

Minutes of the School Committee
Regular Meeting
Milton High Library
Date: June 10, 2015

Committee Present: Michael Zullas, Chair; Becky Padera, Vice Chair; Leroy Walker, Sheila Varela, Kevin Donahue.

Not Present: Ms. Bagley Jones

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 June 10, 2015 meeting of the School Committee to order at 7:08pm

Approve Agenda

The committee approved the agenda after moving Item 5 and 6 to Chairman's Report, and deleting the Executive Session. He also added Item 7e (report on union agreement)

Citizens Speak

Lilly Fundling came to urge the committee to keep the two days off as school days. She would prefer that students go to school on Good Friday and Yom Kippur.

Casey Corcoran, a Collicot parent, said he would like to restore the two holidays. His is a new family to Milton and he said they were attracted by the new synagogue. Having Yom Kippur off send the signal that Milton is welcoming and supportive.

Mr. Zullas noted that he would like to get the students who were invited to come to School Committee to come up as early as possible. Next, the chairman recognized one individual who has been a great aid to the Milton Public Schools. Frank Schroth has run MyTownMatters, which has been a great vehicle for Milton Public Schools to get word out to parents/guardians and citizens. Frank is suspending those efforts for now. Mr. Schroth accepted a gift from the School Committee and noted that the children are our future.

Superintendent's Report

Topic One: New England Scholastic Press Association Meritorious Achievement Award. Milton High School English Teacher Michael Young presented the staff of "Elephant in the Room," -- the school newspaper for Milton High School. Mr. Young talked about the creation of the paper. Each student introduced themselves. Ms. Varela asked them if an online version was available, and was told that Josh Kery will be working on this as his senior project. Mr. Walker congratulated them for the award.

Topic Two: Tucker Mentoring Program. Tucker principal Dr. Elaine McNeil Girmai, along with Elementary Curriculum Coordinator Stephanie Nephew, Reading Specialist Margaret Berges came to speak about the mentoring program. The students introduced themselves and Ms. Nephew talked about the mentoring program. She said they discovered the strongest aspect was that the students were setting goals. They talked about the Mentor Money, the birdhouses and talked about their experience at Tucker Career Day.

Topic Three: Residency Update. Ms. Gormley made a PowerPoint presentation on issues surrounding residency. The presentation went over how the Milton Public Schools defines residency and how they identify non-residents. Since September 2014, 29 students have been excluded from the MPS due to non-residency. An additional 35 parents/guardians withdrew from the registration process due to questioning. Ms. Gormley also explained how restitution works. The district has initiated action for restitution against parents/guardians and landlords in five cases thus far. Ms. Gormley talked about how the district will annually check the residency of students attending Blue Hills Regional, Norfolk Agricultural and all special education out-of-district placements. She said they will also ask families who move within the town to re-register. This may be an inconvenience, but the MPS needs to have correct address changes, etc. At the conclusion of the presentation, Dr. Donahue said this is a difficult topic. Sensitivity to families is appreciated. Mr. Zullas said this is a sensitive subject, but important work. Also, Dick Burke has been diligent on this issue. He said that the committee will be discussing the proposed revisions to the residency policy under the Chairman's Report.

Happenings: Ms. Gormley said the high school recently had a very successful graduation. Prom was at the New England Aquarium, and it was an exciting week with Boosters Banquet. Ms. Terranova gathered high school parents to run the All-Night Party. Ms. Gormley noted that the School Committee recognized volunteers in a reception before the meeting. Ms. Padera reported that the Pierce Players show, Bye Bye Birdie, was fantastic. Ms. Varela said this production was

very well done. Tomorrow, a Pierce teacher, Ms. Nicole Hoyceanyls, will visit the State House to be recognized as finalist for PAEMST award.

Chairman's Report

Topic One: FY16 School Year Calendar (Attachment) On April 1st, the committee voted to attend school on Yom Kippur and Good Friday in order to address snow days and the late date for Labor Day. There were many speakers on this topic, he said, and it would be prudent to reconsider the vote. Mr. Zullas read a letter signed by a number of citizens:

"Dear Mr. Zullas. Thank you so much for your willingness to reopen the discussion about the 2015-16 school calendar and holiday observances. We greatly appreciate your reconsideration of this important decision (voted April 1, 2015), which eliminates Yom Kippur and Good Friday as school holidays for the upcoming year. We appreciate the School Committee's commitment to the students and families of Milton, and its overall respect for our town's diversity. Because of that, we urge you to reverse your decision and reinstate Yom Kippur and Good Friday as observed holidays. The following summarizes the views expressed at Citizens Speak:

- Holding classes on Yom Kippur, the most sacred Jewish Holiday in which fasting is expected for those over the age of 13, would reverse decades of thoughtful and respectful practice in our schools. Additionally, Good Friday has been observed as a holiday in Milton Public Schools for over 40 years.*
- Missed class instruction cannot be made up, and disadvantages the students who observe Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah or Good Friday while others continue to learn. Missing a day of school for religious reasons when school is in session is a penalty.*
- Teachers, principals, administrators and secretaries will now be required to work on Good Friday or Rosh Hashanah/Yom Kippur which may force them to use a personal day. Requiring them to use a personal day is inequitable.*
- Basing a significant school policy change on one unusual winter is imprudent. Furthermore, any significant change to the school calendar should be considered thoroughly, following a significant and well publicized opportunity for community feedback.*
- Maintaining a "Jewish friendly" reputation is extremely important for attracting young Jewish families to Milton. Starting summer vacation one or two days early should not be prioritized over a long-standing practice of honoring Milton's faith communities. Diversity is one of the things that makes Milton very special.*

Therefore, we recommend that the School Committee consider the following requests:

1. *That the MPS 2015-16 calendar continue to have 5 banked days in case of snow, as we have had in past years, not the 7 banked days as enacted on April 1. Reevaluate the school calendar in two more years if concerns persist.*
2. *Please respect religious diversity in Milton by keeping Yom Kippur as a school holiday, and consider having either half a day of school on Good Friday or the entire day off."*

The letter was signed by 122 citizens of Milton.

After reading the letter, Mr. Zullas opened floor for discussion. Ms. Gormley said she has worked closely with the clergy throughout her career. This recommendation was made because Labor Day falls very late next year. Her recommendation is to gather information on how many snow days will be needed going forward. For 2015-16, we should include Good Friday and Yom Kippur as no school days.

Mr. Walker made two motions. In light of the Superintendent's recommendation, he moved to rescind the vote from April on this issue, and to accept the Superintendent's recommendation. He said that this is not a policy subcommittee issue, but that this is a Superintendent's issue. Ms. Padera said that Policy Subcommittee could help. We should look at what could happen if we have another winter like this...what are some of our options? The School Committee should be involved in looking at the school calendar in general. Mr. Walker said there is certainly the opportunity at any time for any member who has ideas about the school calendar to give those ideas to the Superintendent. He said to be careful about usurping her responsibilities. Ms. Varela said she thinks that Policy Subcommittee would be a way to assist the administration, and the more assistance in getting the message out, the better. She said that it seems to be such a passionate issue, that before a vote is taken, an extremely thorough marketing, etc. should be done. Dr. Donahue supports Mr. Walker's motion. If the School Committee is going to address this, the policy subcommittee is the place to do it. This would permit the Superintendent to go through her process and involve us as a subcommittee as she sees appropriate.

Move: Mr. Walker

Second: Dr. Donahue

Discussion: Mr. Zullas said he thinks it is appropriate for Policy Subcommittee to review this and make a recommendation. He would feel more comfortable if the Policy Subcommittee made a directed effort.

The motion on the floor is to rescind the vote from April 1, 2015 and to take the Superintendent's recommendation to include the two religious holidays as days off, AND to review this decision in 2016. It has been moved and seconded.

The chair called for a vote. Regarding the first motion, which to rescind the vote from April:

Move: Mr. Walker

Second: Ms. Varela

Vote: 5-0-0

On the second motion, which is to accept the Superintendent's recommendation to restore the calendar to make Yom Kippur and Good Friday as days off, and for the Superintendent to review the calendar over the next year and make a recommendation in April 2016.

Move: Mr. Zullas

Second: Dr. Donahue

Discussion: Ms. Varela asked, does this mean that the Policy Subcommittee would not assist? Mr. Zullas said any member can make recommendations regarding the school calendar at any time. Ms. Varela said she would like to ask the Superintendent if she would want or would use the Policy Subcommittee as a source of information. Ms. Gormley said she's never seen policy subcommittee used in that way, so she would like to wait and think about it. Ms. Varela asked if we could open this up at a later date. And Mr. Zullas said that would be permissible. Ms. Varela asked for Ms. Gormley to report back what she thought about the role of the Policy Subcommittee and at a later date, open this up as a recommendation. Mr. Zullas asked if Ms. Gormley would be able to address this at the next School Committee meeting and Ms. Gormley said yes.

