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Milford Board of Education

Meeting Minutes
April 8, 2013

Board members present:

Tracy Casey
Suzanne DiBiase
Laura Fetter
George Gensure
Susan Glennon
Dora Kubek
Beverley Pierson
Christopher Saley
Earl Whiskeyman

Administration present:

Dr. Elizabeth Feser
Michael Cummings
James Richetelli
Susan Kelleher

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Milford Board of Education held a board meeting on Monday, April 8, 2013 in the Board Room in the Parsons Complex. Mrs. Casey called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. with the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. STUDENT AND STAFF RECOGNITION

There were two recognitions of the evening.

The first recognition was given to Mrs. Kim Bean, Special Education teacher at Meadowside. Dr. Feser told the board she was pleased to announce that Kim Bean is the recipient of this year's 2013 Teacher Award presented by the Southern Connecticut State University Center of Excellence on Autism Spectrum Disorders and Autism Services and Resources Connecticut. She is committed to the success of each and every student and strives to make every day the best day possible. Kim was selected for this honor based upon her extraordinary efforts, dedication, and time so generously given to support individuals on the spectrum and their families in Connecticut. Kim was recognized at an award ceremony at the Southern Connecticut Lyman Auditorium on March 16th. She thanked Kim for her work with the children in our district and the autistic population.

Dr. Feser then recognized Ms. Rachel Rowley, Social Studies teacher at Jonathan Law. Rachel spearheaded the creation of a new social studies curriculum addressing the events of 9/11 with a team of teachers, district wide. The new curriculum incorporated oral histories, technology and presentations to students in grades 6-12. Rachel was named as a recipient of their 2013 Teacher Award. Rachel was selected by the committee due to her creating this exemplary educational curriculum that helps students understand the impact of September 11, 2001. She attended a ceremony at the Tribute Center and was awarded a \$500 gift for Jonathan Law High School. Dr. Feser thanked Rachel for her work.

III. STUDENT REPORTS

Ratan Manohar & Hayley Soulier reported on the latest activity and upcoming events occurring at Jonathan Law High School. Hamsa Ganapathi and Alexandra Corsi presented the report for Joseph A. Foran High School. Both reports are on file.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Cathy Berni – 96 Centennial Drive – Ms. Berni thanked Dr. Feser, Ms. Glennon and Mrs. Kopazna for their participation in the Career Fair that was sponsored by the PTA Council.

David Chestler – 502 North Street – He has two children in the system. He reminded the board that he submitted a memo to the board. He is new to Milford. He is disturbed by the calendar having school in session on Jewish holidays. He told the board he is Jewish. He left his former town because he attended school on Jewish holidays. While he knows the children will not be penalized for their absence, he wants to add Rosh Hashanah back as a day off from school.

Ms. Novak – Ms. Novak has a daughter at Jonathan Law High School. She believes there will not be any Honors courses that will be offered next year. Her daughter has not taken any Level II courses. She will be forced to take AP courses. Ms. Novak is afraid for her wellbeing and for her health. The Level II students would move onto the AP courses. What will happen then? They will fail. The course selections will not work for her daughter. She also told the board she does not believe some of the teachers are not qualified to teach the courses.

Mrs. Casey asked Mr. Cummings to comment.

Mr. Cummings told her there are few classes offered in AP and Honors. In the past two years, Honors courses have been eliminated and replaced by an AP course. The reason is because the College Board views the Honors courses as a terminal course on the Honors track. Enrollment numbers do not allow the district to run those courses. In the past it has forced cancellations of AP courses to run Honors courses. The disciplines affected are Math and Spanish.

V. CHAIR'S REPORT

Mrs. Casey acknowledged State Representative Mr. Maroney as being in attendance. She then presented him with a plaque for his contributions to the Board of Education.

Mrs. Casey then asked if the board members had any questions regarding the two policies presented for approval (GP-11 & GP-22). She then asked for a motion.

