

Milton School Committee Meeting Minutes
Milton Access Cable Studio
March 31, 2021
7:00pm

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

Staff Present: James Jette, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Karen Spaulding, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Human Resources; Amy Dexter, Assistant Superintendent for Business

1. **Call to order** - 7:04pm
2. **Approve March 31, 2021 Agenda**
Updated and approved
3. **Citizen Speak (Policy BEDH-15 Minutes)**

Ms. Sturdivant - 38 Norman Street

- Twins in 8th grade
- Offer the support to the School Committee for the \$50,000 for the Equity Audit
- Many concerned about the Cambridge Survey, but we need to ask these questions
- listened to many town meetings
- LGBTQ family, son is transgender and Milton Public Schools have been supportive through the process
- changes have been made and more need to still happen
- LGBTQ students need to be seen and heard
- Changes in the locker room to allow children privacy
- Students need and deserve a safe place
- MPS teachers have been supportive

Helene Norton-Russell - 37 Dyer Ave

- Stand up on this international trans day
- Mom of a trans child that attended the High School, first came out as gay before transitioning
- People need to recognize that difficult questions needed to be asked in the survey
- Child had bad experience at Pierce
- Hate is learned, we need to do better in our community
- What we are talking about is life and death. Suicide is rising, we need to do a better job for our children

4. Superintendent's Report - Superintendent Jette

a. Milton High School Principal Appointment

- Superintendent Jette welcomed Principal Cahill and congratulated her on her appointment
- Principal Karen Cahill
 - thanked the School Committee and the Administration for the opportunity and stated that she is looking forward to the opportunity and the position
 - want to make sure every students feels safe and supported

The School Committee also congratulated Karen Cahill on her appointment.

b. Equity Audit Update - Welcomed Senior Director of Equity Education - Somaly Prak-Martins

- Ms. Prak-Martins gave an update on the status of the Equity Audit and a presentation. https://www.miltonps.org/application/files/2816/1731/1965/Quality_Review_SC_Presentation.pdf

Sheila Varela asked if Ms. Prak-Martins could explain who will be on the selection task force to choose screening committee members and how will the equitable pooling be insured from the district?

Ms. Prak-Martins replied that translation of the application will be available in multiple languages. Ms Prak-Martins has reached out to community boards –everyone selected will go through a training process. Nobody will be dismissed. Will make sure it will be an inclusive and equitable process.

Ms. Rosmarin

- Excited to see and wonderful to have this happening in Milton
- Concerned about the low response to the surveys and asked if there was any way to get the response rate up

Ms. Prak-Martins

- The survey is optional and anonymous
- It is a chance to tell your story
- Equity is for all
- Encouraged the community to complete the survey
- Will continue to move with the work and the data
- Need to consider the learning loss
- Equity work is new and need to work together and have these difficult conversations

Chair Varela

- Concerned that the survey will not be completed by enough people in the community because they say they are too busy or missed the email

Ms. Eberhardt

- Engagement piece is so important – for the larger Milton community, not just the school community
- Would rather talk to parents on the phone at times instead of the emails
- The School Committee is committed to this work as a School Committee and community

Ms. Prak-Martins

- We call people into the conversation but everyone has their individual work
- Understand some may have not learned how to have these conversations
- Need to minimize the harm and create the safe place

c. District Updates - Superintendent Jette

- Looking forward to opening the elementary schools on April 5, 2021
- Excited for the parents and students
- Looking forward to bringing people together
- Sending your students to school will continue to be peanut free for safety
- Look for communication on transportation
- Individual Principals will be communicating with parents
- Lunch will be spread out and will look different
- Middle and High School will return on Monday, April 12, 2021
- Ask the community to do their job, minimize your circles and wear your mask
- Looking forward to ending the school year on a positive note

5. Chair's Report - Chair Varela

a. Approval and Vote of Permanent Superintendent's Contract

Chair Varela made a motion to approve Superintendent Jette's Contract.

