

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

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

**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 September 14, 2011 meeting of the School Committee to order at 7:07 P.M.

**Approve Agenda**

The committee approved the agenda after deleting items 4c., Finance Subcommittee Meeting Minutes of July 22, 2011, and 4e., Finance Subcommittee Meeting Minutes of August 30, 2011, which will be reviewed and approved at a subsequent School Committee meeting

**Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Pavlicek entertained a motion to approve the July 27, 2011 minutes of the Milton School Committee Retreat.

Move: Kelly

Second: Sheridan

Vote: 5-0-1 (Bagley-Jones abstained)

Mr. Pavlicek entertained a motion to approve the August 30, 2011 minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Milton School Committee.

Move: Sheridan

Second: Keohane

Vote: 5-0-1 (Bagley-Jones abstained)

Approval of the minutes of the Full School Committee Finance Subcommittee Meeting of July 22, 2011 was postponed to a later meeting.

Mr. Pavlicek entertained a motion to approve the July 26, 2011 minutes of the Full School Committee Finance Subcommittee Meeting.

Move: Keohane

Second: Walker

Vote: 4-0-2 (Sheridan and Bagley-Jones abstained)

Approval of the minutes of the Full School Committee Finance Subcommittee Meeting of August 30, 2011 was postponed to a later meeting.

## **Superintendent's Update**

### **Milton High School**

Ms. Gormley reported that despite some issues with transportation and residency documentation, the opening of school had gone smoothly. She then invited Steve Traister, Athletic Director, and Dr. Joseph Arangio, Principal, to update the committee on the start of school at Milton High.

### ***Athletics Update***

Mr. Traister reported that the high school athletic season was off to a good start. About 370 students have signed up for fall sports to date. Of the group, 11% have requested a fee waiver through the free and reduced lunch program. The club sports (rugby and crew), which are self-funded, have also attracted participants. Waivers and scholarships are available for these sports as well. Mr. Traister acknowledged that there were cyclical lows in some sports and stated that he would investigate the drop off in participation in the girls' program as requested by Mr. Walker. In response to a question by Ms. Sheridan, Mr. Traister summarized recruiting strategies to involve students in sports, which include 1) reaching out to eighth graders in the off-season, 2) reaching out to students in the Bridge Program, and 3) numerous phone calls to families. Ms. Sheridan requested an analysis of the diversity of students participating in high school sports. Committee members also inquired about the process of evaluating coaches, and how negative feedback is addressed. Mr. Traister informed the committee that the parents and students are surveyed, and the evaluation data is reviewed with the coaches. Ms. Bagley-Jones commended Mr. Traister for the improved communication to families about the athletic program.

Ms. Gormley reminded the committee that fundraising makes up a significant portion of the athletic budget. She stated that the administration is looking for a new chairperson for the Banner Program, which is a key component to the fundraising for athletics. Ms. Gormley stated she would work with the Finance Subcommittee on a proposal to pay the new Banner Program Chair a stipend based on a percentage from the program's proceeds. Ms. Bagley-Jones announced that the Walkathon, another of the key fundraisers, is scheduled for February 11th. Ms. Gormley recognized the efforts of Ms. Bagley-Jones and Laura Kessler for spearheading this very successful event. Mr. Traister also recognized the work of Gary Kelly and the MHS Boosters and encouraged community participation in their annual fundraising event "Swing for Sports." Ms. Gormley thanked former School Committee member, Beirne Lovely, and Curry College President, Ken Quigley, who have been instrumental in providing the venues for the "Swing for Sports" event. Mr. Walker requested that sponsorship information for "Swing for Sports" be made available online.

Mr. Traister updated the committee on the new state-mandated concussion laws, which require testing and certification for parents and students as well as coaches and trainers. This year, as part of the new regulations, there will be a baseline assessment of all ninth and eleventh graders. For students returning to school and sports post concussion, there is

a protocol to follow, which involves school nurses and guidance. Mr. Traister thanked Dr. Ben Thompson at Milton Hospital and Jason Bouffard for their involvement in the concussion prevention and education effort.

