

**Milton School Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Pierce Middle School**  
**March 27, 2018**  
**6:45 pm.**

*Prior to the regular meeting of the Milton School Committee there was a tour of Pierce Middle School at 6:15pm followed by the Open Public Budget Forum at 6:45 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.

**Open Public Budget Forum Agenda (6:45pm).**

Topic One: FY20 Budget (Attachment).

Dr. Donahue reviewed the FY20 Budget Proposal as submitted by the School Committee. He explained that the requested FY20 budget was \$52,008,200. The current Warrant Committee recommendation is \$50,973,200; which is a \$1,035,000 reduction from the requested budget for FY20.

Dr. Donahue informed the audience regarding which items were approved for funding, and which items were not approved for funding:

- \$1.38 M for salary increases of existing staff – FUNDED
- \$293,000 for additional staffing based upon increasing enrollment – PARTIALLY FUNDED
- \$150,000 for two new Secondary Education/Support positions – NOT FUNDED
- \$556,000 in non-personnel spending (\$486,000 to be used for SPED, primarily out-of-district tuitions and transportation) – PARTIALLY FUNDED
- Two New Programs:
  - Middle School Special Education Language-Based Program – NOT FUNDED
  - High School Transitions Program – NOT FUNDED
- Enrollment based staffing needs:
  - 2 Elementary Classroom Teachers – FUNDED
  - 2 High School Classroom Teachers – NOT FUNDED
  - One additional recess aide at each elementary school – NOT FUNDED

In addition, Dr. Donahue reviewed FY20 Budget Cuts with the audience as below:

- One Elementary Technology Teacher: This position was funded by the override and will now be cut. This leaves only one technology teacher at the elementary school level
- Five Middle School Positions were decreased to part time: this is due to cuts in the music, technology, STEM, writing and art programs.
- High School Clubs and Activities: There will be cuts in at least one third of the high school clubs and activities.
- Cutbacks in the part time administrative support position will results in decreased number of part time staff.

Comments were then taken from the audience.

Beverly Ross Denny of 107 Columbine Road, was very excited when the previous override passed because it would provide support to the district schools, however she was dismayed to find that this funding only supported one year. She asked whether there it is possible to plan for three years ahead of potential overrides instead of only one, so that newly created positions and programs would not have to be cut in the next school year. She commented that it appears as though the Town did not anticipate the future needs of the district in planning the

previous override. She expressed concern as to how we can do this differently in the future so that the programs created by override funding will not be lost so quickly.

Ms. Varela reminded the audience that the School Committee does not set the amount of money of the Town override. This is done by the Warrant Committee and Board of Selectman. She is thankful for the concerns expressed by the audience and strongly encouraged the parents to express these concerns to the Warrant Committee and the Board of Selectman because these are the groups making the determinations regarding override and planning.

Linda Mancini of 14 Hillcrest Road wondered if the Town has considered seeking low interest loans rather than budget cuts or overrides to create the programs that will attract children back into the district.

Dr. Donahue commented this is good point and added that there are constraints as to how we can spend borrowed money. He is happy to obtain the specifics as to whether loans can be taken to cover operational costs. Additionally, there are considerations as to the interest accrued on these loans and whether this will cut into operating budget at some point depending upon the amount borrowed.

Linda then asked we have we ever done anything like this in the past.

Dr. Donahue replied that we have not; but we have been creative with other funding sources. For example, the Selectman attempted in the past to seek approval to use Chapter 90 funding, which is traditionally allocated to be used for road construction, to be used as a principal payment for a large term loan. The Commonwealth did not allow this. The other members did comment that this is typically not allowed, but they will defer to Dr. Pavlicek for additional comment on this when he arrives.

Karen Friedman-Hanna of 3 Norway Road remarked she is concerned about what the specific reduction in hours will be for the specialist courses, especially at middle school level. She comments that those classes are already "enormous". She noted that the middle school years are a challenging time for students and that having creative outlets for children is crucial. Without this you face more challenges in behavior and decreased academic performance. Reducing music education and the arts will decrease educational quality. This is a huge concern and she doesn't know how that can be considered alright by the district. The electives are equally as important as academic courses, and are often the reason children of this age come to school.

Dr. Pavlicek arrived to the meeting.

