

*** note: Executive Session occurred before Regular Session at this meeting. ***

Minutes of the School Committee
Regular Meeting
Milton High Library
January 8th, 2014

Committee Present: Lynda-Lee Sheridan, Chair; Leroy Walker, Vice Chair; Mary Kelly, Becky Padera, Mike Zullas. Student Reps: Audrey Erickson, Matt McCarthy, Evvie Oliverio and Amanda Delconte.

Not Present: Kristen Bagley Jones

Staff Present: Mary Gormley, Superintendent; John Phelan, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Personnel; Glenn Pavlicek, Assistant Superintendent for Business. Town Administrator Annemarie Fagan was also present.

Call to Order

The Chair called the January 8th meeting of the School Committee to order at 7:07 pm.

Approve Agenda

The committee approved the agenda after removing the Diversity Report (Item 5b) and moving the Chairman's Report to the top of the agenda. (Item 5a) Ms. Gormley said there will be an edited 14-15 school calendar (Item 4c)

Chairman's Report: Mr. Walker began by saying the committee has reached a tentative agreement with the MEA Unit A. After thanking all the parties, he outlined the goals the school committee had going into negotiations. He noted that they reached agreement on collaborative planning model, which engages teachers, coordinators and principals to plan on a regular basis. The agreement will also restore spring conferences. He said one of the goals on the economic side was to "moderate" the overall salary growth, and also to revamp the step structure. He said they accomplished both of those objectives. With that, he said there will be two separate votes, the MOA, then the evaluation tool.

Ms. Sheridan entertained a motion to vote on the MOA

Move: Mr. Walker

Second: Ms. Padera

Discussion: The chair noted that Ms. Fagan is voting member of the committee.

Mr. Zullas asked to speak, saying that the most important component to maintaining a great system is great teachers. He said the School Committee looked at 20 communities, including those suggested by the head of the union and used that information to define the market as to what's competitive. He presented a chart which showed an analysis of the salary structure against these 20 other comparable communities. This chart is based on one of the five lanes, the masters B-30 lane, which he said is one of the most populous steps. He said this chart compares Milton

salaries to the average for these 20 communities. By referring to the chart, Mr. Zullas showed that for FY 13, Milton's salaries are competitive. It showed Milton salaries are, on average, higher, than these 20 communities. Mr. Zullas said the trend continues for the next three years, which allows the MPS to remain competitive and to attract and retain the best teacher talent. Mr. Zullas cited this as the reason he will vote in favor of this contract. Ms. Kelly spoke next and said, she appreciates this chart. She said it tells a story that Milton's teachers will be competitively compensated. She said her goal is to try to decrease, without affecting the competitiveness, the rollover numbers. To rollover the staff requires resources that exceed the 2.5% growth. She explained that, as part of the negotiations, she agreed to go to a step above where she wanted to be. As the negotiations process continued, the bargaining team went even higher, so for that reason, she said she will vote against this. Mr. Walker said he won't engage directly on Ms. Kelly's comment, but regarding the point that "we went further than we had approved..." he stated that at that stage of the negotiations, the team chose not to demoralize the teaching staff. Ms. Sheridan thanked the negotiating team, the administration and the union for all the time they have given to this process.

Vote: 5-1 (Kelly against. Ms. Bagley Jones not present, Ms. Fagan voted in favor)

Next, the chair entertained a motion to vote on the evaluation tool.

Move: Mr. Walker

Second: Ms. Padera

Vote: 5-1 (Kelly against, Ms. Bagley Jones not present, Ms. Fagan voted in favor)

*note: Ms. Fagan left the meeting at this point.

Citizens Speak

No one came forward for Citizen Speak. Ms. Sheridan said she got a written testimony from Mac D'Allesandro. Ms. Kelly asked if the written testimony be attached to today's minutes. (see addendum)

Approval of Minutes

The chair entertained a motion to approve the School Committee Meeting minutes of November 20th, 2013.

Move: Mr. Walker

Second: Ms. Padera

Vote: 5-0-0

Superintendent's Report

Topic One: Milton High School Site Council Presentation (Attachment) Principal James Jette, along with Assistant Principal Michelle Kreuzer, were joined by members of the MHS Site Council. This council includes Teachers Representatives Ben Kelly, Greg Pullia, Special Education Representatives Tracy Grandeau, Community Member Vicky McCarthy and Betty

White, Parent Representatives Kathy Huntington, Mary Scott, Veronica Guerrero-Macia, Student Reps Mairead Dambruch, Brendan Hunt and Morgan Connolly.

