

Minutes of the School Committee  
Regular Meeting  
Milton High Library  
Date: August 26th, 2015

**Committee Present:** Michael Zullas, Chair; Becky Padera, Vice Chair; Kristan Bagley-Jones, Leroy Walker, Sheila Varela, Kevin Donahue.

**Staff Present:** Mary Gormley, Superintendent; Janet Sheehan, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Human Resources; Dr. Glenn Pavlicek, Assistant Superintendent for Business.

### **Call to Order**

The Chair called the August 26th meeting of the School Committee to order at 7:05pm

### **Approve Agenda**

The committee approved the agenda after adding a MASC update (between Citizen Speak and the Superintendent's Report) and adding an Edline Follow up (Item 4c). Mr. Walker asked to add a vote on FY17 budget development calendar to the finance subcommittee

**Citizens Speak:** none

### **MASC Awards**

Mr. Zullas announced that the community has received three recognitions from MASC (Massachusetts Association of School Committees.) All recipients have been invited to a statewide conference in November, where they will be presented with awards.

- The MASC "Friend of Public Education Award" has been presented to Mary Kelly.
- The MASC "Community Leader for Public Education Award" has been presented to Lynda Lee Sheridan.
- The MASC "Outstanding School Partner Award" has been presented to the Milton Foundation for Education

Mr. Zullas congratulated all the winners.

### **Superintendent's Report**

Topic One: STEM Grade Four Program. Elementary Science Coordinator Bernadette Moonan came to inform the School Committee members about a program at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, where the MPS fourth-grade teachers recently underwent Professional Development training. She explained how Project Lead the Way Launch promotes interest in science for elementary school students. Ms. Moonan showed a brief video about how PLTW classroom works. Ms. Padera asked, if this is a K-12 curriculum, should we be expanding past Grade 4? Ms. Moonan said she'd like to move this to 5th grade next year, but she is pleased with the curriculum at the middle and high school. Ms. Bagley Jones said that parents might not be getting the full flavor of this program and suggested inviting parents into the classroom or holding info nights to inform

them about this. There was discussion about how STEM activities can tie into English Language Arts curriculum. For example, the classroom may build a boat as part of STEM, then they create charts and graphs based on the building, then they do a story about the boat, and then they do research about severe weather.

Mr. Walker asked much time is spent on this curriculum. Ms. Moonan said that 4th graders spends 150 minutes a week on science. He also asked, is there any opportunity to flip the classroom or provide individualized instruction? Ms. Moonan said that students work collaboratively -- with at least one partner. For this type of learning, the work is mostly done in collaboration with peers. Mr. Walker asked Ms. Gormley and Ms. Sheehan if we could move away from district science coordinator model. He would like a better answer on how we accommodate these more motivated and more proficient students as they move towards the high school. If we think this model is a good one, we should use it K-12. Ms. Gormley said that when we created the STEM strand, we researched multiple curricula and she went to Tufts with Marilyn Decker to be sure this was the best one. Ms. Moonan said that the other science coordinators and department heads have discussed how to accommodate these students as they enter the middle and high school. Recently, she got a grant for all the high school teachers to take a STEM certification plan. Ms. Sheehan said we can monitor where students are with our data. There are opportunities for collaboration through Google Classroom. Assessment will be the key to how we plan. Dr. Donahue asked if Grades 1-3 are PLTW also? Ms. Moonan said no, those grades use the LEGO curriculum. Ms. Bagley Jones asked about FOSS kits and how this could go forward to the high school. Ms. Varela asked if this could be used for 5th grade, and could this go full K-12 eventually? Ms. Padera said she's pleased with what she's seen. We will roll out to 5th grade. It would be a monetary commitment if we were to go back to the earlier grades. The middle and high school structure is different.

Topic Two: School Handbooks. Mr. Zullas presented each of the school's handbooks for approval and moved to approve the high school handbook first.

