

MILFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION
Regular Business Meeting
September 10, 2007

Chair Kopazna called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance. She asked everyone to remain standing for a moment of silence in memory of Milford educators who passed away over the summer and for our fallen soldiers and the soldiers who continue to fight the war on terror.

Board Members Present

Mr. D. Amendola
Mr. D. Hourigan
Mrs. C. Kopazna
Mr. S. Marlow
Mrs. D. Mead
Mrs. C. Nihart
Mrs. J. Rohrig
Dr. M. Stapleton

Absent (excused)

Mrs. P. Staneski

Director of Human Resources Mrs. Wendy Kopazna introduced the new teachers for the 2007-08 school year. She also introduced Ms. Kim Planas, Supervisor Special Education, and Ms. Joan Mancini, President of the Milford Education Association, (MEA).

Consideration of Minutes

Mr. Amendola and Mr. Cavallaro made and seconded a motion to accept the minutes of the meeting of August 20, 2007. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

Joan Mancini – Introduced herself to the board as the new MEA president.

Mike Taylor – 340 W. Harbor Road – Thanked the board for the work done over the summer. He noted the CAPT test scores are considerably lower at Law than Foran. He also finds it disturbing why girls are scoring lower than boys in the College Board results. He said the English department may want to get something more gender neutral than “*The Secret Life of Bees*”. He also pointed out that 38 new laptops are noted in the budget expenditures for the month and wanted to know where those computers would be used.

Mike Selvaggi – Milford Point Road. See the attached.

Greta Stanford – Spicebush Lane – Thanked the chair for recognizing the fallen soldiers of 9/11. Two of her former students were killed then. She asked how

many of the 106 Kindergarten students at Pumpkin Delight were from the Mathewson area.

Kathy Berni – 99 Centennial Dr. - She asked if the fundraising forms had been sent to PTAs. She also asked why some schools are entitled to receive Title 1 funding.

Marie Capiris – Parent of a Foran student. She is impressed with the wealth of information on the Milford Food Services website.

Chair's Report

Chair Kopazna announced the “Bridges to the Board” link is up and running. This is a new feature on the Milford Public Schools website that allows administration to provide answers to questions raised during a board meeting. Answers to these questions will be uploaded to the website the day after the meeting. She thanked Mrs. Bonetti for facilitating this space on the website.

Chair Kopazna said that she and other board members attended Opening Day and it was well received. She thanked the municipal leaders and board members who attended.

Chair Kopazna reported that the CABA/CAPPS Convention will be held in Mystic on November 16-17. She and Dr. Polansky will meet to determine how many spots should be reserved for Milford BOE members and administration.

Additionally, the Greenwich Board of Education is another district that currently uses the policy governance structure.

She then turned the meeting over to Dr. Polansky for the Student Reports.

Student Reports

Bob Viscardi of Jonathan Law High School and Marty Paige of Joseph A. Foran High School were present and gave the student reports.

Superintendent's Report

Before delivering the Superintendent's Report, Dr. Polansky stated that Title 1 funding is based on a school community's demographics and the parents of students enrolled in the “Free and Reduced” lunch program. Milford receives \$300,000 a year for this program, which is used to support students in math and literacy.

Further, he stated with regard to fundraising forms, they had been distributed to all building administrators prior to the start of the school year.

Dr. Polansky said the opening of schools was great. He commended all teachers and administrators for making it seamless.

He announced there will be a Citywide 9/11 observance which will be held at City Hall on September 11, 2007 at 6 p.m.

Dr. Polansky then updated the board on his attendance at the Relay for Life event at Jonathan Law over the weekend. There was an outstanding turnout of students.

He also noted that he has been in contact with the superintendent of Greenwich and he will facilitate a meeting with her to discuss policy governance.

Instructional Report

Mr. Michael Cummings, principal of Joseph A. Foran High School and Mrs. Janet Garagliano, principal of Jonathan Law High School, reported on the latest results of Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT). CAPT scores are reported in five levels: Advanced, Goal, Proficient, Basic and Below Basic. Proficient is the range supported by the No Child Left Behind legislation. In Milford, tenth grade students have recorded excellent scores relating to those who are classified as proficient and above. However, more work is needed to improve scores in other grades.