#### *Milton High School Update*

Dr. Arangio reported that he was happy to be back at MHS and very impressed by the school and educational environment. He stated that the opening of school had gone well with a few minor adjustments. He is involved in setting goals and expectations for behavior and performance this year and has received generally positive feedback. Ms. Bagley-Jones inquired about plans to improve the academic experience for those students who may be falling through the cracks. Dr. Arangio stated that closing the achievement gap is a difficult process. Assessing the nature of the instructional tasks and determining ways to improve student engagement is the next big step for his team. He also stated that he is focusing on the retention and development of quality teaching staff.

Ms. Gormley reported that the MCAS, AP, and SAT results would be made public soon, and the preliminary review shows positive trends. Dr. Arangio stated that the AP results are encouraging, and the number of minority students participating in AP classes has increased significantly. He went on to state that his team is continually focused on finding ways raise the bar for academic performance.

Mr. Keohane expressed concern about rules prohibiting food in the classrooms and the long period of time between breakfast and lunch for many students. Dr. Arangio stated that his goal was to create a safe, clean, business-like environment with no distractions in the teaching and learning process. Ms. Gormley stated that parent concerns had been heard and recommended that this issue be handled on a case-by-case basis—that students who need an accommodation to the rule should work in collaboration with the school administration and nurse Margaret Gibbons to find the appropriate solution.

#### Enrollment

Mr. Phelan reported on the total school enrollment to date and stated that the system is still processing new students. The central office staff has been working hard to enroll students as quickly as possible, and there are two to three potential new students who need to provide documentation for residency and health requirements. Mr. Phelan stated that enrollment has been creeping up with late arrivals, and full day kindergarten classes have almost reached maximum capacity. The population of 276 kindergartners enrolled over the summer has increased to 304. In response to a question from Ms. Sheridan, Mr. Gillis reported that 40-50 students had enrolled in the schools in the last two weeks. Ms. Gormley stated that the administration would keep the committee continually informed about enrollment figures. Ms. Sheridan requested that the enrollment updates be dated to help highlight the changes from week to week. Ms. Kelly pointed out the larger class sizes in the French Immersion program as compared to the English program and requested that the maximum caps for the French and English classes be documented on the enrollment update as well.

Ms. Gormley emphasized that the revised student assignment process was designed to keep class size equalized across the district, and the recently implemented changes had ensured a much smoother start to the school year. She went on to report that a historically small French Immersion class at Tucker had increased in size with the addition of five French-speaking families to the district. Ms. Gormley also pointed out that some seats in the English classes were being held open in anticipation of the inclusion of special education students. In response to a question from Ms. Bagley-Jones, Mr. Phelan reported that special education students could have a teacher or aide assigned to support them, depending upon the specifications of their IEPs.

Both Ms. Gormley and Ms. Sheridan thanked the community for their patience as the administration ironed out the details of the complicated process of school opening.

#### Transportation

Mr. Gillis reported on an issue in the busing of students, primarily affecting the Tucker and Glover students, who have not been getting picked up from school in timely manner and are arriving home too late in the afternoon. The length of time between buses leaving Pierce and returning back to pick up Glover and Tucker students is too long. He recommended that \$108K from the surplus in the special education transportation budget be transferred to the instructional services general expenses line to add a bus or buses to mitigate the problem. Mr. Gillis anticipates that one bus, costing approximately \$54K, will be sufficient. Plans to have Pierce bus riders exit through the rear of the school are also underway to alleviate congestion in the front of the school. Mr. Gillis has been working closely with Pierce neighbors and traffic enforcement toward reaching this solution. The administration plans to have the Pierce buses exiting from the rear of the school and new bus assignments in place by next week.

A longer-term solution to transportation and traffic issues would involve changing the opening and closing times at Pierce and MHS. This plan is under review by the administration for possible implementation next year. The Superintendent plans to meet with PTO presidents and community members to get input in October/November and will have a recommendation for the School Committee by early 2012.

Chairman Pavlicek entertained a motion to approve the recommendation of the administration to spend up to \$108K, to be transferred from the special education transportation budget to the instructional services general expenses, for the purpose of alleviating bus travel time for regular education students.

Move: Walker

Second: Sheridan

Vote: 6-0-0

#### School Happenings

The Superintendent reported that she would distribute her self-evaluation and an evaluation time line to the committee members before the next meeting. She recommended that the policy related to the Superintendent's evaluation, which was

written several years ago, be reviewed and revised in the Policy Subcommittee to align with changes in the Open Meeting law. She also requested that the committee send its final revisions to the district-wide goals. Once they are finalized, the principals will tailor school improvement plans to align with the district goals.