Ms. Glennon made a motion to approve the Governance Policy Board Structure – Committee of the Whole GP-11 as proposed. Ms. DiBiase seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

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Ms. Glennon made a motion to approve the Governance Policy Grievance Hearing GP-22 as proposed. Ms. DiBiase seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Mrs. Casey told the board she is relieved that the language has been changed to reflect that if a quorum is not present at the time a hearing to be held, the hearing can be heard by those present.

Mrs. Casey then introduced the Milford Education Foundation to the board. The Foundation met previously with the Superintendent and the Board Chair. It was then decided that the board hear its mission and vision. She then introduced Emmeline Harrigan to the board. She is currently the City Planner.

Mrs. Harrigan navigated her way through a PowerPoint (on file). She gave the background of the Foundation. The foundation works with the community to promote education. The Foundation hopes that Board of Education will appoint a liaison to the Foundation. She further explained the goals of the Foundation. Fundraising is a big part of the program. The Foundation works with PTAs, business owners and more to fundraise for large initiatives. She told the board the Foundation has a draft mission. The goals would be to become a formal organization and report back to the board.

Mrs. Pierson asked where fundraising would begin.

Mrs. Harrigan told her that being a 503C with a specific initiative to build education would allow them to apply to foundations such as the Bill and Linda Gates. You could fundraise with your alumni list and fundraise within the community as a whole.

Ms. Glennon agreed a stronger education system will make a community better. However, she recalls there is a Milford Public Schools Education Foundation that has the framework in place. It was founded approximately 10 years ago but it never took off. She sat on the board as the PTA Council President. She hopes that person would be included in the Foundation. She directed her attention to some information regarding fundraising. PTA's rely on community fundraising efforts. She does not want there to be a competition in fundraising. In addition, parents always feel like they are being fundraised too much.

Mrs. Harrigan told her that she met with a representative from the State. In fact, the president of PTA Council was present for the meeting. The intent is to have PTA Council participate with the Foundation.

Ms. Glennon told her the local PTA's fundraising is her concern.

Mrs. Casey told the board the Foundation work would be a two-step process. Appointment of an ex-officio and the formal organization of the Foundation would be the second step.

Mrs. Fetter recused herself from the vote.

Ms. Glennon made a motion to appoint an ex-officio to the Milford Education Foundation to work with the grass roots organization. Ms. DiBiase seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Mrs. Casey reported on a meeting that was held with Chief Mello, Dr. Feser, Mr. Richetelli and her on April 2, 2013. At the February Board meeting, Chief Mello discussed the concept of appointing School Resource

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Officers at the schools. In fact, he would like to bring in four. However, funding would need to be available.

Ms. Casey advised the board that the Committee of the Whole meeting on April 22nd will be dedicated to discussion of the School Resource Officers, and their funding needs and will be held at City Hall to accommodate a larger audience. In addition, Mrs. Casey will invite the Board of Aldermen and Mayor Blake to the meeting. She encouraged the board members to share with their respective aldermen to attend the meeting.

She then acknowledged Rabbi Wilhelm was present. While Public Comment had been held earlier in the evening, she asked him if he wanted to say a few words.

Rabbi Wilhelm told the board he has been in conversations with members of the community regarding Rosh Hashanah. He heard that at a previous meeting, it was reported the two Rabbis were in agreement. That is not true. He did have a conversation with Dr. Feser. However, he never indicated that he would support that idea. He further explained that the Superintendent did have a conversation with him but the comment of only three students in the school system was untrue. He also expressed that on behalf of the Jewish members in the community, he feels they should be given the day off so they can visit the synagogue.

Mrs. Casey and Dr. Feser clarified that the administration never stated they had received approval from the Rabbi's. Dr. Feser contacted the Rabbi's to notify them of the intended changes in the calendar.

She then asked to move Item VI.3. up on the agenda.

Mrs. Glennon made a motion to move Item VI.3 up to be discussed next. Ms. DiBiase seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

VI. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Mrs. Casey turned the meeting over to Dr. Feser.

Academic Calendar

Dr. Feser told the board there were 13 cancellations this current school year, and two years ago there were many. Administration has been looking into different options to capture days. A survey was sent to the staff and the parent community. The results were reported at the March business meeting, forwarded them to the staff and posted them on the website.