**Move:** Mr. Zullas

**Second:** Ms. Bagley Jones

Discussion: Ms. Bagley Jones asked if these are the final, edited and updated handbooks. Do they address the food issue and the cell phone issue? She was told they do.

**Vote:** 6-0-0

Mr. Zullas asked if there would be any objection to approve the remaining five student handbooks at once? Seeing no objection, he moved to approve the Pierce, Collicot, Cunningham, Glover and Tucker 2015/16 student handbooks.

**Move:** Mr. Zullas

**Second:** Mr. Walker

**Vote:** 6-0-0

Topic Three: Edline Follow Up . Ms. Gormley said that in the teacher contract, there is an item called "Edline Teacher Expectation." The intention is to improve communication between the school and the home. There is an expectation that assignments, news, calendar, email addresses

and other items will be posted. There have been discussions on this topic at this table. Tomorrow, all our new teachers are involved in technology training. She plans to reinforce the importance of communication with the home. Edline expectation will be followed. She assured the committee that this has reached the top of our expectation list. Ms. Bagley Jones noted that students like to use Edline, especially at the HS level. She appreciates this. Mr. Walker said that he and Ms. Varela are very interested in this. Thanks to Mr. Zullas and Ms. Gormley for bringing this to a successful conclusion.

Happenings: Ms. Gormley announced that Dr. Tom Hehir, who served as director of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs from 1993 to 1999, will be the keynote speaker on Monday morning for the all-staff presentation. She said that bus routes have been set, and that orientation nights for new students are scheduled. There was some discussion of the phone problems at Pierce Middle School, which are expected to be resolved quickly.

### **Chairman's Report**

Topic One: FY16 School Committee Goals (Attachment) (Vote) Mr. Zullas reviewed the committee's recent retreat on August 7th and presented a list of our goals that this committee has developed. The purpose now is to vote those goals. Four goals are on the screen:

1. Develop a plan to introduce tuition free FDK by January 2016
2. Develop a plan to assess current and future space needs by June 2016
3. Review and investigate new methods of effective communication by the School Committee and Administration with recommendations by Spring of 2016
4. Develop strategy to address the SPED proficiency gap

Mr. Zullas suggested the committee could vote these either as a group or individually.

Goal #1: Develop a plan to introduce tuition free FDK by January 2016

Dr. Donahue said he would like to address the first one individually. He said his understanding was that the purpose of this goal was to introduce a plan to have FDK by January 2016, not necessarily have this in place. He would like to remove the last three words. Mr. Zullas moved to accept goal as amended:

**Move:** Mr. Zullas

**Second:** Ms. Varela

Discussion: Mr. Walker said that these goals were completed in the last part of our planning session. He agrees with Dr. Donahue, that the committee did not make a decision to offer free FDK, they agreed to complete an assessment by January 2016 of the options for a tuition-free FDK program. We had an extension discussion about cost which would be \$850,000. The idea was to look at the possibilities on how to address the cost issues by 2016. Ms. Bagley Jones agreed, and asked to change the word "develop" to the word "assess?" Mr. Walker said that's a more accurate description. Ms. Padera said there was some disagreement about the issue at the time, but she does not agree with the wording change. She thought the committee agreed to develop a plan to do this. Ms. Varela thinks the issue is that some members are leery about the cost.

Mr. Zullas said just because you develop a plan, that doesn't mean we are bound to implement it. If we wait for the funding, we will miss the bus. Mr. Zullas said he would go with the language we discussed at the retreat. I think this is the language the committee agreed to. He noted that there is a motion pending and he thinks this is the language, so he won't accept the changes as a friendly amendment. However, he said, if members want to reconsider this, we could table this to the next meeting to consider the alternative language.

