

Milford Board of Education Regular Business Meeting Minutes May 10, 2010

Board members present:

David Amendola
Tracy Casey
Suzanne DiBiase
Diane Kruger-Carroll
Josip Jukic
Jack O'Connell
Greg Oliver
Mark Stapleton
Jay Tranquilli
Robert White

Administrators present:

Michael Cummings, Acting Superintendent
Philip Russell, Deputy Superintendent
Wendy Kopazna, Director of Human Resources
Sue Kelleher, Director of Pupil Personnel

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Milford Board of Education held a regular business meeting on Monday, May 10, 2010, in the Auditorium of the Jonathan Law High School. Chairman Stapleton called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance immediately following.

II. STUDENT AND STAFF RECOGNITION

Mr. Cummings recognized three groups at the meeting. They were:

Community Service Award: Two sisters raised more than \$10,000 fundraising for the March for Babies. Anna Malin, a third grader at Mathewson was presented the Trevor Palonen Award for raising \$10,000 for the March of Dimes. He sister, Ellie, began her fundraising efforts last year at Pumpkin Delight. She recruited help from the entire kindergarten classes at Pumpkin.

Milford Young Women's Club Annual Youth Creative Writing Contest: Three students from Milford placed out of 300 entries. The contest was divided in two categories: poetry and short stories. The exact placement of students is not known at this time. However, they will find out at a reception being held later in the week. The following students will be attending the reception:

Caroline Booth, 6th Grader, Harborside
Stephany Acero, 6th Grader, Harborside
Arunika Shee, 2nd Grader, Meadowside

Milford Junior Woman's Club Spelling Bee: The 26th Annual City-Wide Spelling Bee took place on March 5th. Over 20 contestants competed. Sarah Dempsey of Pumpkin Delight, placed third. Amity Sastry of Harborside won 1st place. Amity won 1st place last year as well.

III. CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

- a) Mr. White made a motion to accept the April 5, 2010 meeting minutes as approved. Mr. Amendola seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
- b) Mr. White made a motion to accept the April 26, 2010 meeting minutes as approved. Mr. Amendola seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. STUDENT REPORTS

Kevin McFadden and Courtney Murray reported on the latest activity and upcoming events occurring at Jonathan Law High School. Shenali Parikh and Dylan Leonard presented the report for Joseph A. Foran High School. Both reports are on file.

V. CHAIR'S REPORT

APPROVED

Chairman Stapleton told the board that he continues to attempt to meet with the MEA to discuss the budget issues. He also updated the board on the superintendent search. He told the board that the board secretary will copy all information received from search firms and distribute it to the board.

Mr. White reported that the Permanent School Board has signed an agreement with the architect to start designing the elevator for Pumpkin Delight.

Mrs. Kruger-Carroll updated the board on an event titled "Spearheading". The Milford Health Department, The Milford Police, Milford Public Schools and Milford Hospital will host a forum on teen and youth motor vehicle safety.

VI. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

1. Instructional Report

Mr. Cummings took a moment to update the board on the status of lacrosse. He and Mr. Russell have been in discussion with the parents. The parents have a very strong proposal including no cost to the Milford Public Schools for the first year. More information is needed. He will continue dialogue with them and report back to the board. Mr. Cummings said that he hopes to update the board on the high school reform which includes expanding the athletics program at a future meeting.

Mr. Cummings then gave a PowerPoint presentation (attached) which gave an explanation of the new elementary school configuration and the history of what drove his decision to propose the plan. He began working on options even before the Board of Finance voted to cut the budget by \$2.2M. He further said the stimulus money runs out next year. That, coupled with the BOF cut warranted him to "think out of the box." He told the board that he appreciated being given that opportunity. He, again, explained the top four plans that were put forth for consideration. He explained how the K-2/3-5 structure will enhance the elementary curriculum. By splitting the levels as he proposes, specialists will be located at each school. The teachers will be able to collaborate within buildings. Of great importance, this plan keeps children and friends together making the transition easier for all.

Mrs. Kruger-Carroll asked if administration has been in contact with the other school districts to seek their input. Mr. Cummings said yes.

Mr. Cummings told her there are pros and cons to the plan but it can be very beneficial to the educational experience. He then said that the district cannot afford to wait until next year.

