

MILFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION
Regular Business Meeting
October 9, 2007

Mrs. Staneski called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Board Members Present

Mr. M. Cavallaro
Mr. D. Hourigan
Mr. S. Marlow
Mrs. D. Mead
Mrs. C. Nihart
Mrs. J. Rohrig
Mrs. P. Staneski

Absent (excused)

Mr. D. Amendola
Mrs. C. Kopazna
Dr. M. Stapleton

Mrs. Staneski announced that she will chair the meeting in Mrs. C. Kopazna's absence. She then asked that all cellular phones be turned off.

Consideration of Minutes

Mr. Hourigan and Mr. Cavallaro made and seconded a motion to accept the minutes of the meeting of September 10, 2007. Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Hourigan and Mr. Cavallaro made and seconded a motion to accept the minutes of the meeting of September 24, 2007. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

David Tomasco – 182 Cedarhurst Lane – He passed out packets to the board containing information on the VoAg program. He then explained the documentation presented dating back to January. He noted that a \$35,000 grant has been offered to administration to allow the students to go to the Trumbull VoAg program for this year. While he understands the statute, he and others believe it is flawed and it needs to be fixed. The law could be changed next year, but that will be too late for the students who were accepted into the program this year.

Mr. Tomasco then told the board the State Department of Education supports the program. He concluded by asking the board to accept the grant money to send the kids to the Trumbull VoAg program.

Jim Santa Barbara – 31 Hitching Post Lane – Supports the VoAg program.

Jack Fowler - 50 Pine Knobb Terrace - He told the board that two years ago he had the mis-fortune of being the Chairman of the Milford Republican Town

Committee. At that time, he tried to engage people to run for republican office. He asked Cathy Nihart to run for the Board of Education. He commended Cathy for her service and honesty.

Mike Taylor – 340 W. Harbor Road – He thinks that the High School tutorial program is a great idea. He questioned the cash disbursements of \$25,000 for transporting children from Shelton to Milford and \$11,000 to be spent on “walkie talkies”.

Susan Feher – 348 Housatonic Drive – She commends the students for their efforts of supporting the VoAg program. She told the board to think outside of the box with respect to enumeration. Children do not like to be shuffled around. She offered the idea of having a central pre-k and kindergarten program.

Greta Stanford – 32 Spice Bush Lane – She commended the people who spoke on behalf of VoAg. She then told the board that she has spoken to parents of Pumpkin Delight kindergartners and they are reporting longer bus times than promised.

Mike Blanchard – 333 Merwin Avenue – He supports the VoAg program. He asked the board to do what it takes to allow the students to go to the program.

Kathy Berni – 96 Centennial Drive – Pre-school was affected by the kindergarten move. She asked the board to research all programs when doing the enumeration project.

Elizabeth Tomasco – 182 Cedarhurst Lane – She asked the board to make the decision quickly. She also said that if she graduates from Foran; she has a 25% chance of going to a vet college. If she goes to VoAg, she will have a 50% of going.

Tracy Casey – Amber Lane – She asked the board to consider the VoAg request.

Chair's Report

Mrs. Staneski said that the Connecticut Association of Boards of Election (CABE) will conduct its annual convention on November 16 and 17. Chair Kopazna and Dr. Polansky will arrange for board members to attend. The notification will be made after the election.

Mrs. Staneski reported she had attended the Milford's Promise Red Wagon Fair. She commended Mrs. Bonetti for her efforts coordinating and working the event.

Mrs. Staneski then reported that the Milford Education Funding Committee had met with Deputy Superintendent Philip Russell and State Representative Paul Davis. The discussion focused on the Educational Cost Sharing formula. A public forum will be held in November. More information to come.

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

Student Reports

None.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Polansky began his report with a review of the events that had taken place over the past year relating the Trumbull Vocational Agriscience program. He reported that Dr. Mark Stapleton (Connect State Department of Education) concurred with Milford's interpretation of the post-June passage of the education law regarding vocational facility access. This presentation calls for determining a three-year average of the total number of Milford students who had attended the Trumbull program and the Bridgeport Aquaculture program. The resulting average then becomes the total number of students Milford would be required to send to the district's supported vocational program(s). According to state law, school districts are only required to support one vocational agriculture or aquaculture program. In Milford's case, the program supported by the district is the Bridgeport Aquaculture program. As a result, Milford is absolved from sending students to Trumbull and, instead, is allowed to send all of its vocational agriculture/aquaculture students to Bridgeport. Dr. Polansky reminded the board that cost difference between the two schools is significant.

Dr. Polansky reported Speaker of the House James Amann had indicated in recent newspaper articles that he was confident he could present Milford with a \$35,000 grant to pay for a number of students to attend the Trumbull Vo-Ag program.

Mrs. Staneski noted that there is nothing in writing. Therefore, the board can not take action.

There was discussion about the process of adding items to the agenda. The board decided a recess was necessary.

Mr. Cavallaro made a motion to recess at 7:45 p.m. and Mr. Marlow seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Mrs. Staneski called the meeting back in order at 8:00 p.m. She told the board that 2/3 majority vote is needed to add an item to the agenda.

