

Minutes of the Milton School Committee
Regular Meeting
Milton High School Library
March 2, 2011

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

Staff Present: Mary Gormley, Superintendent; John Phelan, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Personnel

Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

Citizen's Speak

Michelle Donovan thanked the Superintendent and School Committee for changing the first grade assignment process in response to parent concerns.

Tom Flynn, Lisa Viola, and Patty Elliott, organizers of the Milton Foundation for Education's "Big Backyard Bash" fundraiser on April 2nd, updated the committee on event plans and encouraged everyone to participate. Tickets are currently available for a reduced price, and Wildcat Fun Night has been scheduled for the same evening to provide babysitting for parents. The fundraising activities planned for the event include a raffle for opening day Red Sox tickets and a live and silent auction. Information about how to support the MFE fundraising efforts can be found online at:

<http://www.miltonfoundationforeducation.org/events.php>

Approval of Minutes

Ms. Sheridan entertained a motion to approve the minutes of the January 19, 2011 School Committee meeting.

Move: Huban

Second: Pavlicek

Vote: 6-0-0

Ms. Sheridan entertained a motion to approve the minutes of the January 26, 2011 School Committee meeting.

Move: Kelly

Second: Bagley Jones

Vote: 6-0-0

The vote on the minutes of the February 9, 2011 School Committee meeting was deferred to the next meeting.

Superintendent's Report

Glover Site Council

The Superintendent introduced Glover Principal, Stephanie Nephew, and parent representatives of the Glover School Site Council, James Supplesa and Emily McElhinney, who presented the Glover School Improvement Plan for the 2010-2011 school year. The presentation can be found online on the MPS Web site at:

<http://www.miltonps.org/committee-archive.php>

In 2010, Glover met the AYP (adequate yearly progress) targets in ELA and math in the aggregate and in all subgroups. The school also exceeded the state average in growth in all areas of ELA. However, as reported by Ms. Nephew, the MCAS data pointed to areas of relative weakness in ELA and math that needed to be addressed in the improvement plan. In ELA the school is focusing on deeper analysis of texts, non-fiction texts, poetry, and open response. In math, areas of focus include geometry, measurement, and open response.

Ms. Nephew praised her talented and eager teachers, who are collaboratively engaged in the analysis of MCAS data and the objective summaries for each student. Glover teachers are using the information to target instruction to improve student performance in a number of ways, including:

- Focusing on writing a model or protocol by which to examine student work
- Using benchmark assessments—grade level, unit specific assessments used across all elementary schools
- Creating writing portfolios for each student
- Using Study Island—an online resource available at school and at home for students in grades 3-5, which produces instant data for each student and makes recommendations on areas to improve. Parents can use the tool as well. Lessons in Study Island are linked to each state standard. For students in grades K-2, who are interested, a single subscription can be purchased for \$59. Students in grades 3-5 have access to Study Island at all levels of the curriculum, even through the summer.
- Incorporating more writing opportunities in the curriculum
- Engaging diverse learners
- Encouraging student interest in non-fiction

Glover School also provides additional enrichment and support activities before and after school. Students who need extra help are encouraged to attend the Saturday program, six weeks of learning and enrichment activities funded by the MFE.

Glover parent, Jim Supplesa, spoke about efforts to improve communication and engage parents. The Site Council sent a letter to parents to gather data and to make sure everyone is receiving information they need. Glover sends out a newsletter with information from the principal and samples of student work, and there are also a number of family-based

activities held at the school. Parent Emily McElhinney spoke about hosting the poet Sarah Holbrook, who worked with 4th and 5th grade students, participated in teacher professional development, and did a reading for the Glover Family Literacy Night.

School Committee discussion focused on parental involvement and feedback, and on the growth model as it relates to Glover School. Ms. Bagley Jones and Ms. Kelly requested further information about differentiated instruction.

Ms. Gormley thanked Ms. Nephew for her work in engaging Glover families, who are committed to the school. As she noted, family engagement correlates to increased student achievement.

Docent Program

Emily McElhinney, Parent Coordinator of the Art Docent Program, presented a summary of the content of the program, which is meant to be a supplement to, not a replacement for, the art curriculum. The program is entirely staffed by parent volunteers, who work with the elementary students, introducing them to six artists in separate lessons over a year. Ms. McElhinney stated that the docents selected approachable artists (Picasso, Kandinsky, O'Keefe, for example), who are familiar, and who have had long, interesting careers. In each lesson, a docent will generally read a book, look at and discuss a print, and then follow up with a hands-on activity. Currently there are 150 volunteers teaching 45 classes. Per Ms. McElhinney, parents are committed to the program. She reported that as many as 40 parents came to Collicot on a snow day for training. She thanked Ms. Gormley for the administration's support for the docent program, as well as for the support they have received from the MFE, which provided funds to purchase teaching materials.