She then shared some concerns that were raised following the survey. There weren't any comments from parents regarding Rosh Hashanah. However, she did hear from a community member who felt strongly about school being in session on Rosh Hashanah. Three staff members were disappointed that they would need to use a personal day for the day off. She continued to provide the concerns.

Following the review of the results and the comments, Dr. Feser made the following changes to the calendar.

December 20th will be a full day.

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January 29th will be an early release day instead of January 22nd so there would not be an early release day in the same week as a dedicated day off (Martin Luther King Day).

She then told the board members that being in school on Rosh Hashanah was not intended to disrespect or diminish the Jewish faith. She also told the board that she never told the board or the public that the Rabbi's agreed with her decision, but that they did understand. She also told the board she was not aware of the discontentment of anyone regarding Rosh Hashanah until now.

Mrs. Casey told the public that the board has been discussing the calendar for some time. The language was recently changed because of the cancellations. The board has continually heard from parents about the kids not being in school for a full week. They have expressed their concerns many times to the board.

Mr. Saley told the board that a lot of the work that was to be done over the February and April vacations was not going to be completed. Looking at the calendar, would it be better to start after Labor Day to give the project the time needed to be completed?

Mrs. Casey asked if the Permanent Schools Facilities Committee asked if school could be delayed.

Dr. Feser told the board it was not the purpose of the conversation. They were just asking "What If?" It is premature. Their deadline is to have the schools open by the August 28th.

Mrs. Casey told the board she received a letter from the Building Project Manager to that affect.

Ms. Glennon asked if there could be a contingency plan for one school not being ready for the opening day. She was told yes.

Mr. Saley told the board it would be helpful for the construction company to have that time.

Ms. Glennon wanted to address students who would want to take off a day from school to observe a religious holiday. Does the school district have anything in place?

Dr. Feser told her there would not be a penalty. Projects would not be due on that date. Presentations would not be given.

Ms. Glennon told the board she is approaching it from a business approach. If a large number of staff were to take off, substitutes would be needed.

Board discussion ensued.

Mrs. Casey reminded board members the conversation goes back to September. Labor Day, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur fall in the month of September. The intent was to capture days. She further told the board that she had a conversation with her deacon. His advice was to ensure the students have the opportunity to take off to observe their holiday or be given the opportunity to pray. The calendar is based on the majority of the days students follow.

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Mr. Gensure reiterated the calendar reflects feedback provided from the survey. He agrees Dr. Feser did not mean any harm. Having a state calendar would of course eliminate these discussions.

Ms. Glennon made a motion to approve the 2013-14 Academic Calendar as presented by administration. Ms. DiBiase seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

High School Graduation Dates

Mr. Cummings gave the history of reviewing options of holding graduations on different days. Research was done to hold the graduations at the same time on the same day at a different venue. The recommendation is to hold graduation on two separate days, June 20th and June 21st at 5:15 p.m.

Ms. Glennon made a motion to hold the high school graduations on June 20th and June 21st. Ms. DiBiase seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Mrs. Casey then read a letter announcing that Jonathan Law will be graduating on June 20th and Foran will graduate on June 21st.

Teacher and Administrator Evaluation Plan

Mr. Cummings reminded the board that discussions and presentations have been given to keep the board up to date on the evaluation plan. The administration and a committee have worked on the district's plan for two years. In January, the administration submitted the plan to the state. The state recommended a few changes be made. A revision was made to reflect that there will be two unannounced 15 minute and one announced 30 minute tenured observations a year. The plan will now be submitted to the State for approval. In addition, the administrator's will be using the State's model. Before submitting the plans, they need to be approved by the board.

Mrs. Casey asked Mr. Cummings to remind the board how many non-tenure observations. He told the board non tenured means less than 4 years of employment. 3 Full length and during the 4 years there are a variety of announced and unannounced observations.

