

Minutes of the School Committee
School Committee Retreat
July 31th, 2013

Committee Present: Chair; Lynda-Lee Sheridan, Vice Chair; Leroy Walker, Mary Kelly, Kristan Bagley-Jones, Becky Padera, Mike Zullas

Not Present:

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

Others present: Ms. Annemarie Fagan, Town Administrator, joined the meeting at 8:19 pm.

Call to Order

The Chair called the July 30th meeting of the School Committee to order at 7:08 pm

Approval of Minutes

The chair entertained a motion to approve minutes **of May 30, 2013.**

Move: Ms. Padera

Second: Mr. Jones

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

The chair approved a motion to approve the minutes of **June 5th, 2013.**

Move: Ms. Bagley Jones

Second: Ms. Padera

Discussion: Mr. Zullas asked to review the highlighted sections of the minutes. They were edited to reflect that Ms. Bagley Jones asked for an update when the Peer Leaders from MHS came to talk to the 8th graders. Mr. Pavlicek corrected "chairmans" and "forecast." Ms. Kelly made corrections to a highlighted piece about the crew team. They inserted the phrase "The first year of competing in Division One," instead of "coaching." In Topic Four, "they initially had concerns about creating the team" – was changed to "Mrs. Kelly had had concerns about adding new teams for financial reasons." Change John Rhee to correct spelling. With those edits, the chair asked for a vote.

Vote: 6-0-0

Draft School Committee calendar: School Committee members compared their calendars to see if they could agree on dates. They agreed to meet August 21st, not the 14th.

Ms. Sheridan asked for input to the School Committee calendar and agenda items. She thought August 21st would be a good time to introduce the new administrators. Ms. Gormley asked Mr. Walker for a date for an update on Security and Safety Measures. He suggested the September 25th meeting.

Ms. Kelly asked if the 2014 budget would be discussed at the meeting on the 21st and when the committee would be ready to discuss the RFP for the Strategic Plan. Ms. Gormley suggested highlighting in the handbook what policies are new or changed. She also said the teacher, parent and student handbooks are being gone over. Ms. Padera asked if class size, enrollment, would be discussed during the August meeting. Ms. Gormley said on Sept. 11th would be a better time for this discussion.

Ms. Sheridan explained that, on the right hand column are items that must be discussed by a certain date. The Superintendent's evaluation is one of those. The appointment of the MASC delegate has been done. Mr. Walker asked if there was an assessment of Year One for the Superintendent. Ms. Gormley said, yes (under the old formula.) Ms. Gormley said many of her goals have to do with the data. Ms. Kelly said we have to create the internal assessments Ms. Sheridan said when we switch to PARC, it will be done online. Ms. Sheridan explained that in September, we should be starting the second cycle. Ms. Kelly asked, did we miss a step? Ms. Sheridan said we didn't do a mid-cycle review. Ms. Gormley said in August, she should give an update and her mid-cycle review. Mr. Walker said he appreciated Ms. Kelly's point in having internal data. He would like to do some work on that and propose what types of data would be useful. Sean Walsh worked on this, but he would like to standardize what data is interesting and useful, and when it will be available. He said the committee needs to review where the district is, and where the Superintendent is, before August. Ideally, the committee should do the end of the year assessment in July, which would give Ms. Gormley time to go over it before she goes to her staff in August. He suggested the committee should try to get agreement on what types of data should be provided. Ms. Sheridan asked, should we ask the Superintendent and the leadership team to do that? Mr. Walker agreed that the administrative team could do it.

Ms. Padera remembered doing a review and asked if anyone remembered the date. Mr. Walker said they never actually did a review – it was more of a check-in. Ms. Padera said they had a session where they all went around the table and reviewed the Superintendent's goals. Ms. Sheridan agreed, and asked Ms. Gormley when she gave Ms. Sheridan the binder for the evaluation. Mr. Walker said he didn't remember getting feedback from the School Committee

Ms. Sheridan said she will sit with Mary and Charlene and tweak the timeline to see where we should be. Ms. Bagley Jones would like clarification of what we've done so far – like a blueprint. Mr. Zullas asked whether to include the DOR review. Mr. Walker said we should be ready by September for feedback and report from DOR. Ms. Bagley Jones asked when we should introduce the new administrators on August 21st., but it was agreed to introduce on the 11th.

