

Milton School Committee Meeting Minutes
Regular Meeting
Location: Milton Access TV Studio
Date: November 28, 2018
Time: 7 pm

Committee Present: Dr. Kevin Donahue, Chair; Sheila Varela, Vice Chair; Margaret Eberhardt, Dr. Elaine Craghead, Betty White, Ada Rosmarin.

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

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 7pm.

Approval of November 28, 2018 Agenda

Dr. Donahue moved for item 6, the Facilities Advisory Committee Report, to follow item 5b, the presentation of the District Performance Assessment. The agenda was approved with this change and no additions or deletions.

Citizen's Speak – none

Superintendent's Report

Topic One: Guests of the Superintendent.

1. Milton High School Athletic Teams. Superintendent Gormley explained that this portion of the School Committee Meeting is to recognize athletic teams at the end of each season that went on to tournament level play. Athletic Director Ryan Madden introduced the Golf, Swim, and Cheerleading Teams. The cheerleading team finished the season 2nd at Nationals, 4th at the State level. The swim team finished 4th in state. The golf team won the Team Sportsmanship Award for Division Two in the state. The students then introduced themselves one by one. Diving was discussed –everyone hopes to eventually add a high school diving team.

Topic Two: Assessment of District Performance Presentation by Vy Vu (Attachment).

1. Introduction. Superintendent Gormley extended her thanks to Vy Vu. Vy Vu explained that the state recently made changes to the MCAS test. The previous "Legacy MCAS" test is almost 20 years old and allowed direct comparison of results from year to year. The updated "Next-Generation MCAS" has new data points and is a different test altogether. By 2019, the test will be entirely computerized, in keeping with increase in technology within schools and the workforce. In addition to the new MCAS, a new accountability system has been implemented. This year will be informative in terms of how this data is processed and how this new accountability system will affect individual schools.

2. Review of 2017-2018 MCAS results, grades 3-8. The Next Generation MCAS was administered in all schools except for the high school. This is why they were excluded from this aspect of the review. At every grade level our district far out performs well above the state level.

Emphasis was placed on English Language Arts (ELA) MCAS scores for grade three. ELA proficiency at grade three is a critical indicator for future academic success.

Vy Vu added that 2017-2018 was the first year for implementation of the Reach for Reading Program, a literacy curriculum in grades K-5.

Third grade ELA MCAS data for the last 7 years was presented; scores have recovered from a previous decline and are higher than ever before for our district. ELA MCAS scores were reviewed by grade. Vy Vu explained that the MCAS data can be used to identify and target specific grade levels (for example, grade 7 as reviewed in the slides) that will benefit from additional support. Additional support may reverse future downward trends in testing scores.

Vy Vu reviewed the Next Generation Math MCAS score for grades 3-8. Again, overall district performance for math is well above the state performance data. The state data per grade has remained stable. There are large trends, however, either upward or downward, between individual grade levels in our district.

Legacy Science MCAS data for grades 5 and 8 was presented next. In each area we perform well above the state average. All individual schools are trending upwards.

3. Review of High School Standardized Assessment Data. High school Legacy MCAS scores were reviewed next. The percentage of students performing at a proficient/advanced level at grade ten for science, math and ELA was 93, 91 and 98 percent respectively. Five year testing data is consistent regardless of individual cohort.

Dr. Donahue opened the floor for questions from School Committee members. Dr. Craghead asked if we compare our district data to similar districts in addition to the state. Vy Vu responded by explaining that yes, we typically include these comparisons in the presentation but that this year she excluded this to focus on the new testing and new accountability standards.

4. Introduction of the New Accountability System. The new accountability system was implemented this year and uses both Next-Generation and Legacy MCAS data from spring 2017 as the baseline for future assessments. New indicators in this system include Progress of English learners and Chronic Absenteeism (students who miss more than 10% of the school year will affect accountability scores).

Regarding achievement gaps, there will now be focus on the 25% lowest performing students, regardless of subgroup or particular cohort. In theory, progress in this population of students will reflect positive change and the success of efforts to minimize achievement gaps overall. School classification is also changing, and schools will no longer be classified by levels 1-5. Instead they will now be assigned two scores; one that reflects the progress schools have made towards meeting achievement goals (Target Percentage), and one reflecting how well the school performs against peers who took the same tests in the 2017 baseline year (Accountability Percentile). These indicators can potentially change in the future based upon the results and feedback received by the State.