Vote: 5-0-0

Topic Two: Residency Policy Discussion. This issue was highlighted in the recent report on residency. The administration is recommending that Milton families re-establish residency at certain times — other than the initial registration. This would require an amendment to our policy. Typically, the policy subcommittee would make a recommendation and then have a first reading of the policy. The question is, do we revise our policy, and do we discuss it at our next meeting? Mr. Walker said the idea is to create more points at which we assess residency. Mr. Walker moved that the committee make these edits to our residency policy immediately. He said there is no benefit to delay or discussion. Mr. Zullas said he feels the committee first needs to get the language of the policy. Also, our policy adoption does require that we provide amendments in advance of voting them. Mr. Walker said he would accept this friendly

amendment, but Mr. Zullas said that he was not offering this as a friendly amendment. Mr. Walker then withdrew his motion. Ms. Padera asked if there was sufficient staffing to conduct the re-registration and Ms. Gormley said yes. Ms. Varela asked if the Policy Subcommittee would have to meet to put this together before the June 24th meeting and Mr. Zullas said no.

Dr. Donahue said he supports the idea, but he is concerned about the process for families of out-of-district students. He hopes this is not a logistical issue for families who have a number of logistical issues already. Ms. Varela asked if the process would be the same as the initial registration or if it would be a streamlined version. Ms. Gormley said she would check on exactly what is involved and get back to the committee.

Topic Three: Full Day Kindergarten Update. Dr. Pavlicek said the issue is still being discussed by the state legislature and he will have more information at the next meeting.

Topic Four: Strategic Issue Committee Discussion. Mr. Zullas read what we voted at the last meeting regarding the Strategic Issues committee, then asked if there are any other goals or structure for this committee? Mr. Zullas then suggested setting a time horizon. This committee may want to talk about key strategic issues that may be addressed by the district over the next two years, or the next five years. Mr. Walker said he thinks, consistent with the goal we set last August, where we talked about a rolling 3-year-plan, this should be the time horizon. He proposed a rolling three year plan. There was some discussion about the number of people who should serve on this committee. Mr. Zullas said that he would like to present a package for a vote at the next meeting. Mr. Walker said that he thought Dr. Donahue wants to chair this committee and suggested that Dr. Donahue put a package together. Mr. Zullas noted that is the chair who needs to propose the members of the subcommittee, but he will delegate that task to Dr. Donahue and suggested the committee vote on this on June 24th.

Topic Five: Summer Schedule for School Committee.(Attachment) There are meetings scheduled for July 8th, July 29th and a retreat scheduled for August 26th. Mr. Zullas asked for feedback on MASC on whether their facilitator can attend.

Finance Subcommittee

Topic One: Approval of Vendor Warrants (Vote)

Dr. Pavlicek presented Warrant #49 dated June 4th, 2015 in the amount of \$533,559.82

Move: Mr. Zullas

Second: Ms. Padera

Vote: 4-0-1 (Mr. Walker abstained)

Dr. Pavlicek presented Warrant #50 dated June 11th, 2015 in the amount of \$93,546.12.

The committee asked if there were there any downside to voting this warrant on the 24th. Hearing none, the chair noted he would put off to voting on this warrant until June 24th.

Topic Two: Technology Line Item Transfers (Attachment) (Vote). Mr. Walker introduced this item by noting that there were needed infrastructure improvements, which not get approved as part of the Capital Request. He recommended approval of these transfers. Mr. Zullas asked for approval.

Move: Mr. Zullas

Second: Mr. Walker

Vote: 5-0-0

Transportation and Traffic Safety Subcommittee Report

Topic One: Traffic Issues Update: Chief Wells attended one of the meetings and went through line items created after last meeting. He said there are some items that may be DPW issues, rather than police. He made a recommendation to the Pierce Middle School administration regarding pickup and drop off for next year. The chief wants to meet with administration, but suggested a new traffic pattern for the fall, perhaps with separate drop-offs for different grades. This subcommittee is also working on a walking path for Collicot community, especially for walkers from East Milton Square.

Topic Two: Bike Rodeo. This is an event which will be held on Friday night at Pierce Middle School, which emphasizes safety and skills training. This is geared towards current MPS 3rd and 4th graders.

Next Meeting Agenda Items

Ms. Varela echoed Mr. Walker's recent request regarding Edline usage. How many teachers are using it? How efficient is it as the primary source of communication? Mr. Walker said there's a longer-standing request, which was his request for the follow-up presentation on the appendix and asked for this to be an item on the Superintendent's Report.

The chair entertained a motion to adjourn. The next meeting will be held June 24th at 7pm.

Move: Ms. Padera

Second: Ms. Varela

Roll Call Vote: 5-0-0

The meeting was adjourned at 9:17pm.