2. Operations Report

Personnel Report

Mrs. Kopazna reported the listing of job openings, as well as the personnel changes for April, 2010.

Budget Report

Mr. Russell presented the Budget Performance Report for April 30, 2010, as well as the Cash Disbursements Report. He explained the report and the series of accounts to the board. He told the board the 3302 account, Negotiation Services, is over by \$79,000. He then recommended a transfer of \$80,000 from 4101, Heat Energy, Gas, to 3302. He will continue to monitor the account. He then reported 96.5% of the budget has been encumbered.

VII. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

Mr. White asked for a motion to approve consent agenda items a - c. Mr. Amendola seconded.

The consent agenda included two items this month. These were:

- a. Voucher List (Disbursements): Administration recommends approval of the Disbursement report. (EL-6, EL-7)
- b. Budget Transfers: Administration recommends approval of the budget transfer in the amount of \$80,000 from account 4101 (Heat Energy) to 3302 (Negotiations-Legal Services)
- c. Use of Facilities: Administration recommends approval of the Cornerstone Christian Center to use Jonathan Law High School for religious services from July 4, 2010 – June 26, 2011 and December 11 and 18, 2010, April 16 and 23, and June 8, 2011.

APPROVED

The motion passed unanimously.

VIII. ACTION ITEMS

- a. Unfinished Business
None
- b. New Business

Mr. White made a motion to approve the agreement for the resolution of negotiations for a successor collective bargaining agreement with the Milford Federation of Paraeducators. Mr. Amendola seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. White made a motion to approve that the Jonathan Law Track be named after two coaches; Mr. Linwood Schulte and Mr. Charles Phillips.

Mrs. Garagliano read the recommendation letters (on file) supporting both Mr. Schulte and Mr. Phillips.

The motion passed unanimously.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT

Stacy Godek – Mary Ellen Drive – She was supportive of the plan in the beginning. However, time has allowed her to rethink her decision. Census data will be available soon. Why not wait until the census data comes out? She also pointed out that this is being done way too fast. How will the grade three teachers have time to collaborate with grade two teachers under the new plan. More importantly, there will be a new superintendent hired in January.

Cathy Berni – 96 Centennial Drive – She said that Mr. Cummings continues to do a wonderful job. The reality is the money is not there. It will be the same in years to come. This is a well thought out long term opportunity to not only bridge the budget shortfall, but to add to the education experience. She supports the plan.

Name Unknown – 45 Cynthia Drive – His wife is a PTA president. He told the board when he bought his house; he could see the school that his children would be attending. He also said that in 2014, the enrollment numbers will be down. How will you close a school with the K2/35 structure? Would you close two schools? He believes the board should wait until the new superintendent is hired.

Nathan Blair – 80 New Haven Avenue – He is part of a group called Save Our Schools. The group has researched the budget and the presented Plan 4. There are many hidden costs in Plan 4 that Mr. Cummings has not included. Therefore, the savings is not enough to bridge the budget gap. He also said the housing market will be affected by the closing of a neighborhood school. He urged the board to review the materials carefully and discuss another alternative.

Name Unknown – This gentleman told the board he is disappointed that the 5% MEA increase equates to about the same as the 2.2M shortfall. He also said that he is uncomfortable putting his child on a bus. He asked the board to wait until the new superintendent is hired. Let that person make the decision for the district.

Tom Acri – Mr. Acri is a parent and an educator in Milford. As an educator, he asked the board what their K-5 experience was like. The older children mentored the younger ones. That has been known to help the development of children. He also told the board that the teachers union elected to take a pay freeze four years ago.

Jennifer Frederico – Breakneck Lane – She asked the board to wait until next year to implement the plan. This will allow the time needed and the new superintendent will be on board. She also said the Board of Aldermen and the Board of Education should fully fund/support the budget. This will allow the parent's time to build a consensus. She then reminded the board it is not what you pass, it is how you pass it.

Terri Gardone – 12 North Street – Ms. Gardone said the children should be talking about the end of the school year. They should be excited about the summer. They are not. Instead they are wondering where they will be going to school. The parents can

APPROVED

come up with ideas to make it work, but they need time. She recently attended a bullying seminar. She said the kids need to feel safe. She doesn't believe this is the right thing to do at this time. Please wait one year.