5. Milton Public Schools 2018 Accountability Results. Vy Vu explained that under this new accountability system, data from 2017 scores was used to determine district goals for 2018. Superintendent Gormley pointed out that comparisons were historically made only between similar subgroups (elementary schools to elementary schools, middle schools to middle schools), but now elementary and middle schools will all be included as one large group. Ms. Vu added that this criteria may be changed multiple times in these early years of implementation, and that this lends itself towards difficulty in comparing scores from one year to another.

Member Rosmarin asked how the target percentage is calculated. Ms. Vu explained that two target percentage scores are calculated – one for the non-high school student group, and for the high school group. These calculations include ELA, Math and Science achievement scores; Growth Scores for those subject areas, Progress for English Learners, and Chronic Absenteeism. High School Completion Rate is also factored into the score for high schools. Member Rosmarin then asked how schools are responding to these changes. Ms. Vu said that schools are still struggling to make sense of these changes. She added that regardless of these changes, teachers still have an understanding of their students and can identify those needing additional support. This, along with other internal school assessments, is used to identify students who will benefit from intervention. Additional support is then provided as necessary. She explained that we can try to keep this in mind and support teachers at the classroom level while testing continues to change.

Dr. Donahue expressed his disappointment with these changes. Previous data provides valuable information from year to year. This information can be used to identify trends and areas to focus on. The new changes will inhibit our ability to make specific comparisons and future projections.

Ms. White asked how this new system takes yearly fluctuations within each student subgroup into account. Ms. Vu responded by saying that all schools experience these fluctuations and that no, this is not specifically taken into account each year in reporting.

An additional point of concern pertains to the criteria for 95% student test participation in each subgroup – schools will be penalized if this participation goal is not met. For subgroups that are small, one student absence can cause this penalty. Ms. Varela asked how scores are affected if students are legitimately ill and need a makeup day. Ms. Vu explained that only data obtained on the date of MCAS administration is used for accountability reporting; therefore, data for the students who make up the test on another day will not be included in accountability reporting. Ms. Varela commented that if standards will change from year to year it is unclear how we can extract metrics and how this information can be used.

Assistant Superintendent Sheehan explained that you can still identify areas in need of support and make individual district goals based upon this data.

6. 2017-2018 Advanced Placement Assessment data. Milton High School offered a total of 21 AP courses. These courses are open to all juniors and seniors, and occasionally some sophomores have the opportunity to take AP courses. In the 2017-2018 school year, 86% of students who took AP exams scored high enough to earn college credit. This was higher than any previous year. The percentage of students who obtain qualifying scores has steadily increased over time.

Participation and qualifying scores were reviewed by race. Ms. Vu explained that minority students who enroll in AP earn qualifying scores at similar rates of their peers.

Overall, gender does not make a large difference in participation and achievement.

The number of AP scholars in our district has increased over previous years.

7. SAT Data. The College Board has redesigned their testing to ensure students are ready for college and career. Overall scores have increased for students in our district. Performance gaps for minority students still exist, and these differences were reviewed. Performance increased across gender. Students utilized fee waivers at a higher rate this year.
8. Conclusion. Our district is performing above the state average in every area. Our district Grade 3 ELA scores are the highest they have been in the last seven years. The percentage of students earning qualifying AP scores is at an unprecedented high. SAT achievement is good. Regarding next steps, Ms. Vu reminds us that we are in the middle of a district wide strategic planning period. She asked the School Committee to think about other indicators we can use to measure success while the State data points are in flux. Potential categories include Social-emotional learning (SEL) measurements, school climate assessment, participation in extra-curricular activities and sports, and college success.

Dr. Donahue again thanked Ms. Vu for her presentation. Dr. Craghead expressed thanks to Ms. Vu for compiling this data in a way that is easy to understand.

Chair's Report

Topic One: MASC annual Conference Update. Dr. Craghead is the MASC delegate and reported on her attendance at the recent conference. She explained that all of the resolutions previously discussed and voted on by the School Committee were passed, but they were not always passed in the exact format as when the School Committee voted on them. She suggests in the future that delegates be chosen with the understanding there may be some changes in the resolution's specific wording. The delegate should be prepared to vote on matters with this in mind.

Dr. Craghead also added that two transgendered individuals voted strongly against support for gender neutral facilities. They explained that this resolution does not support their ability to use the facilities associated with the gender they most identify with.

Topic Two: Warrant Article (Attachment) (Vote).