Mr. Cummings stated all 9th grade students also take the CAPT test, as a way to practice and become familiar with the test format. Early research indicates that the student's score in 9th grade is a strong predictor of what his/her score will be in 10th grade. Mr. Cummings believes this information will help staff identify areas that a student may need to work on in preparing for the 10th grade administration of the exam.

Mrs. Garagliano added that CAPT scores, statewide have generally declined compared to last year's scores. Milford's scores were flat. She also noted that every child takes the test, including those who have a cognitive disability or English language challenge.

Mr. Hourigan asked absenteeism plays a factor in scores.

Dr. Stapleton asked if Milford's percentage of English Language Learners was becoming a factor in our ultimate scores; Dr. Polansky confirmed this.

Mr. Hourigan asked if the duration of sitting for the exam was a problem. Mr. Cummings stated the CAPT test is 2 1/2 hours long, and should be addressed as a concern at the state level.

Dr. Polansky said that due to the enormity of the information that can be taken from the CAPT results report, a more in depth discussion on the scores will take place at the Committee of the Whole meeting later this month.

SAT Results Report

Assistant Superintendent, Mr. Kevin Ryan said we have increased the percentage of students taking the SAT test. He noted this is the second year that the SAT included the writing component. Mr. Ryan reported 394 students in the class of 2007 took the SAT test. Milford scored just under the national average in reading, math and writing. Foran's scores were higher than Law.

Dr. Polansky said some districts limit who takes the SAT test. If you limit who takes the test, you can drive your scores. Milford encourages lots of kids to take the test from a wide variety of abilities. The trend from 2002 to 2007 shows they are all within line. He told the board this would be discussed in more detail at a future meeting.

Enrollment Report

Mr. Ryan reported the numbers for enrollment as of September 6, 2007. He noted there were two large size classes causing concern; a kindergarten at Calf Pen Meadow and a kindergarten at Orchard Hills share a paraprofessional.

Dr. Polansky stated that classes with over 20 students would need to have a full time paraprofessional added to classroom staff.

Athletics

While the board thanked Mr. Ryan for the update of the current athletic participation figures, numbers are needed from last year to make a comparison. After a brief review of the athletics report, it was tabled for a further meeting.

Dr. Polansky told the board we are at 40% participation currently.

Mr. Hourigan asked if there are enough players for JV and varsity.

Dr. Polansky told him we have enough for varsity. He will need to research the junior varsity numbers.

Pumpkin Delight Update

Pumpkin Delight Principal Vince Scarpetti said the school's Opening Day went smoothly. With the exception of one bus route that needs to be re-evaluated, the transition was well received by parents.

Summer Curriculum Projects

Supervisor of Curriculum Mrs. Carol Malone noted that a great deal of work had been conducted on common assessments at the middle and high school levels. An in-depth analysis was also conducted on CMT achievement as well as Advanced Placement work.

Summer Review of Professional Development

Professional Learning Coordinator Mrs. Gail Krois then gave a report of the summer progress of professional development, as well as her 2007-2008 plan for the district. She explained how the program supports the district goals as well as the National Staff Development Council standards. Professional development is transforming from teacher instruction to student learning. Sources of data which help determine the professional development program include the AIP, Performance Promises, Connecticut's Framework, Common Core of Learning, CMT & CAPT, and No Child Left Behind Legislature.

Personnel Report

Mrs. W. Kopazna reported 47 new teachers had been hired. Due to a late resignation, there is an opening for a special education teacher. The long term substitute teacher needs are being addressed.

She noted MEA negotiations continue.