- 3 year term
- Effective July, 2021

Second: Dr. Craghead

Roll Call Vote:6-0-0

b. Open Public Hearing on FY22 Budget

- Chair Varela announced that on April 14, 2021 at 6:30pm the Milton School Committee will hold the annual open public budget hearing
- This will be held in person in the Cable Studio prior to the regular School Committee meeting at 7pm

- This budget hearing will outline much of what we had discussed in our overview to parents/guardians and staff a few weeks ago and the subsequent vote of the Warrant Committee

6. Finance Subcommittee Report - Dr. Craghead

- a. Statement on the Survey and Warrant Committee Meeting
 - Two issues that were addressed at the Warrant Committee
 - Student Survey sent out to the students
 - Asked about the gender and sexual identity, this was voluntary
 - Audit is in place to offer support
 - LGBTQ+ students in the schools
 - Need the data to help support our students
 - Warrant Committee member expressed discomfort
 - Number of students in school that are coming out and talking to their peers
 - Students cannot be ignored
 - We need to understand and confront our discomfort
 - We need to offer a welcoming environment

Members of the Warrant Committee have stated that there has been Financial Mismanagement by the Schools. The Town Administrator sent a letter to the Warrant Committee stating that he would like to take a deeper dive into the school budget.

- Stated that the schools are not spending responsibly, carefully and wisely
- Instead spending fast and loose with the taxpayers funds and somehow hiding money

Dr. Craghead replied:

- Milton Public Schools are audited at least three times a year
- Largest Audit as a town as a whole in August
- Second is done to look at the grants
- February audited to make sure money is not placed in different accounts
- Always have perfect audit responses
- Every other year the student activity funds are also audited
- Teacher salaries set up
 - Steps and lanes
 - Need this system as other districts do
 - DESE confirms this system
 - Milton not listed in the top
 -
 - paying school districts

Dr. Craghead

- As to the mismanagement question

- Everything is available on the DESE website
- We are not a private enterprise
- Budget books provided are involved and detailed
- Model does not suit private enterprise
- Highly aware of what is spent and why
- Two bottom lines, financial and provide the best education for our students everyday

b. FY22 Budget

- Warrant Committee Meeting took place on Saturday, March 20, 2021
- Voted on the FY22 Budget
 - Schools were cut \$200k
 - Roll over budget that includes the 6 positions
 - Had the money in 2021 but not in 2022
 - Tier II asks were cut early in the process
 - Tier I asks were also cut
 - Will report out on that next week on April 14th

c. Approval of Vendor Warrants

Dr. Craghead made a motion is made to approve Vendor Warrant #38 payable on March 25, 2022 in the amount of \$149,541.96.

Second: Ms. White

Vote: 6-0-0

7. Strategic Planning Advisory Committee Report - Ms. Rosmarin

- Met for a brief meeting
- Next step is looking at prioritizing the plans and more focused
- Big document, hard to have it all listed but can be overwhelming
- Only so much funding available
- Next phase will be Superintendent Jette's Plan
- Identify a number of steps with multiple stakeholders
 - Task forces for each of the 6 goals
- Look at the objectives
- Bring the recommendations to the advisory council on May 19th
- Will review the findings
- Will pass along recommendations to leadership teams
- Superintendent Jette will organize a half day retreat to review the plans
- The School Committee retreat will review in August
- Hopefully be able to vote on the plan at the first School Committee in the fall
- Want to all be heading in the same direction

8. Health and Wellness Advisory Committee Report - Ms. White

- Jackie Morgan getting ready for students to return
- providing weekly meals for remote families
- Superhero lunch day
- Ms. Kinsella reported that there has been an uptick in Covid cases. Will be working on providing home vaccinations
- Laurie Stillman reported Milton Youth Advocate for Change received a grant
- Discussed various mental health programs: South Shore Hospital, “Aunt Bertha” Interface Referral Service, Bay State and perhaps the use of a Therapy Dog program. That type of program could perhaps use a therapy dog owned by a Milton retired Police Officer and would have to be approved by the Superintendent and the Milton Police Dept.
- The committee discussed the Cambridge Education survey sent to students/families/staff and felt that we really need to get the parent community educated on these issues

9. Approval of Minutes

Chair Varela made a motion to approve the School Committee Minutes for February 24, 2021.

Second: Ms. Rosmarin

Vote: 6-0-0

10. Next Meeting Agenda Items

Updated and approved

11. Executive Session

Chair Varela moved to adjourn to go into the Executive Session not to return to the open session for the purpose of:

- To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with union and nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with union and nonunion personnel in accordance with Chapter 30A, Section 21(a)(2)
- Approval of Minutes

Second: Dr. Craghead

Roll Call Vote: 6-0-0

Meeting adjourned at 8:50pm