Dr. Donahue presented the document regarding the establishment of a School Building Committee to the School Committee. This contains new language that will be contained within the Warrant article which, if voted on today, can be presented at the February 2019 Town Meeting. Ms. Varela is concerned about this going forth prior to the completion of the current architectural study. She is also concerned as to whether we need a School Building Committee when the Facilities Advisory Committee has been working on this matter so diligently. The School Committee discussed the timing of the Warrant article and the group agreed to move forward and vote.

Dr. Donahue put forth a motion to approve the proposed language for the Warrant article, which is to be presented to the Warrant Committee by their deadline of December 1, 2018 so it can be included in the February 2019 Town Meeting.

Second: Ms. White

Abstain: Dr. Craghead

Vote: 5-0-1

Topic Three: Posting of Subcommittee Minutes. Dr. Donahue discussed the potential need for all subcommittee minutes to follow a particular format so they are more standardized. At this time, it seems the notes are formatted in a way that makes them more easy to navigate. Ms. Eberhardt suggested that items that are voted on be in bold.

Facilities Advisory Committee Report

Facilities Advisory Strategic Planning Goal (Attachment) (Vote).

Member Rosmarin asked if the School Committee has any recommendations or suggested edits to the Facilities Advisory Committee Goal Statement that was presented at the last meeting.

Member Rosmarin put forth a motion that the Facilities Advisory Strategic Planning Goal be approved with no additions or deletions.

Second: Dr. Donahue

Vote: 5-0-0

Member Rosmarin also discussed the upcoming public relations campaign that aims to educate community members about facilities issues. She distributed a handout that summarizes this issue. This will be distributed to parents at school and community events. Ms. Varela asked if we should strike space rental from the portion of the handout that mentions potential solutions because this has not proven to be a viable option. Member Rosmarin pointed to the wording and explained that the advisory committee has sought to make sure the public understands all the potential options that were investigated and explored along the way.

Next Topic: Posting of Subcommittee Minutes. Please see the Chair's Report.

Finance Subcommittee Report

Topic One: FY20 Budget (Attachement) (Vote).

Rankings for the potential items for inclusion in the FY20 budget were sent to Dr. Craghead. She reviewed these results, and explained they must be voted on at this meeting. She asked whether we should exclude the lower ranked items. Elementary teachers (2) were ranked the highest, followed by a high school English teacher.

Ms. Varela proposed we ask for all nine items.

Dr. Craghead distributed a document composed by Dr. Pavlicek. According to this document, the FY20 budget can potentially accommodate an increase of 3.91%; to add all 9 items proposed for potential inclusion would increase spending by 5.23%.

Superintendent Gormley identified three key areas of consideration in which items to include: enrollment; cost avoidance; and special education.

Ms. Eberhardt is opposed to requesting all nine items.

Dr. Craghead put forth a motion to include in the proposal for inclusion in the FY20 Budget.

Dr. Donahue supports including the top four ranked items.

Ms. White asked whether we can reconsider the language based program later in the year.

Dr. Craghead put forth a motion to include the following items in the FY20 budget, in order of priority: 2 Elementary School Teachers, 1 High School English Teacher, MHS Transition Program (BRYT Program), Additional FTEs for High School Math and Science teachers, Language Based Special Education Program, additional Elementary Recess Aides.

Second: S. Varela

Vote: 6-0-0

Topic Two: Approval of Vendor Warrants (Vote).

Dr. Craghead put forth a motion to approve vendor warrant number 21, dated November 29, 2018 in the amount of \$434,346.92

Second: Varela

Vote: 6-0-0

Health and Wellness Advisory Committee Report

The Health and Wellness Advisory Committee Report was provided by Ms. Varela. The committee recently heard updates from Mr. Devlin in the Guidance Department regarding the "Take 5" room that is being used at the high school. It is estimated that the Take 5 room is being used by 195 students. It serves primarily as a safe place for relaxation and provides resources for students who are feeling stressed and overwhelmed for any reason during the school day. It is currently staffed by two of the three high school guidance counselors. Students may come and go as needed. Ms. Varela highlighted the distinction between the Take 5 and the BRYT Program. The BRYT Program would serve students recovering from physical, social, and emotional setbacks that require extended absence from school; the program would aide students with their transition back into the school community.

The BRYT Program would require another adjustment counselor for staffing. Justification for the use of the BRYT program includes statistics that school attendance increases in schools that implement and maintain these programs. Any student is welcomed to use the room and there is no longer any stigma regarding this program.