Mr. Walker said he thinks in a year where we are developing a contingent or non-contingent budget, he thinks it's irresponsible to acknowledge that we have a \$850,000 problem, but proceed to develop a plan nevertheless. He agrees that a nice objective is to have a tuition free FDK, but if the cost of that is \$850,000, he wants to see the trade-offs. He said if it means laying off teachers, then he's not in favor of this. Ms. Varela said she's torn because she's willing to say we should develop a plan, but she doesn't want there to be cuts at the middle or high school to fund it. Ms. Padera said the committee has set lots of goals without knowing exactly where the money comes from, and that they all have concerns fiscally. Mr. Walker suggested the following wording: "Develop a plan to assess the cost and program implications of tuition free FDK by January 2016." Mr. Zullas said we are not developing a plan, so this is a step back. He did not accept the amendment. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Zullas suggested the following wording: "Develop a plan by January 2016 to introduce tuition free FDK, which will include an assessment of cost and program implication."

Mr. Walker then suggested "Assess the cost feasibility of offering tuition free FDK and make a decision as to whether to include tuition free FDK in the FY17 budget."

Mr. Zullas called this a "wholesale change," and said he would prefer to move forward with the goal as written. Ms. Bagley Jones respectfully disagreed. She does not remember agreeing to this wording. Mr. Zullas said he thought there was consensus at the retreat about this goal. He noted that if we develop a plan to introduce something, that does not mean we're bound to do it.

Mr. Zullas then suggested the following wording: "Develop a plan by January 2016 to introduce tuition free FDK which shall include an assessment of the cost and program implications."

Mr. Zullas said he would like to take his motion off the table. Dr. Donahue said he likes this language better, but agrees that it's a good idea to take this off the table. This is a strong priority. we need to feel comfortable with the language.

No Vote. Mr. Zullas withdrew his motion. He asked SC members to send him language changes, if they have any.

Goal #2: Develop a plan to assess current and future space needs by June 2016

**Move:** Mr. Walker

**Second:** Ms. Varela

Discussion: Ms. Varela asked, when we approve these goals, do we then at some future point, line people up for each goal, and when do we do that process? Mr. Zullas said they are assigned to the appropriate subcommittee, or create a new subcommittee.

**Vote:** 6-0-0

Goal #3 Review and investigate new methods of effective communication by the School Committee and Administration with recommendations by Spring of 2016

Mr. Walker said that if this alludes to a conversation we had several months ago, to talk about student calendar decision, then we already addressed that. If it's not what it alludes to, what is the problem or challenge that we want to solve? He does not remember a discussion about this at the retreat. Ms. Padera said there were a few different people talking about this, with discussion on the way the district communicates PARCC results, how we test, why we test, how much time is spent on this. Mr. Walker said there was some discussion about trying to be more communicative about talented and gifted students, but he thinks the committee should take more time on this. Discussion ensued. Ms. Varela said the district should investigate other avenues we might take, other than the blog. She said a large number don't read email and definitely don't read lengthy emails. Ms. Bagley Jones said they "have to get with the times." Mr. Zullas moved to approve the goal as written.

**Move:** Mr. Zullas

**Second:** Ms. Varela

**Vote:** 5-1-0 (Mr. Walker voted no)

Goal #4: Develop strategy to address the SPED proficiency gap

Mr. Walker said he would like to add "by June 2016" to give it a time frame. Ms. Bagley Jones asked why all subgroup proficiency gaps aren't being addressed as part of this goal. Dr. Donahue said it's because on the second page of the handout, it lists the previous year's goals. The third one down addresses ALL subgroups. This was meant to compliment that. Ms. Bagley Jones asked to change the dates on the prior year's goals.

There was a motion to approve the goal, with the amendment of the date.

**Move:** Mr. Zullas

**Second:** Ms. Padera

Discussion: Ms. Varela asked, what is our role as a School Committee to address the SPED gap, before the department review? Ms. Gormley said the review will start in September. Ms. Varela asked why not wait until the review is over? She also noted that implementing those changes would be Ms. Grandeau's job. Discussion ensued.