Dr. Donahue put forth to him the question regarding whether the town has considered seeking low interest loans to cover operational costs of the district and whether this is permitted.

Dr. Pavlicek is not completely certain but does not believe this is allowed. Requirements of balancing the budget for the town allow you to borrow against anticipated revenue and items similar to this, but to borrow solely to cover operational costs builds a gap which would be concerning to the bonding companies. He is not sure if this is legally permissible.

**Dr. Donahue moved to adjourn the Open Budget Forum and call to order the regular School Committee meeting at 7:06 pm.**

**Second: S. Varela**

**Vote: 6-0-0**

#### **Regular School Committee Meeting**

##### **Call to Order**

Dr. Donahue called the regular School Committee Meeting to order at 7:06p.m.

### **Approve March 27, 2019 Agenda**

The agenda was approved with the addition of the Re-approval of Policy IHBG under the Policy Subcommittee Report.

### **Citizen Speak (Policy BEDH – 15 minutes)**

Jillian Meade of 52 Gulliver Street stepped forward to read a letter drafted on behalf of approximately 30 residents of the abutters in the Elm and Wendell park neighborhood in response to a recent meeting held on March 7<sup>th</sup> between members of the school committee and residents of Gulliver, Elm and Wendell Park Streets.

The concerns and questions of the neighborhood organizations were itemized in the letter as follows:

- Given that the report was only issued on January 2019, and many questions are unanswered or have contradicting answers, why are we fast tracking this process?
- Given that the kindergarten population spikes next year, but then drops back down to current enrollment levels the following year why are we rolling out more temporary short term options. Again, why are we fast tracking the process?
- Given we have not decided on what the best option is for the students of Milton, why is the school building committee formed and why are we fast tracking the process?
- If Milton Public Schools is worried about losing 1000 students a year to private school why would we devalue our flagship high school by adding a nonconventional early education center to the back of it that would still not provide the facilities necessary?
- To date no one that provided their names or email addresses at the abutters meeting have been provided clarification regarding the questions that couldn't be answered during the March 7 meeting.

The letter's closing stated: "What are the School Committee's next steps? Are you going to vote on any of the options and make a recommendation to the building committee? Is there any consideration of exploring the feasibility of exploring the 4X4X4 plan that was proposed in the March Select Board meeting? Why aren't the School Meeting and Select Board members working together? As taxpayers, residents, parents, and proud citizens of Milton, we are deeply concerned about the School Committee's rush to push forward on a long term plan as a short term project. This is not the best we can do for our children; not for a Grade A school system. We can do better, and we must do better".

Dr. Donahue thanked her for the letter reading.

### **Superintendent's Report**

#### Topic One: Guests of the Superintendent.

Milton Foundation for Education 2019 Celebration: Ms. Eberhardt announced the Milton Foundation for Education 2019 Celebration, which will occur on Saturday, April 6, 2019 at Lombardo's. The theme for this year is "Beyond the Books".

Pierce Middle School Community Service Learning Project: Dr. Karen Spaulding introduced 8th Grade Students Emily Gallagher, Ciara Walsh, Claire Graham and Ha-Yen Nguyen, who have worked on a project to increase voter turnout at the Milton Town elections. Only 21.8% of Milton residents voted in the last Milton Town election.

#### Topic Two: Pierce Middle School Site Council Presentation (Attachment).

Dr. Spaulding presented the Pierce Middle School Site Council Presentation. She started by reading the Pierce Middle School Mission Statement. She then showed a slide detailing the grants awarded in the last several years for specific programs that support the mission statement. Then the council reviewed the school's strategic goals and steps implemented to achieve them.

Goal 1: Improve Technology

Goal 2: Targeted Interventions and Instructional Practices that Increase Student Learning

Goal 3: Integrate School Wide Approach to Support the Social Emotional Growth of All Students

### Topic Three: Happenings

Superintendent Gormley announced the upcoming retirement of Assistant Superintendent Janet Sheehan by reading her current blog post as below:

It is with mixed emotions that I share with you Assistant Superintendent Janet Sheehan's announced retirement effective June 30th of this year. I have known Janet since 1994 when she joined the teaching staff at the Collicot Elementary School. After graduating from the Educational Leadership Program at Lesley University, she continued her career as a Principal in the Cohasset Public Schools. A decade later we were thrilled to welcome her back to Milton, first as Principal of the Collicot Elementary School and later as Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Human Resources.