Mr. Kelly began by talking about creating a spreadsheet of supports available to each student. The supports include coaches to advisors, teachers, etc. This is an effort to close the proficiency gap. Mr. Jette recognized the work of the Central Office staff in compiling this spreadsheet, as well as the middle and elementary schools. Mr. Jette talked about having students take the final exam a week earlier to help prepare them for MCAS. Biology teachers got together and put together a midterm to more closely resemble the MCAS.

Ms. Kreuzer said they are implementing cross-disciplinary courses, for example, Computer Science and Music to create digital music; Calculus and Art to create 3-D models. The presentation showed the increase in communication between MHS and the community. In addition to MHS Info Night (now offered to parents of grade 5-8), they host an AP Info Night from grades 7-12 and Pierce PTO Info Night for Grades 6-8. There is Milton High Happenings, an on-line newsletter highlighting student, department and school achievements. Mr. Jette said the earlier we get people enthused about Milton High, the better retention. Next, they discussed Replications, a calculus project, as well as Norfolk County DAs office program which helps with School Safety. School-to-Careers partnerships is a group that makes connections with business community and legislative leaders. Brendan Hunt said he's organizing a "Run for Red Nation," as a fundraiser for sports and clubs.

There was discussion about school-wide events on MLK day, partnership with the PeaceCorps, There's also Positive Affirmations -- which addresses drug and alcohol initiatives. Anti-Bullying, Substance Abuse, Teen Safe Initiatives with Dr. Knight & Liberty Mutual and Diversity Committee Survey for students. There is also a team that reviews Milton High School Student Handbook Policies. These include the Technology Policy, Attendance and Tardy Policy, Backpacks/Locker Use, Dress Code and Snack Policy.

School Committee members then asked questions of the Site Council. Ms. Padera asked, regarding the snack issue, there are problems, especially for student athletes, about fueling and exercise. She said she learned more about this at a recent conference. Especially for kids who get up early, there is a need to snack between meals.

Mr. Walker asked, where are we on the calculus project? Mr. Jette said this project would begin either the 21st or 23rd. Ready to go in terms of identifying 7th grade students for this. They're in the process of getting the flyer out and selecting families. The goal of the calculus project is to inspire underrepresented groups, to get them in line to get into and pass a calculus course. This will be a three-week summer course and free tutoring. Not remedial in any way. It's "pre-teaching," for these students." This year would be first cohort, and continue this for several years. The model has been successful in Brookline. Other local high schools are piloting this, as well. Mr. Zullas asked what is Naviance College Planning, and was told it is like an email blast, but allows student to fill out college applications on line. It can also be used for community service information.

Ms. Sheridan noted on the "Risk Taking" page, how much new information is on there, which wasn't there 6,7 years ago. She said this presentation speaks to all the opportunities for students in the public schools. Ms. Padera said she heard positive things about bringing grades 5-8 to the High School Info night. She asked if there is any way kids could come to the high school during the day and "shadow" -- or bring a small group of parents come in during the day. Mr. Jette said that when parents call and ask to do a private tour, we don't turn them away. We will give a tour. Ms. Padera also said that Debate and Speech are big draws for colleges. It was great to read in the paper about this. To view the entire presentation, visit this site:

<http://www.miltonps.org/documents/MHSSiteCouncilPresentation1814.pdf>

Topic Two: Milton High School Program of Studies (Attachment) (Vote)

Mr. Jette introduced the 2014-15 Program of Studies booklet. He went through this document page-by-page to explain the changes that had been made for next year. Both Mr. Jette and Ms. Kruezer outlined the proposed changes, including the addition of speech as a graduation requirement.