**Vote:** 6-0-0

Mr. Zullas said the Chairman's Report is concluded.

Mr. Walker asked to speak, regarding the second page of goals on the handout. He suggested that they be incorporated under the heading "2014-2016 goals." Mr. Zullas said that the School

Committee Policy states that "each SC each year develops its goals." Mr. Walker said he want to make sure that the committee does not lose focus on these goals. Ms. Varela said she supports that the 2014-15 should be supported and carried out. She will commit to that. There was discussion on how to incorporate the prior year's goals. Mr. Walker moved to adopt the documents entitled "2015-16 and 2014-15 goals" as "Rolling 2014-16 Milton School Committee Goals."

**Move:** Mr. Walker

This is an acknowledgment that even though they were voted in two separate years, they are all goals this year. Two separate sheets, one title. That way, whenever we look at them, they are attached.

Mr. Zullas said we don't need a motion for this, but he will take Mr. Walker's suggestion and change the titles.

### **Finance Subcommittee:**

#### Topic One: Approval of Vendor Warrants (Vote)

Dr. Pavlicek said there has been one warrant since the last meeting. Warrant #7 in the amount of \$225,246.99 on August 13th. It was signed off at retreat meeting, but no vote. The chair entertained a motion to approve the warrant.

**Move:** Mr. Walker

**Second:** Ms. Padera

**Vote:** 5-0-1 (Walker abstained)

#### Topic Two: DESE Innovative Pre-School Program Grant Tuition (Attachment) (Vote)

Mr. Walker referred to the attachment, which recommends the full committee approve the request for a full day of tuition of \$8,790 for the 2015-16 year. This is largely resulting from a Sen. Joyce grant he put into the budget. In order to offset the program cost, we have set a tuition.

**Move:** Mr. Walker

**Second:** Mr. Zullas

**Vote:** 6-0-0

Topic Three: FY17 Budget Development Calendar (Vote) Mr. Walker handed out a budget calendar attachment. There are two schedules to approve, which are highlighted by red type and blue type. They will need an estimated contingent and non-contingent schedule. Fortunately, there is a list of assumptions we can use to estimate costs over a multi-year period. They have decided to use a 5 year planning model to create the "estimated bottom line budget figures." This is due by Dec 1st. The two deadlines are Oct. 1st where we provide estimated contingent and non-contingent budgets.

**Move:** Mr. Walker

**Second:** Ms. Padera

**Vote:** 6-0-0

### **Transportation and Traffic Safety Subcommittee Report:**

Ms. Varela gave an update on this subcommittee. She said at the elementary schools, there was an assessment of walking routes. A representative from Mass. DOT analyzed the safest walking routes. There was a suggestion of the PTO appointing transportation leads as part of PTOs. They like the idea of “walking school buses.” The best way to alleviate traffic is to have more walkers. At middle school, the subcommittee worked with Dr. Spaulding and MPD Lt. Mark Alba to put together a new drop off and pick up at Pierce.

### **Approval of Minutes:**

The chair moved to approve the minutes of July 29th, 2015

**Move:** Mr. Zullas

**Second:** Ms. Varela

Edits: None

**Vote:** 5-0-1 (Mr. Walker abstained)

### **Next Meeting Agenda Items**

A policy subcommittee update was requested. Mr. Walker asked for the consultant for the SPED review to brief the School Committee. Ms. Gornley noted that the SEPAC, principals and School Committee members are invited to meeting with consultant. Mr. Walker said he would prefer to have the person come here. Mr. Zullas said to post the meeting on the 8th and ask if the consultant could come on the 9th.

The chair entertained a motion to adjourn from regular session and enter Executive session to review minutes of prior executive session and not to return to open session but to adjourn directly from Executive Session.

**Move:** Mr. Zullas

**Second:** Mr. Walker

**Roll Call Vote:** unanimous.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:44 pm.

The Next School Committee meeting is scheduled for September 9th.