Janet is the consummate professional. She has dedicated her career in Milton to improving the achievement and social-emotional well-being of our students. Janet is uniquely qualified to lead pre-school through grade twelve administrators, teachers and staff in curriculum and professional development in a myriad of content areas.

In the area of Curriculum, one of her most recent and lasting accomplishments is leading a team of elementary staff over the past three years in the analysis of our English/Language Arts student achievement data. Subsequently, she facilitated an examination of programs that led to the implementation of the National Geographic Reach for Reading Literacy Program for our Kindergarten through Grade Five students.

In the area of Human Resources, she leads all of our recruitment efforts and has set standards for excellence in hiring at every level of our school district.

Janet's breadth of knowledge and interpersonal skills have additionally benefited the Milton Public Schools as she oversees Professional Development, Budget, Special Education, Title IX, State Assessments, Grant Programs, and Residency. Her success in these areas ensures that teachers are given the tools they need to employ best practices across all grade levels and that the District operates in compliance with all Federal, State and Local requirements.

Professionally, the Milton Public Schools is stronger and more robust because of Janet's contributions through her years of service and leadership. Personally, I will miss her humor, kindness, dedication and commitment.

Please join me in wishing Janet Sheehan a happy and healthy retirement with her husband Jack, daughters Jennifer and Allison, son-in-law Mark and two very special grandchildren Addy and Jack.

### **Chair's Report**

Dr. Donahue explained that since he has nothing to add that will not be covered in the subcommittee reports, we can move forward to the Finance Subcommittee Report.

### **Finance Subcommittee Report**

#### Topic One: FY20 Budget

Dr. Craghead again reminded the audience that the FY20 proposed budget has been sent to the Warrant Committee. They had to make cuts they did not want to make. Because such a large part of the budget is salaries, the committee ended up cutting FTEs for teachers in the classrooms despite the fact that no one wanted to do so.

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

**Dr. Craghead moved to approve Vendor Warrant number 37 dated March 21, 2019 in the amount of \$364,732.38.**

**Second: S. Varela**

**Abstain: E. White**

**Vote: 5-0-1**

**Dr. Craghead moved to approve Vendor Warrant number 38 dated March 28, 2019 in the amount of \$215,901.40.**

**Second: Donahue**

**Vote: 6-0-0**

#### **Facilities Advisory Committee Report**

Ms. Rosmarin presented the Facilities Advisory Committee report. She reported the committee is wrapping up the School Building Project in preparation to hand it over to the School Building Committee. Their last meeting was with the Select Board to discuss this process and related issues. The committee is in the process of seeking quotes from companies for a second opinion regarding enrollment projections. Despite the fact that NESDEC is seen as the gold standard in Massachusetts the FAC feels it makes sense to seek a second opinion at this time. The committee also discussed getting on the School Building Authority list for funding as well.

There was a review of specialist spaces in the elementary schools to quantify the amount of specialist education still being maintained in their dedicated spaces.

Bill Clark, Town Planner, attended the last meeting and was queried regarding any other land parcels in town that can be used for our school district.

At the next meeting there will be an analysis of the operational costs, specifically of the potential K-5 school option versus early childhood center option.

In response to the stated concern about this process being fast tracked; there is an urgency given the continued enrollment growth. Everyone is trying to move this forward in a productive and thoughtful manner, and there will be continued opportunity for suggestion and feedback.

Lastly, the FAC has been working on a list of elements to consider when evaluating each of the potential options.

Some of these include the following:

Satisfying the need for 26 additional classrooms

Decompressing existing elementary school sites

Management of on-site traffic

Cost effectiveness

Minimizing transitions for students

Enabling children to walk to school

Developmentally appropriate grade configurations

Site availability

Ms. Rosmarin expressed that she welcomes the opinions of the other members, as well as the audience.

Dr. Craghead asked if the cost effectiveness addresses building or operational costs.

Ms. Rosmarin replied that both should be heavily considered.

Ms. Varella asked for more information about the next steps for putting together the School Building Committee. What exactly are we charging them with? What is the deadline for the committee to be in place?