Ms. Kelly commended the pair on the presentation. She supported the introduction of new courses, without the addition of staff members. She asked about the budgetary impact, especially with the visual literacy course. Mr. Jette said this course will use movie clips and YouTube clips. Very minimal cost. BioLab will need to purchase some consumables. Biogen will partner with us to help with expenses. Ms. Kelly said regarding Speech, she does not think it should be a graduation requirement. Mr. Jette said that public speaking is an important skill for interviews, etc. This offers students a life skill that will put our students above others. The students reps all spoke in support of the speech requirement. Mr. Jette said, by not making it a requirement, those who shy away from public speaking won't take it. Ms. Padera said it's a critical skill. Mr. Zullas asked what would be the downside to having it as a requirement as opposed to an elective? Mr. Jette said the downside is once you make it a requirement, you have to be able to be sure every student takes it. Ms. Kelly said she believes that this should be a core part of every course. Ms. Sheridan asked, could it be either Speech or Debate? Mr. Walker moved to approve the Program of Studies as written.

Move: Mr. Walker

Second: Ms. Padera

Vote: 4-1 (Kelly opposed)

Topic Three: Kindergarten SY 14-15 Registration Process and Info Night, to be held January 23rd at 7 pm and First Grade Info Night, TBA. Mr. Phelan said he'd like to alert all incoming K parents, that on the front of the Milton Public School website, there's a headline on how to sign up for K. So far, they have completed pre-enrollment packets for 80% of K students on line prior to K Info night. They will email some "students in action" video clips to parents in advance of the presentation. This night is about How to Enroll Your Child. Later in June, there will be opportunities for visiting the school and seeing the classrooms, etc. There will also be Grade One program selection information nights. these will be held at each Elementary School, on Wednesday, February 12th.

Ms. Kelly noted that Finance Subcommittee has not voted yet to review fees. FDK is fee-based and there is a potential that the present fee might be increased. Ms. Padera asked how would K parents know which elementary school they're going to? Mr. Phelan said they will process the applications and by April 30th, schools will be assigned at this point.

Topic Four: Revised FY13-14 School Year Calendar (Attachment) (Vote) Ms. Gormley noted, as a result of settling the contract, the administration had to adjust the school calendar to add four Professional Development days at MHS, and two at middle and elementary. They also added a Spring conference to March 6th. Ms. Sheridan asked if this might create a problem for parents who use high school students as babysitters. Ms. Kelly asked what to do with the Middle School students. Can Community Schools do something for the middle-schoolers? Mr. Walker moved to approve the calendar.

Move: Mr. Walker

Second: Ms. Padera

Vote: 5-0-0

Topic Five: Budget Presentation. On January 9th, at 2:45 and 3:30, there will be a staff meeting to discuss the FY15 Budget.

Happenings: Ms. Gormley said the happenings would be summarized in the E-blast.

Chairman's Report

*Previously reported in the meeting.

Finance Subcommittee:

Topic One: FY14 Half-Year Personnel Restorations (Vote)

Ms. Kelly noted that there was a request for two positions to be restored: \$13,000 for librarian aide and \$24,000 for custodian. Ms. Kelly said she would like to know what the funding source would be. Mr. Pavlicek said the librarian aide position was actually included in the current budget. For the custodian, there are people on unpaid leave, so we actually have money in the custodial budget. Mr. Zullas clarified that with the restoration of the aide, K and 1 students can go every week to the library, instead of every other week. Ms. Gormley said that our taxpayers have made an investment in the library collection. We have to have someone there to supervise this collection. There are some students who do not go to Milton Public Library, so this is their only access. She said this was a cut she should not have recommended. Restoring that aide for the rest of the year will positively impact learning. Ms. Kelly asked if this aide is part of the current FY15 request? Mr. Pavlicek said yes, this position is in there. Mr. Walker moved to approve the request.

Move: Mr. Walker

Second: Ms. Padera

Vote: 4-1 (Kelly abstained)

Topic Two: FY15 Budget/Reduction/Cut List (Attachment) (Vote)

Ms. Kelly said the School Committee has put in their request to Warrant Committee. Now, they have to say what the impact to the system would be if we don't get all of our request. Ms. Gormley has to come up with a list on what to cut. Mr. Pavlicek explained how the budget was formed and what each number means. Ms. Gormley went through the cut list and talked about how each potential reduction was decided. Mr. Phelan discussed the preliminary impact of a \$747,591 reduction. These were divided into position and non-position reductions. The position reductions were further divided into moderate impact and high impact among the high impact reductions were:

Chorus - Grade Five, Elementary SPED, Middle School History, Middle School Electives, Middle School SPED, Middle School Art, High School Adjustment Counselor, High School Consumer Studies, High School electives and district-wide administrative support, which makes a total of 7.1 positions at a total reduction of \$737,000.