Member Deborah Milbauer presented information to the committee regarding the "Rethink the Drink" campaign. The Milton Substance Abuse Coalition is rolling out this campaign to the parent community. The goal of this program is to decrease underage drinking. Community organizations in Braintree, Weymouth, and Quincy are also launching this campaign in their towns. There is a website that provides information and this was presented to the committee. In addition, the parent pledge was reviewed. This campaign is one way that the Coalition is working to combat the issue of underage drinking, which was a major goal of the group for this year. Ms. Milbauer asked for input as to the best way to engage parents so they will hopefully review and sign the pledge. Various social media strategies were discussed, as well as the potential for working with town wide organizations to get the word out. A handout was also recommended, and the committee will create one that can be distributed to parents at school and community events. Ms. Milbauer will report back on the progress of this campaign in the future.

Noel Vigue, Director of Health and Physical Education, provided updates on the “Wait Until 8th” smartphone campaign. Details of this campaign were initially presented to the School Committee last spring. The purpose of this initiative is to protect children under the age of 13 from exposure to inappropriate online sites, social media, and cyber bullying. The initiative has not been as popular as the district has hoped. They discussed ways to increase participation, including an updated public relations campaign.

Ryan Madden, Director of Athletics, gave an overview of the success of the fall sports season.

Ms. Varela informed the Committee that Chief of Police John King will attend this week’s meeting to give an update on the Milton Police Department’s efforts to reduce underage drinking in the community.

Dr. Craghead commented on the “Wait Until 8th” campaign. She did sign this pledge but explained that as students become more independent having a means of communication is important. In addition, it is difficult to find cell phones that are not smart phones. She made the point that the lack of current success with this initiative potentially involves many more factors than just parental disinterest. Ms. Eberhardt added that it is possible to turn off additional features of the smartphones. Ms. Varela commented that having a phone to communicate with your children is important.

Transportation and Traffic Advisory Committee

Ms. White reported that Judy Crocker, Mass DOT, will have a final report of the Glover survey in January. There was a follow up discussion of the October “Walk to School” initiative, which was very successful. There will be additional “Walk to School” dates in 2019.

Traffic issues at Glover and Cunningham Schools were discussed. Concerns at Cunningham School relate to the fact that there are less traffic guards in the afternoon. There is concern about parents and children who cross the street as cars are exiting and the potential for injury this presents. One parent commented that it is quicker for her child to use the bus to get home than it is for her to pick up her child at school due to the heavy traffic volume.

Glover concerns are related to the need for increased signage to direct traffic, and the fact that buses are having difficulty accessing the school due to the traffic volume.

Ms. Varela asked if Ms. White can invite the Lieutenant Mark Alba (who hires the crossing guards) to attend the next meeting so we can discuss these concerns and the potential for hiring additional crossing guards.

Ms. White will call him and find out more and extend an invitation to him to attend the next meeting. Assistant Superintendent Pavlicek added that there is a texting trial taking place at this time that can send emergency texting updates to parents regarding changes in bus schedule (for example, if buses are for some reason running late).

Superintendent Gormley also commented about the large amount of administrative time these updates to parents currently take.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of October 17, 2018 were reviewed by the School Committee.

On page three, there is an error regarding the number of FTE hours added to the high school guidance and adjustment counselor staff. The corrected statement will read: "He responded that they were able to appoint 0.5 FTEs to the adjustment counselor staffing budget, and 0.5 FTEs to the guidance counselor staffing budget".

On page five, the following statement was made by Ms. Eberhardt, not Ms. Varela: "...changing the cap of two board members on Subcommittees/Advisory Committees so that up to three members can potentially attend".

Lastly the group agreed it will be helpful to have committee meeting minutes numbered and have voting sections bolded for ease in navigating the document in the future.

Dr. Donahue put forth a motion to approve the minutes of October 17, 2018 with the additions and deletions as above.

Second: Ms. Varela

Abstain: Dr. Craghead

Vote: 5-0-1

Old Business

None.

Citizen Speak Topic Response

N/a

Next Meeting Agenda Items

The next agenda will include the standard subcommittee and advisory committee reporting as per the usual rotation. The Finance Subcommittee will report. The next meeting will be held at the high school.

Citizen Speak

N/a.

Meeting Adjourned

Dr. Donahue put forth a motion to adjourn.

Second: Ms. Varela

Roll Call Vote: 6-0-0

Adjourn 10:15 pm