2011 agenda after 1) adding an update on the 350th celebration activities under the Chairman's Report and 2) deferring the Executive Session.

### **Citizen Speak**

Adam Roberts from *Milton Patch* encouraged members of the community to participate in the "Deck the House" competition, with a potential grand prize of \$100K for the schools. He directed the audience to [http://milton.patch.com/or\\_deckthehouse.patch.com](http://milton.patch.com/or_deckthehouse.patch.com) for more information.

### **Superintendent's Report**

#### Tucker School Site Council

Marcia Uretsky, Tucker School Principal, Debra Fidrocki, Tucker special education teacher in the co-taught classroom, and Site Council parent representatives, Kristin O'Hara and Katie Manning presented the Tucker School Improvement Plan to the committee. The presentation can be found online:

<http://www.miltonps.org/documents/TuckerSIP12-14-11.pdf>

As described by Ms. Uretsky, the Tucker community is very diverse—a source of pride for the school. The school also has a growing low-income population, a subgroup that currently makes up 31.1% of the 370 students. In spite of the challenging demographics, Tucker School has achieved outstanding MCAS results. This year Tucker made AYP in all grades, subjects, and subgroups and has earned the state designation of a 'high performance' school. Although Tucker School requires corrective action in ELA, this year the median student growth percentile in ELA was 70%. The growth percentile in Math was 81%. In both ELA and Math, Tucker School's student growth has met or exceeded the district's growth, and Tucker was one of 127 schools in the state to be commended for high

student growth (greater than 60%) and narrowing the proficiency gap for high-needs students over two years.

As stated by Ms. Fidrocki, striving for “personal best” is ingrained in the school culture, which is sustained by collaboration and enthusiasm among the teachers and staff. The school practices rigorous instruction and requires an 85% level of mastery of the material. Ms. Fidrocki also reported that teachers have been pushing to improve open responses, one of the identified weaknesses in ELA, and there are initiatives in place to accomplish improvements. The staff knows every student well and uses a variety of approaches to move the students to the goal of 85% mastery, including re-teaching and targeted instruction. Ms. Uretsky also mentioned the use of differentiated grouping in math between classes to challenge students and promote healthy competition.

The Site Council parent representatives reported on efforts to increase family involvement in school activities, which included an open-ended survey to reach parents who weren’t showing up. In response to parents’ recommendations, the Site Council and PTO events are now held with babysitting and dinner available. The *Tucker Pride Newsletter* is sent weekly, and Edline is updated frequently and has become more parent-friendly. At the Open House this year, parents sold soups and stews, rather than the traditional baked goods. Inside the school, French and English students are brought together in school activities, integrating both the students and families involved in these programs.

The committee members commended Principal Uretsky and her Site Council for their impressive work at Tucker School. Ms. Sheridan noted the warmth and energy in the school, and Darren Johnson, one of the Student Representatives, spoke about the importance of the motivating message for students to succeed at their personal best. Ms. Gormley spoke about the huge number of families in attendance at the recent Tucker Unity Night. Ms. Bagley-Jones stated that she endorsed the work of integrating the French and English students. Mr. Keohane, who spoke as a former Tucker parent, commended the high level of parent involvement and the celebration of diversity. Ms. Kelly congratulated the council members for their continuous leadership.

Principal Uretsky spoke about the goal to establish a solid basic foundation for success and confidence in all her students. Ms. Gormley noted that the School Improvement Plan was a living, working document, requiring continual assessment.

### School Happenings

Ms. Gormley updated the committee on recent and upcoming school and community events, including:

- The many music performances and art exhibitions in the schools this month
- Recognition of Nora Goonan, a long-time cafeteria worker who retired
- The robotics competition among several communities to be hosted by Marilyn Decker at MHS December 15th with the help of parents who have engineering experience
- Martin Luther King holiday event to be held at the site of the former Temple Shalom on Blue Hill Avenue

- “Guys and Dolls” production at Pierce on January 19th
- Kindergarten registration beginning on January 21st
- MFE mini-grants, totaling approximately \$20K, to be distributed in January

Ms. Gormley directed the viewers to the MPS Web site for the dates of the detailed budget presentations to the PTOs. She also directed the committee members to their green folders, in which they could find responses to their requests for data and information.