Ms. Padera asked about the impact of cutting high school electives? She noted the 2.5 FTE reduction on the cut sheet. Mr. Phelan said sometimes a 1.0 employee goes to a .8 employee, reducing their pay. Ms. Padera said this could potentially cause the district to lose some good people. Ms. Gormley noted that these reductions would impact options for our students and impact staff. Ms. Sheridan asked about the reduction of one section of Grade 8 Math Investigations, a course for students who are struggling. How can we cut that? Dr. Spaulding found that Math Investigations was successful in 6th and 7th grades, but not in 8th grade. The course was not yielding the results. Ms. Padera asked questions about how chorus and/or music classes might be combined. She also talked about the value of the team system at the Middle School. Ms. Kelly said that regarding the presentation and all the comments, every reduction should be called either "high impact," or "very high impact." Ms. Sheridan entertained a motion to accept the reduction list. There was some discussion about whether this list required a vote of the school committee. Mr. Walker said this is a vote as to how, at this time, we would propose to close the \$747,000 gap. Mr. Pavlicek explained that the committee is voting on what to show to the Warrant Committee. Mr. Walker said the Warrant Committee has been incredibly generous on a number of points, but in fairness to them, they're waiting for this detail so that they can do their due diligence. We can always make changes and priorities. Ms. Kelly moved to approve the presentation.

Move: Ms. Kelly

Second: Mr. Walker

Vote: 5-0-0

Topic Three: Acceptance of Grants (Attachments) (Vote). Ms. Kelly said our teachers write a tremendous number of grant proposals. Ms. Gormley said Ms. Kelly asked — and Mr. Pavlicek looked into — what the amounts are and how often we update the community on our grants.

- The Blue Hills Bank Charitable Foundation gave the Weatherbug Station to Glover for \$1,500; the Christa McAuliffe Center to Milton High School for \$3,000 and funded Cunningham Elementary School's Seasonal Nature Walks Project for \$859.14
- Earth Networks gave a STEM Grant (Weatherbug Station) for \$1,500.
- Milton Library Foundation gave Lori Henry, Milton Public School Librarian a grant for all elementary schools of \$2,762.
- The MFE recently gave \$150,000 in digital learning equipment.
- Dr. Karen Spaulding wrote a PD grant for \$30,000 and was awarded the grant by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

The chair entertained a motion to accept these grants.

Move: Mr. Walker

Second: Ms. Kelly

Discussion: Mr. Zullas abstained from the vote on the Library funds, as he is on the board of the Milton Library Foundation.

Vote: 5-0-0 (Mr. Zullas abstained from the library vote)

Citizen Speak Topic Response: none

Next Meeting Agenda Items: Ms. Kelly asked for budget binders and materials for Warrant Committee to be ready. Mr. Walker asked for an update on how the Library Card project is going for the MPS first-grades. He also requested a “drill-down” on the number of students who do not access the MPL. Mr. Walker publicly acknowledged Charlene Roche and Moira Downes for their work with the administration and thanked them. Ms. Gormley asked to add the Diversity Report, edits to mid cycle review to the next agenda and noted that Pierce Site Council will present. Mr. Walker requested that Citizens for a Diverse Milton attend the meeting to give input on the Diversity Report.

The chair then entertained a motion to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of Negotiation Strategy for non-union personnel, Negotiation Strategy for Collective Bargaining with AFSCME, Deployment of Security Personnel and Negotiation Strategy for Collective Bargaining with the MEA Units B, C and D.

Move: Mr. Walker

Second: Ms. Kelly

Roll Call Vote: unanimous.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:25 pm.

*addendum:

To: The Milton School Committee

From: Jennifer Mulqueen & Mac 'Allesandro, parents of MPS/LEAP II student Sophie D'Allessandro

Date: January 8, 2013

Re: IEP Concerns and Music/Arts Integration

We recently rejected a portion of our daughter's IEP in efforts to modify some of her direct instruction and therapy according to her learning style and aptitudes. We did this because during the course of her second-grade year, we observed an emergent yet pronounced proclivity for music and were seeking a Music Therapy Assessment to better understand how we, as her parents, her teachers, and her therapists, can use music as a tool for deeper engagement and learning. Our daughter has what we will call mild cognitive disability as well as other delays.

