

Milton School Committee Meeting Minutes  
Meeting via Zoom  
December 15, 2021

Committee Present: Chair; Margaret Eberhardt, Vice Chair; Ada Rosmarin Dr. Elizabeth Carroll, Dr. Elaine Craghead, Beverly Ross Denny, Betty White

Staff Present: James Jette, Superintendent of Schools; Janet Sheehan, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Human Resources

Absent: Amy Dexter, Assistant Superintendent for Business

**1. Call to Order - 7:05pm**

Cora Redmond - Student Representative joined the School Committee Meeting.

**2. Approval of Agenda**

Chair Eberhardt made a motion to approve the School Committee Agenda.

Second: Ms. White

Roll Call Vote: 6-0-0

**3. School Committee Discussion:**

- a. Pierce Incidents
- b. Anti-Racist District Action Plan: Update from Superintendent James Jette and Senior Director of Educational Equity Somaly Prak-Martins
  - i. Incident Reporting System
  - ii. Senior Director of Educational Equity: Reports to School Committee

Ms. White

- Acknowledge how painful the past few weeks have been for the community, students and families of color
- Schools should be a place where a child feels safe and welcome
- Impacts a student's emotional well being
- Proud of the students of Pierce who took their pain and turned into positive voices to express and talk about their experiences
- Students are asking for change
- Students face a rigorous academic schedule and need social well being
- Believe there is more goodness in the world and the community
- Our students give us hope
- As a School Committee member, will pledge to listen and learn

- Pledge to work to make a better school system
- We are better and stronger together

Ms. Ross Denny

- Thanked the students and community members for their diligence and patience while we struggle through these times
- Recognize that what is happening in Milton is happening all over the country
- Optimistic that the communication and plan of what we will do differently as a school system
- Want the community to have confidence in the School Committee
- We recognize where we need to grow
- The voices of the students and community have been heard
- Hoping the following three things will happen by the end of the school year
  - Racism and sexual harassment reporting system will be up and running
  - Recognize we need an Anti-Racist curriculum (not Critical Racial Theory), need a message of tolerance and respect
  - K-12 review/approach to identify the work of Anti-Racism
- This work will get done

Dr. Carroll

- Share the same priorities of Ms. White and Ms. Ross Denny
- Personal commitment of the changes in the schools
- Looking at several recommendations to be an Anti-Racist School District
- View we have failed of the progress we should be making and our children are suffering
- Open Letter was written by Anti-Racism Coalition in response of the incident at Pierce
- The Milton community needs to continue to educate ourselves
- Past two weeks, we have received 7 times as many emails calling for Anti-Racism in Milton
- Have had conversations with others who have not emailed that they are supporting an Anti-Racist school district
- We are stronger together and moving Milton forward
- Have an Anti-Racist Resolution in place, specific and clear just for Milton
- Translating that resolution into progress
- There is work to be done and need to look for progress at every meeting
- Share the optimism that we can do this, the students are depending on us
- Share the disappointment of the past few weeks of the incident at Pierce
- Thanked the community for reaching out, you have been heard

Dr. Craghead

- Proud of the 8th graders who walked out and spoke up, never easy to speak up
- Have known a number of the students and great to see the students growing up into strong individuals

- Need to educate our students about the ways racial intolerance has shaped this country
- There is not real equity in this country
- We need to do more to educate our students about the harmfulness and hatefulness, all bigotry
- Take this as a lesson of what still exist in this town and the difficult journey, we still have a head of us

Ms. Rosmarin

- Deeply saddened by the events that took place the past few weeks
- All students must feel welcome
- Need to strengthen our reporting systems
- Need Professional Development with staff to support our students
- Proud of the Pierce Students who have used their voices to make their school a safe and welcoming place
- Thankful for the MPS administration for its work to communicate with the community
- We are among many of districts taking an active stand against bigotry
- Facing challenges and Milton is a work in progress
- Maintaining commitment to build on the work to move forward to make Milton an equitable school district

Chair Eberhardt

- Thanked all for sharing, these will be difficult conversations
- MPS has held a community forum, open discussions
- Deeply hurtful for the community and families
- Thanked the Administration for communicating
- Understand people were not happy with how some decisions were made regarding the incident at Pierce
- This will be hard work, believe in the young students asking for change
- Not going to be easy work, this community can make this happen
- School Committee is committed to this work
- Have to educate and build the capacity to have the conversations
- Equity and inclusion are issues in the community, we are committed to this work