Jeff Foxon – 145 Platt Street – He has shared his concerns with the Board of Aldermen. He does not understand the savings. Nor does he understand Plan 4. He urged the Board to look at the Ansonia school district. They went to this plan and it failed. They are going back to the old structure. Test scores dropped. Please do not vote for Plan 4.

Joe Prisco – Mr. Prisco supports the plan. He hopes Mr. Cummings accepts the superintendent position. He is good for the district.

Debbie French – 271 Baxter Lane – She has two kids. One will be a walker, one will be a bused. How will this work? It's true that Ansonia went back to K-5 structure because their test scores dropped. Please reconsider.

Mark – 15 Lively Drive - He would like to know how each board member feels, publicly.

Nick Deveny – He is a student at JFK. He said if the board needs to save 2.2M, the he feels Plan 4 is then best plan. He is not afraid to go to a new school because his friends will travel with him. He told the board he supports the plan.

Cheri Waters – 7th Avenue – She moved to Milford last year, from Maine. She chose her home because of Simon Lake and Mr. Busca. Mr. Busca came in over the summer and walked her entire family around the school. They fell in love. Now what happens to family communities? They will be destroyed. Please do not vote for Plan 4.

Chris Saley – 19 Marsh Street – He has 2 children at Simon Lake. He said it is a shame that these discussions did not take place in September. He agreed everyone wants small classes. He also noted that 73% of the budget is spent on teacher's salaries. He listed some examples of savings and asked the board to come up with some long term ideas.

Barbara Genovese – Ms. Genovese is a former Majority Leader for the Board of Aldermen. She told the board that the citizens are not having their say in this. Children need more stability. Change is not good for children. She also said the bond rate has dropped in Milford. That is not what we, as a community, want. She also expressed her disappointment that the board is continuing to spend \$700,000 for Milford children to learn Spanish. Why?

Kathy Gage – Ms. Gage read a prepared statement (on file).

Bob Nunno – Mr. Nunno is a parent and an educator in Milford. He feels the Board of Aldermen and the Board of Education are to represent the people. The 2.2M should be restored in the budget. He urged everyone to talk to their aldermen and ask them to restore the money.

Rocco Frank – Mr. Frank told the board that Milford is not unique. Many school districts are in the same predicament. Many are restructuring. You read it in the paper every day. Nobody wants to see the City in the state it is in, but this is the nature of the economy. You have to be creative and develop long term savings goals. He told the board that Mr. Cummings has done that. While it is not the best plan for the parents, it will help the education of the children while saving money. He supports the plan.

Andrea Feher – 179 River Cliff Drive – She told the board she went through the redistricting of River Cliff four years ago. The board proposed it, the families disputed it and in the end it did not happen. In the end, everything was fine. She urged the board to take the time needed to come up with a long term plan.

Name Unknown – 16 Devonshire Road – He is a fourth grader. His brother is a kindergartner. He does not like Plan 4 because he should be going to school where he lives. He also thinks the bus rides will be too long and stress kids out. They will not be able to learn because they will be stressed out. That is not good.

Name Unknown – This person said she came from a different country. She said that Simon Lake is the last school in Devon. Families will not move there because there is no school.

Name Unknown – 55 Wilcox Street – He is concerned about the before and after school program. He asked the board to please look into the program at Simon Lake which is different than the other schools.

APPROVED

Name Unknown – 121 Lenox Avenue – He is a parent of a 2nd and 4th grader. He appreciates what Mr. Cummings is trying to do. He has asked the Board of Aldermen to restore the money. He asked the board to table this for a year.

Name Unknown – Joy Avenue – He is a parent of a Simon Lake student. The before and after care program at Simon Lake provides breakfast and snacks. The program is run by adults. Will that be the case at the new school?

Lucille Casey – 57 Morris Lane – She believes the Board of Aldermen should restore the money.

X. BOARD COMMENT

Mrs. Casey updated the board on the request she made to the Board of Education and the Board of Aldermen to meet and discuss the budget. She hopes the two boards will be able to meet soon.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Stapleton asked for a motion to adjourn.

Mr. White made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Amendola seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Robert White
Corresponding Secretary

Pam Griffin
Recording Secretary