### **Chairman’s Report**

#### Milton 350th Celebration Update

Ms. Sheridan showcased the unique items commemorating the Town of Milton’s 350th anniversary, which are being sold to support the events of the year-long celebration. The memorabilia can be purchased at the schools and Town Hall or online at:

<http://milton350thanniversary.org/store.html>

Ms. Sheridan also recognized the generosity of the Copeland Foundation, which has donated \$150K toward the community celebration. A fundraising dinner is planned for Thursday, January 26th.

#### Park and Recreation Bills

Mr. Pavlicek reported that discussions with the Parks Department about possible trading of facility rental fees for work at the Pierce field have stalled. Currently the Parks Department has had use of school facilities rent-free and has not paid its bills. Mr. Pavlicek shared a draft of a letter to Mr. Perdios outlining fees owed to the School Department.

Ms. Bagley-Jones encouraged both sides to come together to resolve the issue. Mr. Walker reminded the committee that the schools have been incurring costs, have ongoing resource challenges, and cannot afford to provide facilities for free. Mr. Pavlicek noted that no other entity has rent-free use of the facilities.

### **Finance Subcommittee Report**

Ms. Kelly presented the October 31, 2011 Expenditure Report to the committee for review. Mr. Gillis highlighted areas where certain capital funds and state circuit-breaker funds and grants had not yet been received. Otherwise, he stated that the budget activity was on target for this period in the cycle. Ms. Kelly moved to approve the October 31, 2011 Expenditure Report.

Move: Kelly

Second: Walker

Vote: 6-0-0

Ms. Kelly reminded the committee that the FY13 budget information binder for the full Warrant Committee meeting on January 11th should be pulled together prior to Christmas break. Ms. Kelly then posed the question that if in fact there are more funding resources available this year, should the committee try to restore some programs to move the system forward in FY13— i.e., brainstorm a list of priorities, if we’re able to fund them. Mr.

Pavlicek concurred that the responsibility of the committee is not just to struggle to maintain, but to advocate for what is needed. As stated by Ms. Gormley, further funding would allow the Administration to create new programs without having to sacrifice others. In response to a question about how this process would work, Mr. Pavlicek recommended that the committee vote on an optimal budget number at the January 4th meeting and give the Warrant Committee a heads up that the committee is working on this option. Ms. Gormley stated that the Administration has developed a priority list of programs and initiatives. The committee agreed to notify the Warrant Committee that it is reconsidering a final budget number and will vote on the proposal at the January 4th meeting. Ms. Sheridan cautioned that the message should be clearly articulated to the community, and Mr. Walker stated that the list of proposed programs should be forwarded to the Warrant Committee as soon as possible.

### **Policy Subcommittee Report**

Ms. Sheridan presented the proposed revised Social Networking Policy to the committee along with the current policy and the schools' Internet Acceptable Use Policy for reference. As stated by Ms. Sheridan, the revised policy under consideration does not affect the Internet Acceptable Use Policy. School Committee discussion focused on instances when using the school system's internal email system is an inefficient way to communicate with students—when using Facebook and text-messaging could be more appropriate within certain guidelines. Ms. Bagley-Jones recommended that the subcommittee have school counsel and Bob Pattison review the policy. Ms. Kelly requested that the subcommittee also research MASC recommendations in this area. Ms. Sheridan stated that the revisions are a work in progress, and the new guidelines will ultimately replace the old policy.

Mr. Pavlicek also reported that the MASC recommends implementing a policy for sports-related impact concussions in the near term. The policy, which is under review by Steve Traister and Margaret Gibbons, will be presented at the earliest possible meeting on January 4th. Mr. Pavlicek will notify the MASC that the committee is working on the policy, but will not be able to meet the MASC-recommended deadline.

The Policy Subcommittee is currently working through Section A of the Policy Manual and requested a full committee retreat meeting to review the policies. Members proposed that the agenda for a retreat meeting, tentatively scheduled for January 8th, incorporate a discussion of the Superintendent's goals.

Mr. Pavlicek, after determining there was no further business to discuss, entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Move: Walker

Seond: Sheridan

Vote: 6-0-0

The meeting ended at 9:09 P.M.