The Superintendent stated that MCAS, AP, and SAT results would be made public soon in presentations to the School Committee.

In other school happenings:

- The MFE is planning its big fundraiser for March 10th, which will focus on literacy and the classroom libraries; the Superintendent is working with the MFE on school policies related to fundraising from private industries.
- Information about the Adult Education Evening Program offerings is now available.
- The Pierce Open House was a huge success with great attendance and feedback from parents; other open houses are planned for September; the calendar of events is available online.
- In response to School Committee feedback, Mr. Phelan has prepared a brochure for parents describing curriculum content by grade to be distributed at each school's Open House. The content is also available online across all disciplines and across all grades. By mid-October, high school parents can click on each grade and course to find detailed information on the curriculum and expectations for students. Mr. Phelan anticipates that the MPS curriculum will connect online with the common core early next year. Parents will be able to drill down to get as much detail as they wish. A special education program guide is also available online.
- Mr. Bill Ritchie's office is now located at Town Hall; transition to the Consolidated Facilities model has gone well.
- MHS is looking for a PTO president.
- The MFE Monster Dash fundraiser for elementary science will be held on October 30th.

### **Chairman's Report**

Mr. Pavlicek invited Ms. Sheridan to report on plans for the celebration of the Town of Milton's 350th birthday, which include a yearlong list of activities, a series of arts and musical events, historical trolley tours, and an oral history project. The big event will be held the weekend of June 8th, 9th, and 10th and culminate with a parade and fireworks. The 350th Committee is selling memorabilia for fundraising at the Farmer's Market, the Fuller Village Craft Fair and Celebrate Milton. For more information about the 350th celebration, community members can email: [milton350th@gmail.com](mailto:milton350th@gmail.com)

Mr. Pavlicek reported that the Consolidated Facilities group had developed an operating budget, which will require a vote of Town Meeting. The Special Town Meeting, tentatively scheduled for November, has been postponed until January. Therefore, the Consolidated Facilities Committee will reconvene to determine how the new

department—which needs administrative support—can be funded in the near term. To date, the town has transferred one employee from the DPW.

### **Facilities Subcommittee**

Mr. Keohane reported on the status of energy-saving initiatives and the various capital projects underway. He stated that overall electricity expenditures are down 6.7%, although there is an 11% increase in heating due to the increase in the cost of gas. At the Tucker School, however, heating costs are down. Mr. Keohane also informed the committee that the roof repair work at Tucker has been completed, and the Glover roof project is near completion. The exterior ductwork repairs are also near completion at Glover and in the demolition phase at Pierce.

Per Mr. Keohane, the solar panels have been ordered, and the developer is running conduits from basements to rooftops—work needed prior to installation of the panels. As a result of the review by structural engineers, a decrease in the number of proposed panels is necessary, which will result in a 7-8% loss of projected savings in kWh. Negotiations are currently underway for the off-site solar project where some of the loss can be recouped.

To take advantage of Green Community savings, energy efficient bulbs are being installed at MHS and Pierce, and heating units in Collicot/Cunningham are being reconfigured and reengineered.

The Facilities Subcommittee has paid its last bill. Negotiations are underway to recoup the owner's workers' compensation insurance balance.

### **Finance Subcommittee**

As Reported by Mr. Gillis, federal government regulations require an adjustment in the school meal prices. He presented the committee with a memo outlining proposed fee increases for school breakfast and lunches for FY12 and FY13. He stated that after further review prior to the meeting, the breakfast fee did not have to increase.

The Chair entertained a motion to approve the school lunch price increases as written in the memo from the administration and not to include the breakfast fee increase.

Move: Bagley-Jones

Second: Sheridan

Vote: 6-0-0

### **Next Meeting Agenda Items**

The committee and administration proposed to present the MCAS/AYP results and the Superintendent's evaluation at the next meeting. Other pending topics include the SAT and AP results.

Ms. Sheridan stated that she had information she will send the committee about holding a forum at MHS.

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

Move: Walker

Second: Sheridan

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

The meeting ended at 9:52 P.M.