School Calendar

The Superintendent requested that the committee vote on the 2011-2012 school calendar, which was revised to align professional development days in the summer with the MCAS results; to include the Jewish holiday Rosh Hashanah; to align the professional development day in October with Columbus Day; and to reflect changes in the spring parent-teacher conference process. The committee requested that the calendar include information about the change in spring conferences. Ms. Sheridan entertained a motion to approve the revised 2011-2012 school calendar.

Move: Pavlicek

Second: Keohane

Vote: 6-0-0

Walkathon Report

Ms. Bagley-Jones reported on the success of the Walkathon fundraiser, which netted more than \$22K for high school clubs and sports. She thanked the 60+ MHS club participants, who had great ideas and worked hard to generate enthusiasm and community participation.

Ms. Gormley thanked Laura Kessler and Don and Kristan-Bagley Jones for their leadership and hard work in pulling together this successful event.

Homeless Audit

Ms. Gormley reported that the results of the DESE audit of the MPS program for homeless students is posted on the Web site.

<http://www.miltonps.org/committee-archive.php>

Financial Audit

Ms. Gormley recognized Mr. Gillis, who participated in the DESE fiscal review of the MPS, and who has implemented state recommended best practices. The fiscal review is posted on the Web site.

<http://www.miltonps.org/committee-archive.php>

School Happenings

Ms. Gormley reported on recent and upcoming school events including:

- The successful Daffodil Day, which raised \$7K for the American Cancer Society
- The success of the Future Problem Solving teams, who ranked high enough to participate in the state tournament in Marlboro
- The Saturday program for grades 3-7 starting this week
- Safety awareness night at Pierce held by Chief Wells which will also be presented to the elementary schools on March 9th.
- This month is Arts in the Schools Month, and many activities have been planned
- The Tri-M Honor Society of music recently inducted a number of talented Milton students
- Janet Sheehan has been selected to be the new principal at Collicot; her resume will be available on the Web site
- Milton citizens, through their excise tax bills, can contribute to the MPACE program, which benefits all schools
- Traffic issues at Collicot are being addressed
- An update on athletics will be coming soon via an e-mail blast

In response to a question from Ms. Kelly, Mr. Phelan reported that students could still enroll in the Saturday Program through the first week. The program, which provides extra academic support for identified students, also offers enrichment and recreational courses in three morning periods. There is a \$150 fee to participate in the enrichment activities. There is no charge for students who have been identified as needing academic support. The funding for the Saturday Program comes from the MFE

“Math is a Slam Dunk” is a free, 14-week program for math support run by Steve Shapiro from Pinnacle Learning, who volunteers his time. Community service students from MHS help staff the program, connecting high school and elementary students.

In response to a request from Ms. Kelly, Mr. Phelan updated the committee on the kindergarten and first grade registration process.

Chairman's Report

Ms. Sheridan updated the committee on changes in the calendar. The Pierce Site Council presentation has been moved to March 30th; the March 16th meeting will begin with an open budget hearing.

Finance Subcommittee

Ms. Kelly and Mr. Pavlicek reported that the Warrant Committee had authorized restoring \$637K above level funding to the school budget. In its daylong deliberations, the Warrant Committee determined that anticipated revenue from the state, in addition to monies from the town stabilization fund, could provide more than level-dollars to town departments. As Mr. Pavlicek stated, even though it's early in the budget process, and there will be modifications going forward, this is a good place to be in early March in a difficult fiscal environment.

As reported by Ms. Kelly, the administration has a prioritized list of position reinstatements, including all of the teaching positions in the budget reduction list. The list of prioritized restorations have been posted on the MPS Web site:

<http://www.miltonps.org/committee-budget.php>

As recommended by the Finance Subcommittee, Ms. Sheridan entertained a motion to accept the list of restored positions to the FY12 school budget, with the proviso that the list is subject to change.

Move: Kelly

Second: Pavlicek

Vote: 6-0-0

Consolidated Facilities Update

Ms. Sheridan updated the committee on the process of hiring the townwide Director of Facilities. The screening committee interviewed 17 out of 72 candidates and narrowed the list to three finalists. She anticipates the decision will be made on March 14th at 6:30 P.M. in Town Hall. The proceedings will be televised.

Policy Subcommittee Update

Mr. Huban presented to the committee a policy related to purchasing energy efficient vehicles for the second reading. Mr. Phelan stated that none of the school-owned vehicles would be affected by the policy. Mr. Huban moved to adopt the policy as written.

Move: Huban

Second: Pavlicek

Vote: 6-0-0

Facilities Subcommittee Update

Mr. Keohane reported that the solar panel project consultants are investigating alternative sites for the solar panel arrays—a discussion initiated by the unusually harsh winter and concern about roof collapse. The consultants are now looking at land—a 3-5 acre site accessible by car—to purchase or lease. Mr. Pavlicek stated that, in the meantime, structural engineers should determine the schools' roof load capacities before moving forward.

Next Meeting Agenda Items

Per Ms. Kelly's request, some of the agenda items from the March 30th meeting will be moved forward to the next meeting on March 16th.

Ms. Sheridan then entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Move: Huban

Second: Bagley-Jones

Vote: 6-0-0