Though mild, Sophie's different abilities will no doubt have a profound impact on the direction of her life and career. Like all parents of all children, it is our job to understand how our daughter's mind, body and temperament work in synchrony so that we can help her determine a path. Because there is ample research in the field of neuroscience on how music functions in the brain, we were hopeful that the special educators in Milton would see this as an opportunity for exploration and professional development.

As far back as 1987, world-renowned cognitive scientist and MacArthur Genius Award Recipient Howard Gardner of Harvard University named the Multiple Intelligence Theory, one of many developmental psychologists to redefine intelligence beyond the parameters of linguistic and mathematical. Music is one of those intelligences.

Despite decades worth of empirical evidence regarding the ways in which music (and the arts generally) contribute significantly to children's education, we were extremely disappointed to be met with unsubstantiated claims by Special Education Director Karen Clasby that:

"(W)hile we too highly value music and the arts, we do not agree that a Music Therapy Assessment is called for, to create a responsive Individual Education Plan for Sophie. She is doing well in her current placement in the LEAP II program at Cunningham School, where she receives a modified curriculum and is included with typically developing peers for her lunch and specials, including music, which is offered to all elementary students in the Milton Public Schools."

"We value music and as you know, our teachers and specialists integrate it in a number of ways in their work with students."

Despite attempts to undertake a process through which we might better understand the positions stated by Ms. Clasby, we were never offered either an explanation of how the arts and music are "highly valued" or any detailed elucidation regarding the myriad integrations used by teachers and specialists.

Ultimately, we are refused mediation — a process we understood to be one in which parties either assuming contrasting positions or parties without a full understanding of each other's positions, might find common ground or gain a more complete understanding of the other's

perspective. The refusal to engage in this less adversarial mode was the last communication we received from the administrator in charge.

As all good advocates must do, it is incumbent upon us now to gather data, and above all, listen. But listening, of course, involves a conversation, and that brings us back to the underlying purpose of this submission: we hope to be in conversation with you and other policy makers and decision makers in the Milton Public Schools so we can come to a fuller understanding of how the arts are integrated into the education of all Milton students, not just our daughter and not just for students with IEPs. Please understand that this is an advocacy effort for arts integration on a broad level, as true advocacy cannot be about one student or one administrator — as you know, it is about taking systemic shifts in attitudes thinking and policy.

Rest assured that we will indeed supplement our daughter's education to the best of our ability, just as Ms. Clasby suggested, and perhaps, presumed we would do. "Many Milton parents access supplementary activities through the arts, or with animals, to address the unique interests and talents of their children, as you do with music for Sophie..and this is wonderful."

We are fortunate that we are privileged to afford these services, but believe fundamentally that music intelligence (and arts generally) is not at all a "unique interest and talent," to be left to those privileged enough to ensure that their child's education is enhanced by it. What is wonderful, perhaps, is that Milton is a community in which the educational enhancements music and the arts offer can be left to many families to provide on their own.

We suspect, however, that there are many Milton families that cannot afford to offer these enhancements on their own. Furthermore, many parents simply may not be informed about what is possible. For example, there are currently over twenty districts in Massachusetts that provide Music Therapy services, including neighboring Braintree and Scituate, Plymouth and Bourne on the South Shore. This might be interesting for parents to know who have had Music Therapy in Early Intervention and found it effective in their children's learning. In Milton, this is dropped entirely and the children who attend the integrated preschool receive no music whatsoever! This last point was a matter we brought to the School Committee's attention before taking our daughter out of the preschool in 2008.

The pendulum has begun to swing, with recent national lawsuits challenging NCLB and the newly minted Core Curriculum. Parents are beginning to take notice of the effects of public schools whose primary philosophy is to have high standardized test scores; a recent high school senior in Knoxville, TN took on his local school board. We seek to be part of a constructive force that helps the pendulum to continue to swing, that creates energy behind an honest discussion about how children learn (and learn differently) and how we can educate each individual in a way that keeps them engaged and excited to move forward in life.

To be certain, there are a lot of questions. In order to create change, we must appeal not only to reason, but research, resonance, resources and real world events in order to facilitate the discussion we now seek and create openness to change. For our part, we will continue doing research and compiling questions which we will present the Milton School Committee with at future meetings of this critically important body. We look forward to engaging in a constructive dialogue with each of you moving forward. Thank you for allowing us to voice our concerns.