Mrs. Kopazna then delivered the Human Resources Year End Report. She explained the main responsibilities of her department and what was involved in the process. Responsibilities include: staffing, employee benefits, labor/employee relations, policies, employee services, training, record keeping and research. Some highlights mentioned were:

- The department posted 206 open positions from September 1, 2007 to August 30, 2007

- 2,578 applications were processed

- Three union contracts were negotiated

Operations Report

Mr. Russell gave the Budget Performance Report as of August 30, 2007. He noted the electricity account is below budget. He has accounted for 22 teacher retirements that are expected.

He then asked Mr. Bradbury to report on summer projects.

Although the board had a list of all completed projects, Mr. Bradbury shared a PowerPoint presentation "before and after" photos of some of the school projects. The highlighted projects included the extensive work done at Pumpkin Delight, Simon Lake, Jonathan Law, Calf Pen Meadow, JFK, Joseph A. Foran and Harborside. Completed projects that were done included fencing, heating, major asbestos work and driveway improvements.

Mr. Russell reported there were 123 bus runs with 61 buses. All buses have cameras on them thanks to the work of Senator Gayle Slossberg. All Pumpkin Delight bus runs went smoothly.

He reported the citywide enumeration process will begin with letters being sent the week of September 24, 2007. The letter will have a card with a return date of

October 15, 2007. The goal is to get a return rate of 75% - 90%. Data will be processed in mid-November.

Mrs. Rohrig asked if there was a plan to raise the return percentage.

Mr. Russell stated that door-to-door and/or phone survey would be the next step.

Consent Agenda Items

Chair Kopazna called for a motion on the Consent Agenda Items.

Mr. Cavallaro asked to move consent agenda item #2 "Suspension Policy" to new business.

Mr. Amendola made a motion and Mrs. Mead seconded the motion to approve Consent Agenda Item 1.

1. Voucher List Disbursements - Administration recommends approval of the Disbursement report. (EL-6, EL-7)

Motion passed unanimously.

New Business

Mr. Amendola made a motion and Mrs. Mead seconded the motion to approve the administrations recommended changes to the Administrative Policy "5114 Suspension"

Mr. Cavallaro asked if the dress code policy is enforced. He was told yes.

Mr. Amendola asked if there was a position for an in-school monitor.

Dr. Polansky said he would survey the schools and report back to the board.

Motion passed unanimously.

Board Comment

Mr. Amendola said year after year Mr. Selvaggi asked for every Board member, staff and legal counsel to resign.

Mr. Hourigan would like the chair to add that all cell phones be turned off during the meeting.

Mr. Marlow thanked the teachers and administrators for all of their hard work.

Mrs. Nihart asked the following statement to be added to the minutes.

I would like to apologize publicly for my vote more than a year ago to eliminate the Vocational Agricultural program from the school budget – a vote based solely on the recommendation of Administration.

The information that the Administration gave the Board was inaccurate and incomplete: specifically that Milford Public Schools could provide the same education and that the Vo-Ag students “just wanted a Fairfield County diploma.” I heard these comments 2-3 times each and will swear to it under oath. You can’t make it up.

Compounding this poor decision, Administration failed to notify parents, students and Guidance counselors that Vo-Ag would be dropped until more than a year later, when it was impossible for families to make other arrangements.

How can we call ourselves “Best of Class” when we cannot serve the best and brightest in our school system?

I was not elected to this Board to rubber stamp recommendations of Administration, nor to cover up their failings. If not for the recently elected Board members, there would have been no change at all in the past two years. With all the talk of accountability, I have yet to hear one apology from Board leadership or Administration in 2 years. Instead of shouldering responsibility, they have blamed parents, students, previous administrators, previous Board members, No Child Left Behind, the budget, and the state. I hope this situation will change in the future.

Certainly we can fund Vo-Ag if we could suddenly find \$300K to cut from the budget and return more than \$200k to the City. Although we may be within our legal rights to eliminate the program, we have damaged our school district and the public trust. I would like to see Vo-Ag reinstated. It’s the only right thing to do.

Chair Kopazna asked for a motion to adjourn.

Being no further business to discuss, a motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Amendola and seconded by Mrs. Mead. The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 10:10P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

David Amendola
Minority Leader

Recorded by:

Pam Griffin