Dr. Donahue commented that as of last week the town moderator has had about 6 requests to be on the committee. He is not sure of timeline but it seems like we are approaching that point of forming the committee. He explained that the School Committee will look at the options presented, identify several reasonable options and ask the building committee to further evaluate them.

### **Policy Subcommittee Report**

Ms. Eberhardt presented the Policy Subcommittee Report. At the 2/27/19 School Committee Meeting the committee reapproved the homeschooling policy; however the packets that evening contained an earlier version without the most current changes included. The folder for this meeting contains the correct version of the policy that was voted upon, and we should officially vote on the policy again tonight.

### **Ms. Eberhardt made a motion to reapprove Homeschooling Policy IHBG.**

**Second: K. Donahue**

**Vote: 6-0-0**

### **Health and Wellness Advisory Committee Report**

Ms. Varela presented Health and Wellness Advisory Committee Report. At the last meeting feedback from the "Wait Until 8<sup>th</sup>" Program was discussed. Noel Vigue plans to work on rebranding this campaign. Many parents have indicated they feel as though they have been "told" to participate. Dr. Spaulding also presented other changes that will give students social and emotional "breaks" during the school day, which includes the availability of standing desks and exercise bikes that children can use during the day. She says that students have found these helpful. Principal Jette explained that the traditional student advisory periods will be shortened and additional periods will be added for social and emotional relief. There will be a wellness week this month in the high school. Turnout for Parent Speaker Series has been great. Additionally, Laura O'Melia will organize an event for National Donate Life Month in April.

### **Transportation and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee Report**

Ms. White presented the Transportation and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee Report. She explains that the committee became aware of an overcrowded bus situation at Cunningham and this was discussed. There are issues when the school has a half day or when there is no afterschool. This was discussed and reviewed for potential solutions.

There was discussion regarding proposed changes on Route 128, particularly near the Tucker Elementary School. The changes will not take place until 2023. Randolph Avenue area traffic is a concern. The crosswalks at Tuckers have not been painted yet. The PTO parents will email the Governor's office and DCR to push for these to be painted as soon as possible.

A Cunningham parent spoke about the congestion at pick up and drop off. The additional crossing guard in the morning has helped, but there are needs in the afternoon. Parents have been parking on both sides of Fuller's Lane and this can be a hazard preventing emergency access. Additionally he noted a lack of signage on the streets and sidewalks in this area.

The MassDOT representative indicates that there is an upcoming Walk to School Event. She also added that she is willing to come do an observation of the traffic patterns.

The next meeting is April 29<sup>th</sup>.

Dr. Pavlicek added that the DPW will add signage. Tucker School Oak Street residents are concerned with the Do Not Enter restriction on the street. In response the duration of the restriction will be shortened to a 45 minute window around pick up and drop off times in the morning and afternoon.

There have been issues when crossing guards call in sick. School notification of these absences is problematic. The police have asked for a single point of contact to be identified so this information can be communicated in a timely manner. Dr. Pavlicek will be that point of contact.

The district is rolling out a phone app that will allow parents to track school buses. This will be tested by the administration in the spring, and is hoped to be offered to parents in the fall.

Regarding bus overcrowding- we will need to reconfigure routes after enrollment numbers come in the spring.

Ms. White asked Dr. Pavlicek to remind the audience about the school bus sign up and fees.

Sign up for buses will begin May 15<sup>th</sup>. Students in grades K-6<sup>th</sup> that live more than 2 miles from their school, along with children that meet criteria to receive free or reduced lunch, will ride for free. For all other students there is a fee of \$275/year for bus service. These seats will be allocated on a first come, first serve basis. Given increasing enrollment, it is possible that additional buses may be needed.

#### **Old Business**

None

#### **Citizen Speak Topic Response**

None at this time.

#### **Superintendent's Review**

Dr. Donahue will not be in attendance at the next meeting and the Superintendent review is due. Information has been sent to members via email. He would like to complete this by April 24<sup>th</sup>. He asked for feedback and comments to be submitted as soon as possible so he can draft a preliminary document to be ready for committee review and discussion during the next School Committee meeting.

#### **Meeting Adjourned**

Dr. Donahue put forth a motion that the meeting be adjourned to Executive Session, not to return to open session, for the purpose of the review of minutes, as well as for discussion of negotiation strategy for union and nonunion personnel.

Roll Call Vote: 6-0-0

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm.