Superintendent Jette

- Reporting system should be up and running next week
- We are an Anti-Racist Community
- Will continue to communicate with the community
- Culturally Responsive Teaching in our schools
- We have a totally new leadership
- Have had a culture shift, need to work together collaboratively
- Committed to the work, outlined in goals, outlined in strategic plan and the Quality Review
- Encourage every person to complete the survey, need their voices

- Impressed by the maturity level of the students who have spoken up, called for leadership to listen
- We do hear our students, staff and need to provide a platform for our students
- Allow students to have a voice
- Will have set backs, ask for the patience, courage and acceptance of educational risk
- Commend all for speaking to the community
- We will be an Anti-Racist District

#### Chair Eberhardt

- Need to have conversations with the community and how to reflect how to be a inclusive community
- We have a shared vision
- What are the ways we are going to get there?
- Superintendent Jette received a number of hateful/concerning emails over the past few months. This has been a safety concern.

#### Ms. Ross Denny

- How do we engage the public health commission?
- Superintendent Jette was not feeling safe due to the emails being sent
- Have had conversations in meetings about nobody should go to work feeling like their life is threatened
- Offered bringing in security
- Need to work in partnership with police and resources to make everyone feel safe
- Provide responsible protection

#### Superintendent Jette

- There have a been a lot of supportive and kind people out there
- At work every day, committed to this work
- Educators are heroes
- Ask that people talk to their children to what they expect
- Ongoing conversations of how to talk to your children about race
- Difficult conversations will evoke a lot of emotion
- Will also need a community commitment
- Diversity is our strength

#### Cora Redmond

- Sophomore at Milton High
- Proud of the 8th grades, hope their voices were heard
- Students need to be heard, need to be more opportunities for students to speak and to be heard

Dr. Fish

- Past few weeks have been challenging at Pierce
- We as a community continue to do the work with the students and families
- Have seen unbelievable work from students and teachers to grow together
- Engagement of the students, used their voices, they have been heard
- Asking and expecting condemning hatred
- Need a place to report incidents
- Organized and thoughtful event held by the students
- Staff have created a safe place for the students to express their voices

Director of Educational Equity Somaly Prak-Martins

- We have heard the students
- Very proud of the students coming out in solidarity with a message
- Use their rights and voices that they need change
- Incident Reporting Forms, ready to launch next week
- Talking to students at Pierce and High School
- This will be a anonymous reporting option
- Goals would be for K-12 intervention and use the system, identify and track
- How can we better support the students and react in real time?
- Thanked Pierce Community for providing a safe place for the students and to have the conversations

#### **4. Superintendent's Report**

- a. Assessment of District Performance - [Presentation link on the MPS website](#)
  - i. Director of Data and Analytics Vy Vu

Dr. Craghead

- Thanked Vy Vu for a very thorough report
- There is unfinished learning and a continued enrollment crisis
- What strategies will take place for AP enrollment for African American students

Superintendent Jette

- Replied the Calculus Project would support the initiative
- Building self-esteem and confidence at the elementary level
- Expose all students to a rigorous curriculum
- Parents and faculty encouraging students
- Open Enrollment Policy for AP courses however there is a level of commitment
  - Teachers provide support for all students

Ms. Ross Denny

- What courses are 10th grade students eligible to take
- How are these students prepared?
- Who is monitoring their performance throughout the year?
- Need to provide more support, need to do the research to prepare the students

Superintendent Jette

- Depends on what the student is involved in
- Set curriculum from the College Board
- Meeting in the Spring, courses are selected
- Perhaps talk about providing a study hall for students that have not been incorporated

Ms. Ross Denny

- Would like to see a proposal for the students - what are the study strategies in order to be successful in class
- Need to be very transparent and up front not just the summer work
- Could be a disconnect with the students
- A lot of work to not receive the college credit
- What is the best way to talk more about AP courses without taking up so much time tonight?

Chair Eberhardt

- Perhaps email and come back with our questions for another meeting to discuss the data

Ms. Ross Denny

- What is the percentage of African American and Hispanic students recommended for at least one AP class before graduation?
- Parent would trust the judgment of the recommendation
- SAT data, what supports are in place for support for the students
- We need to do the research to look at the data

Dr. Carroll

- Agreed to have a follow up discussion
- Wondering about the AP role Professional Development on teacher bias
- How are we supporting educators to avoid disproportionate referrals?