Ms. Bagley Jones asked for detail about the data. Mr. Walker explained he is looking for a variety of data points to help with the review. Ms. Bagley Jones asked for the blueprint from the student achievement data and presentation to School Committee. She said she'd like to limit the site council presentations to 12-15 minutes. Ms. Sheridan said they need to look at presentations and be sure they're more uniform. Ms. Kelly suggested that site councils come with their "budget requests" before November. Ms. Sheridan summarized that the agreement is: "get the information, don't go as deep as in the past, get the Site Councils to appear before School Committee so we have better information to go forward with the budget. She also noted that it should all be connected to the Advancement Initiatives."

Ms. Bagley Jones asked if they could move the Athletics presentation to an earlier date, so the public gets a chance to see Mr. Rooney. Since he's a new person, Nov. 6th seems too late. She said people want people to know him.

Ms. Sheridan asked why there's only one meeting in November. There is usually only one in December. There was discussion of dates and it was agreed to meet on Nov. 20th and Dec. 11th. Ms. Sheridan said she'd adjust the site council dates. Ms. Kelly reminded the committee that the Strategic Plan discussions are also upcoming.

Ms. Gormley suggested having a separate TV show to give accolades to students, athletes, etc. Ms. Bagley Jones said she prefers to have them stay, just schedule it better. Ms. Kelly liked the idea of a TV show for student accolades.

Ms. Sheridan asked for feedback on retiree reception and volunteer reception. Members agreed they should stay on the calendar. Mr. Walker asked if they'd vote the calendar at the next meeting and Ms. Sheridan said yes.

Ms. Sheridan said one of her goal is to revamp the structure of the School Committee meetings. Mr. Zullas explained how, as a former site council meeting member, it might be difficult to have an October presentation, since they have only had one or two meetings at that point.

Mr. Walker suggested the site council just be a dialogue. Mr. Walker said he would like to have consensus. Ms. Sheridan said we should vote this calendar on the 21st. Instead, it was agreed that this is a "work in progress," -- so rather than voting it, they should just all agree. Mr. Walker wanted to be sure there was consensus. This topic will be on the agenda for next meeting.

Subcommittees: Mr. Pavlicek was removed from all the subcommittees and the chair reviewed all of the subcommittees. Mr. Zullas volunteered to stay on Consolidated Facilities. However, Capital Planning needs one rep. Payroll is currently Ms. Padera. The DOR subcommittee is not a standing committee; and the Master Planning Committee is losing Mr. Pavlicek. Either Mr. Zullas or Mr. Walker will serve on that committee. The Safety subcommittee representative is Mr. Walker. He pointed out that

this is not a School Committee subcommittee, it's a meeting called by Ms. Gormley. They suggested breaking it out into two lists – subcommittees and responsibilities.

Retreat Discussion:

Ms. Sheridan said she felt there was good input from the last meeting. The committee generated an extensive list of topics, including challenges, priorities and some School Committee goals. She would like to prioritize the list and asked members if they picked the top five challenges. She asked them how they prepared for this meeting.

Ms. Kelly said she's confused. In terms of us creating goals for next year, she feels the committee is missing a component -- just to give a top five, I'm not sure if that puts us where we need to be.

Ms. Padera said she prepared did top five goals for School Committee. So did Ms. Kelly. Mr. Walker said he looked at both, and said his are goals for the district. Ms. Bagley Jones said she chose "themes" with other categories underneath. For her School Committee goals, she looked at academic initiative goals, strategic planning/fundraising; etc.

Ms. Kelly said she thinks many of the things on the list are more like "best practices," not goals. She would like to see the administrations' goals to help formulate the School Committee goals.

*** Note: At 8:19, Ms. Annemarie Fagan joined the meeting. ***

When asked what are some of the goals for the administration, Ms. Gormley said student achievement, centered in on advancement initiatives. She explained how implementing the new evaluation tool is a huge step. She noted that School Committee members are discussing athletic programs, budgeting, etc. She would like to initiate strategic planning and is working on "branding" Milton High School," for prospective and current student/parents/guardians. Budget issues are a priority, as is keeping to our budget timelines.

Ms. Kelly brought up Special Education. She said, as the committee is preparing the budget, they need input from the SPED department. What if we financially determine a need to cut aides, but academically, it's determined we need more aides in the classroom?