Mr. Cavallaro made a motion to add item 8.1 to new business. 8.1 – acceptance of the \$35,000 from Speaker Amann for 5 students to attend VoAg. Mrs. Nihart seconded.

Mrs. Rohrig asked that the motion be reworded for clarity.

Mrs. Nihart removed her second.

Mr. Cavallaro removed his motion.

Mr. Cavallaro then made a motion to add under new business, to accept the Speaker of the House's offer of \$35,000 in support of five students attending the Trumbull VoAg program for one year. Mrs. Nihart seconded the motion. Motion passed 7-0.

Mrs. Staneski then told the board a 2/3 majority vote is needed to reorder the agenda.

Mr. Hourigan made a motion to move new business to Superintendent's Items, after item A. Mr. Marlow seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Dr. Polansky reminded the board that the \$35,000 is only for the current year. The program is a four year program. It will require funding.

Mr. Cavallaro asked what administration would need to do if the decision was made to accept the \$35,000 grant.

Dr. Polansky told him that all eleven students who were originally accepted to the program would need to be notified. Only five would be able to attend. Trumbull would have to make that decision.

Mrs. Nihart said that other districts allow their students to participate in the program. If allowed to attend this year, that would give people time to relocate if necessary.

Mr. Marlow said the board needs to look at the whole picture.

Dr. Polansky told the board that fundamentally it is wrong to shift the kids. They have already begun programs in their home schools.

Mr. Marlow emphasized he is having a hard time with this decision. The board is not making a commitment to the program the way the motion is worded.

Mr. Cavallaro said it allows students to participate in the program for one year.

Mrs. Mead asked what else would need to be cut to pay for this.

Mr. Russell told her the costs exceed \$600,000.

Mrs. Staneski motioned to accept the Speaker of the House's offer of \$35,000 in support of five students attending the Trumbull VoAg program for one year. Mr. Cavallaro seconded. By a roll call vote 6-1 (Staneski-No); the motion passed.

Dr. Polansky then presented an overview of the after-school program designed to increase the academic achievement of at-risk students in 9th grade. Students would be accepted to the program based on the following criteria; recommendation by the freshmen team faculty, a GPA below 2.0, an F on either a progress report or report card.

The program would consist of four labs, each dedicated to a specific content area: English, Social Studies, Science and Mathematics. Each lab would be staffed by a content area teacher and a special ed teacher. Dr. Polansky stated this is just an overview. More information is needed such as a budget analysis, bus scheduling and other issues.

Instructional Report

NCLB Report

Dr. Polansky and Deborah Herbst presented an overview of the NCLB legislation and the impact it can have on school districts.

In Connecticut, students in grades 3-8 are assessed using the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT). In grade 10, student performance is assessed using the Connecticut Academic Performance Test.

Top-level state educational officials, as well as superintendents throughout Connecticut, are concerned about the high degree of difficulty on the Connecticut tests, when compared to tests used in other states across the country. There are discussions taking place at both the state and federal levels about using one common test for all states, in order to “level the playing field” for assessment purposes (and, ultimately, for fairer access to educational funding).

Enrollment Report

Dr. Polansky shared both the 2007-08 and the 2006-07 enrollment reports with the board. Administration uses the October 1 enrollment report historically to show trends. To date, the current year is at 7,374, which is slightly below last year.

He notified the board that two paraprofessionals have been added to two classrooms where the class size was of concern.

Personnel Report

Mrs. W. Kopazna reported all teaching positions, with the exception of one, have been filled. Negotiations continue with the MEA.

Operations Report

Mr. Russell gave the Budget Performance Report as of September 30, 2007. He noted the electricity and fuel accounts are still running below budget. A surplus is to be expected.

The Special Education and transportation accounts are running over approximately \$331,000. However, we expect \$452,000 back from grant reimbursements.

Enumeration Update

Mr. Russell reported 20,000 surveys were sent to residences in Milford. To date, we have received approximately 40%. He hopes to reach at least 50% return with the first mailing. A second mailing would then be sent, and possibly a door to door approach would be need to be done.

Mrs. Staneski asked how long the children are actually on the bus.

Mr. Scarpetti reported that he personally rode on all the bus routes this past week and they are running within the promised time allotment.

Consent Agenda Items

Mrs. Staneski called for a motion on the Consent Agenda Items.

Mr. Hourigan made a motion and Mr. Cavallaro seconded the motion to approve Consent Agenda Items 1-3.

- 1) Voucher List (Disbursements): Administration recommends approval of the Disbursement report. (EL-6, EL-7)
- 2) Joseph A. Foran Mission Statement: Administration recommends approval of the Joseph A. Foran Mission Statement
- 3) Field Trip Request: Administration recommends approval of the Joseph A. Foran High School Natural Helpers trip to Camp Hazen in Chester, CT from October 26-28, 2007

Motion passed unanimously.

Board Comment

Mrs. Rohrig said that as board members a commitment was made to revisit the Mathewson student population. No one likes change; however, redistricting may be the answer.

Mrs. Staneski asked for a motion to adjourn.

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

David Hourigan
Acting Minority Leader

Recorded by:

Pam Griffin