- Math emerged as an area that needs to be focused on, could we have a presentation update on revising the Math Curriculum and to support students
- MCAS indicators this is a problem and a challenge
- Appreciated the reminder of the number of AP courses offered
- Could we have a presentation on the funding from Covid and how we are addressing the unfinished learning, could help connect the dots for the community

Ms. Rosmarin

- Questioned about the risk ratio slide, students removed for disciplinary reasons
- Would be helpful to see all on one table
- Grade 3 MCAS scores, recognize the negative impact of the pandemic, we still have so much work to do for our students
- Need to figure out how to bring the scores up, it is a challenge

Ms. White

- Looking at the unfinished learning, as we make our budget request may be helpful to ask how many students have been impacted
- Need to support the students to catch up
- We have a lot of work to do after seeing this data

Chair Eberhardt

- Looking at the data, our systems in place are broken
- It is a collective effort
- Growing as educators

Superintendent Jette made the recommendation to send the link of the presentation to the community. Come back at a later date to answer questions with other members of the faculty.

Chair Eberhardt

- Will be another School Committee to discuss the data

Superintendent Jette

- Courage Conversations Forum - Virtual Meeting December 16, 2021

- b. District Updates
  - Updates will be provided in the Blog

## **5. Citizen Speak (Policy BEDH-15 Minutes)**

None

## **6. Chair's Report - Chair Eberhardt**

- a. Draft 2022-2023 School Year Calendar

Chair Eberhardt commented that the School Committee receives a number of emails with questions about holidays. Will not be voting tonight but should continue to have a conversation about the calendar.

Dr. Carroll

- Calendar list Religious and Cultural Holidays
- Can we merge documents labeling all holidays (even if not time off of school)

Ms. Rosmarin

- Looked at Cambridge Public School Calendar, they do list all holidays with a bottom section listing no school, and early dismissal but also state to be mindful of all students and their observations of religious/cultural holidays

## **7. Finance Subcommittee Report - Dr. Craghead**

- a. FY23 Budget
  - Met on December 7, 2021
  - Superintendent Jette informed us that the Leadership Teams had meetings to prioritize the budget
  - Assistant Superintendent Dexter informed us that she was in the process of putting together the Roll Over Budget
  - Discussed placeholder figure \$68,100 for a teacher when the budget is discussed
  - Now given the recent hires we should be using the placeholder of \$75,000 the \$68,000 is not adequate
  - Basic Rollover of salary increase to budget around 2 million (most of the budget is salary)
    - Includes steps/lane increases
  - Meeting soon to discuss negotiation process, contracts expires in June 2022
  - Increase in Special Education Tuitions
  - Special Education Transportation increase
  - Special Education Curriculum Supplies and Curriculum



- Heat and Utilities increase over 100,000 (built in a basic percentage)
- Need an extra bus (it is a must) estimate cost of \$70,000
- Rollover budget neighborhood of \$3 million dollars
- December 22nd will meet again, Superintendent Jette will present the priority list including all the asks from the schools

b. Approval of Vendor Warrants

Dr. Craghead made a motion to approve Vendor Warrant 24 payable 12/09/21 in the amount of \$324,052.06.

Dr. Craghead made a motion to approve Vendor Warrant 25 payable 12/16/21 in the amount of \$461,189.63.

Second: Ms. White  
Roll Call Vote: 6-0-0

## **8. Policy Subcommittee Report - Dr. Carroll**

a. 1<sup>st</sup> Reading of Policy GCF, Professional Staff Hiring

Ms. Ross Denny

- Representative Screening Committee, should clarify who is involved
- In addition of the background checks, should include looking at someone's digital footprint/internet
- To make sure we fully understand the candidates beyond what is shared with us
- To our benefit that we know the past footprint of candidates we consider (not sure if we need council before making this decision)
- Candidates may have a public profile that could put the district in a position

Chair Eberhardt

- Believes the digital footprint search would need to be discussed with council before adding into the policy

Dr. Carroll asked Superintendent Jette who is involved in the screening committee?

Superintendent Jette replied:

- Unit A members (MEA)
- Administrators
- Parents
- Members of the Leadership Team
- Members of School Committee
- Students

- Associate agreement in place

Dr. Carroll addressed the questions in the community group chat. Suggested community email with any additional questions. Will revisit and vote on the policy at a later date.

## **9. Approval of Minutes**

Chair Eberhardt made a motion to approve School Committee Minutes dated November 17, 2021.

Second: Ms. White

Roll Call Vote: 6-0-0

Chair Eberhardt made a motion to approve the School Committee Minutes dated December 1, 2021.

Second: Dr. Craghead

Roll Call Vote: 6-0-0

## **10. Old Business**

None

## **11. Next Meeting Agenda Items**

Updated

Chair Eberhardt made a motion to adjourn from the School Committee Meeting.

Second: Dr. Craghead

Roll Call Vote: 6-0-0

Meeting adjourned 10:40pm.