Ms. Sheridan asked, what is the wish of the School Committee? We have some data, we have a list of School Committee goals, a 2-3 year list of goals for the district. Ms. Padera said she would also like to see the administration's goals for planning purposes. They could develop purely School Committee goals, and another set based on the administration's goals. Mr. Zullas said the best course of action is to set goals for the School Committee and review at the end of the year. Set a measurement against ourselves.

Mr. Walker said the School Committee goals are, in his view, simply supports for whatever the administration determines. We can have our own goals, but mostly, move towards the district's goals. How have we done, and where should we be going?

Ms. Gormley outlined the advancement Initiatives as follows: early literacy, closing the achievement gap and science.

Ms. Bagley Jones said she feels the School Committee goals and the district goals are the same. With regard to the budget process, the School Committee has done really good things. Working with the principals, getting started earlier, and communicating it better.

Ms. Sheridan said this document (on screen) is something we need to revisit. She directed members' attention to the challenges.

#3, length of School Committee/Subcommittee meetings.

#10 posting on the calendar.

11-15 might be more Finance Subcommittee-related.

Mr. Zullas said he would like to add to the list – he noted that Mr. Jette said there was a decline in AP tests and test-takers and he'd like to address that.

Ms. Bagley Jones said one of the School Committee goals should be reaching all the kids we need to reach -- those who are not at the top and not at the bottom.

Ms. Padera said, while this process has been helpful, some of the district goals need more thought and discussion. In the future, the timeline for discussing these should be later in the year. School Committee goals can be done in the summer.

The discussion then moved to creating School Committee Goals:

1. To complete a strategic plan during this school year
2. Override Campaign/Budget. Mr. Walker thought the word "override" should be included, but some board members expressed concern. One phrase suggested was "prepare for a Contingent and Non-Contingent Budget." The group finally settled on "Prepare for an Override Budget Discussion".
3. Fully-funded athletic budget. Fill the deficit that currently exists. Mr. Walker said this might mean the money comes from somewhere else. Ms. Bagley Jones said it is still one of her goals. Mr. Zullas suggested "Plan for Athletic Funding."
4. Paperless deployment of School Committee information. We should all move towards paperless. Ms. Kelly said she feels as though we're already there.
5. Continue review of School Committee Policies.
6. Workable Union Contracts. Or "Settle Collective Bargaining Contracts."

Ms. Kelly would like feedback on behavior in the classrooms. How do we get this data? She would like to see action plans for each teacher to take care of behavioral issues while continuing to teach the class. Mr. Walker wants to know if this is a large enough problem to be a district goal. Ms. Sheridan thinks the Superintendent should get quarterly reports on the progress of the Advancement initiatives. Mr. Phelan explained how there are different behavior/discipline protocols at each school level.

7. Mr. Zullas said "Review consolidating Business Office functions with the town" as a goal would be worthwhile.

8. Ms. Bagley Jones said "Review School Committee Format for Meetings."

Mr. Walker said this wouldn't be in his top 25. He also said that #6 should be an administrative task and Mr. Zullas agreed. Ms. Kelly suggested a subcommittee, similar to Consolidated Facilities. Mr. Walker said he would follow the lead of Glenn and Mary.

8. Mr. Walker suggested, for a district goal, making edits to Goal #1: "Successfully implement the Advancement Initiatives milestones." Reduce the achievement gaps, improve science scores.

Ms. Gormley said we have grown the number of SPED students who stay in-house. The district is moving towards total inclusion, so that children who live in Milton can attend our schools. Ms. Kelly said this is both a budgetary issue and also a matter of getting these children to succeed.

Ms. Bagley Jones noted that we don't have a diversity goal on our School Committee goals. Ms. Sheridan asked, is this about hiring? Ms. Bagley Jones said she simply doesn't see any goal that involves diversity.

Ms. Sheridan suggested, to wrap it, up, this is a first draft. This can continue to be discussed at the next meeting.

Mr. Walker updated the committee on the topic of the RFP. If members want a hard copy, he has them. He asked them to take a look at it, focus mostly on first two pages. He asked them to review the objectives and what tasks the committee wants the consultants to do. He said we should vote at next meeting. Ms. Bagley Jones asked if we have the money; and Mr. Walker said we do. He asked for edits before the next meeting.

The chair entertained a motion to move into Executive Session.

Move: Ms. Bagley Jones

Second: Ms. Padera

Roll Call Vote: unanimous.