Ms. Glennon made a motion to approve the MPS Professional Learning and Teacher Effectiveness and Performance Evaluation Plan with required revisions, and the use of the CSDE Administrator Evaluation Plan. Ms. DiBiase seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Budget Quarterly Report

Mr. Richetelli updated the board on the financials. He reminded the board the budget is monitored daily. The year will end with a balanced budget. He then reported a few accounts that may be of question. Account 1127 – Overtime salaries currently overspent due to Hurricane Sandy and Blizzard Nemo and security projects. Summer projects caused staff to work overtime to ready schools for opening day. Funds from the certified teachers salaried accounts and certified administrators will be used to balance the difference.

He then told the board outside contractors needed to be hired to assist with snow removal causing contracted services to be overspent. In addition, account 3505 is overspent due to installing security cameras. He told the board the district has applied through the State of Connecticut to FEMA since much of those costs are were caused by the hurricane. About 75% of the costs should be reimbursed. \$37,000 of the transportation

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account is overspent due to students who were displaced from the hurricane. The expectation is to be reimbursed for those costs.

He then reported the Cynergistic account continues to find savings. Therefore, the energy account has a surplus.

Transportation Study

Mr. Richetelli told the board that he has exhausted his efforts of trying to find savings with the transportation account. He then navigated a PowerPoint that gave the background before selecting an independent consultant to conduct a transportation audit of the district (on file). Three firms were interviewed and the decision was made to choose TAS. He provided the proposed timeline to the board. He further explained he spoke with some districts in Connecticut who used TAS. The districts were notified of situations that could provide long term savings.

Mrs. Casey asked if the reasons for using TAS were the same as Milford's. She was told yes.

Mr. Saley asked Mr. Richetelli if they were aware of the diesel issue where the district could have substantial savings if another location was found.

Mr. Richetelli told the board it would be part of the study in some way.

Ms. Glennon made a motion to authorize administration to move forward with hiring a consultant for the Transportation Study. Ms. DiBiase seconded. After a roll call vote, the motion passed 8-2 (Glennon/Pierson)

Transportation Policy

Mr. Richetelli explained the policy revision is a first read. The revisions are in line with the State laws and guidelines. In working with legal counsel, the administration is recommending the terminology use of severe be changed to hazardous condition.

Ms. Glennon asked for clarification of #9. The judgment solely rests with the Board of Education or should it be changed to ultimately. She was told the administration acts as agents of the board of education.

Mrs. Casey asked why in number 6 is the language "board of education" used? Maybe it should read "board of education or its designee". She also asked Mr. Richetelli to ask the attorney for specific language to prevent any confusion.

Mrs. Fetter asked if the miles per hour were provided from the state. She was told yes. However, he will review them with Attorney Holcomb.

Mrs. Casey asked if the state guidelines should be in the policy or should they be added under legal reference? It may be better served if the policy referenced them.

A conversation ensued.

Mr. Richetelli told her the only problem is that is a template and not a “state” guideline even though the reference is a state recommendation.

Human Resources Report

Mrs. Kopazna gave the Human Resources Report for the month of March. She told the board, in addition to the openings, anticipated openings have been posted.

Mrs. Kelleher also reported the district is very close to hiring a behaviorist.

VII. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

Ms. Glennon made a motion to approve Consent Agenda items 1-3 Ms. DiBiase seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Richetelli noted the ed specifications submitted were for the Foran project and not Law.

Ms. Glennon made a motion to rescind her motion to approve Consent Agenda items 1-3 Ms. DiBiase seconded. She then removed her second. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Glennon made a motion to approve Consent Agenda items 1-3

1. Disbursement Report
2. Acceptance of the Joseph A. Foran High School Roof Replacement project
(State Project #084-0184)
3. Consideration of Minutes
 - a. March 11, 2013 Business Meeting
 - b. March 25, 2013 Committee of the Whole

Ms. DiBiase seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

None.

XI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

IX. BOARD COMMENT

X. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Glennon made a motion to adjourn. Ms. DiBiase seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Approved

Pam Griffin
Recording Secretary

Ms. Susan Glennon
Corresponding Secretary