

Approved  
**Milford Board of Education**

Board Meeting Minutes  
October 27, 2014

**Board members present:**

John DeRosa  
Suzanne DiBiase  
Jennifer Federico  
Laura Fucci  
Susan Glennon, Chair  
Dr. Heidi Gold-Dworkin  
Anthony Piselli  
C. Robert Satti, Jr.  
Earl Whiskeyman

**Administration present:**

Dr. Elizabeth Feser  
James Richetelli  
Michael Cummings

**Board Members absent:**

Michael DeGrego

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. Glennon called the Committee of the Whole Meeting of the Board to order at 7:01 p.m. in the Board Room at the Parsons complex. She then led those present in the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. Glennon announced Mr. DeGrego would not be present. She then called for a motion.

Mrs. Fucci made a motion to reorder the agenda moving III.a. Recognition – Durham Bus Services to the next item of business. Mr. DeRosa seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

She then turned the meeting over to Mr. Richetelli.

**II. RECOGNITION – DURHAM BUS SERVICES**

Mr. Richetelli reported Durham Bus Services has transported over 200 children from Pumpkin Delight and John F. Kennedy elementary schools to the Boys and Girls Club since the reconfiguration four years ago. Durham has provided bus transportation for those children at no cost to Milford Public Schools. Ms. Glennon and Mr. Richetelli presented Mr. Martino of Durham Bus Services with a plaque. Vice President of Boys and Girls Club Milford, Janice Yaron and Program Director, Ms. Jill DeWerd also presented Mr. Martino with a plaque, and several children from the Boys and Girls Club offered their appreciation for Durham's contribution.

Ms. Glennon then turned the meeting over to Dr. Feser for the second reading of the Attendance policy.

**III. PROPOSED POLICY CHANGES TO P5113 ATTENDANCE**

Dr. Feser explained administration brought the policy before the Board as a first reading at the October Business meeting. She then clarified the changes made to the Attendance policy is in alignment with the state law and its guidelines. A significant change is how the state is now tracking "chronic absenteeism", as having both excused and unexcused absences above 10% of the scheduled amount of school days.

Ms. Glennon opened the floor to Board questions.

## Approved

Mrs. Fucci asked for the definition of “a portion of credit” in the administrative regulation.

Mr. Berkowitz and Mr. Thompson explained the motivation is to keep students engaged, and in school. Therefore, the hope is that the student would continue to attend class knowing they would receive partial credit opposed to losing the entire credit.

Mr. DeRosa asked if a child would continue to receive education services if they were to withdraw under the age 18, with parental consent. He was told the school system does not have an obligation to educate them.

Mr. Satti referred to a typo in the administrative regulation on page 5 “**3115**” should be “**5113**.”

Mrs. Federico commented that she has heard administration say this is not a “gotcha” policy. She asked for clarification.

Mr. Thompson explained the earlier action means the administration will get involved sooner. They will try to determine the cause of the absences and provide interventions. The guidance counselor, dean of students and parents will be involved in the process.

Mr. Whiskeyman asked about a student who was absent due to medical conditions. Dr. Feser explained students on “Homebound” would not be considered absent.

Ms. Glennon asked administration how they will assure consistency in what notification, by a parent, will be accepted to document the reason for an absence.

Dr. Feser assured her the Committee in place has worked on the issue of consistency across the district. The schools will monitor and track using the same mechanisms. Mr. Berkowitz also shared that the appeals process will help ensure consistency. However, Mr. Berkowitz told her in instances where there seems to be a pattern, different measures may need to be taken.

Ms. Glennon asked if the policy applies to all schools.

Dr. Feser told the Board the policy currently applies more to high school but implementation will now be worked on in the elementary and middle schools, especially in K-2 to start right when students come into the school system.

Mrs. Fucci commented that when you monitor the attendance, you may find many different reasons causing the absenteeism, and thus, will be able to offer various support mechanisms and interventions earlier.

Being no further discussion, Ms. Glennon called for a motion.

Mrs. Fucci made a motion to approve the proposed changes to the Policy 5113 Attendance. Mr. DeRosa seconded. The motion passed 8-1 (opposition Mr. Satti).

Mr. Satti asked about the change made to the regulation “3115” to “5113.”

Ms. Glennon told him that it was a housekeeping issue and would be corrected.

#### **IV. STUDENT TRANSPORTATION REPORT**

Mr. Richetelli reported on the annual transportation report. He noted that Durham Bus Services has provided transportation to the district since 2005. In 2013, the current contract was renewed contingent upon the installation of a fuel tank in their bus yard, and the installation of cameras on all buses by 2015. He then reported those contingencies have been met and cameras have been installed on all buses. Mr. DeRosa asked if the cameras are on a direct feed or on tape. He was told each camera has its own hard drive which can hold up to three months of data. Mr. Richetelli noted that neither the school district nor the state has a data retention policy. Ms. Glennon asked how the cameras are maintained and was told they are tested about once per month during preventive maintenance on the buses.

Mr. Richetelli introduced Transportation Coordinator Mrs. Messologitis to the Board.

Mr. Richetelli reminded the Board of the recommendations made from the transportation audit conducted in September 2013. The Board made changes to the Transportation Policy P-3541 based on those recommendations. He noted during the revisions to the policy, the walking distance was not changed and are within the state guidelines. The next step was to implement a voluntary “Opt-Out” program with the hope the program could lead to consolidating routes. However, there were only 34 students who opted out of the program. Thus, there was no real efficiency gained.

Mr. Richetelli reminded the board of the traffic safety expert who examined all instances of students who lived within walking distance of school but were receiving bus service. He identified 260 students to be reclassified as walkers. Following notification to those students affected, the administration implemented an “Opt-In” program allowing walking students to apply for ridership on an existing bus route and by going to an existing bus stop. To date, 59 students have applied and all were given a spot on a bus. Parents can apply all year long; however, the program works on a first come first serve basis.

Mr. Richetelli noted that 12 bus runs have been eliminated since 2013. In addition, the number of students being transported has decreased by 8.3%. The percentage is also attributed to students moving up levels and declining enrollment. To date, the district has eliminated 2.5 buses at an approximate savings of \$100,000. However, the Board had already reduced the transportation account by \$80,000. Therefore, the savings is \$20,000.

Mr. Richetelli concluded his report with an update of the parents transportation calls received at the beginning of the year, and the traffic volume handled at the schools. The traffic volume count was conducted on various days and times last spring and this fall, including at least one day of inclement weather. A subsequent count will be done in the winter and spring. He also noted there have been no anecdotal reports of traffic issues at the schools and the preliminary observation is that the changes have not caused increased traffic volume at the schools.

Mrs. Fucci noted the disparity in the numbers between the drop offs and pick up. Mr. Richetelli told her it could be because parents work and are able to drop the children off in the morning. The student could be walking home or carpooling.

Mrs. Fucci thanked the administration and custodians for reviewing the drop off/pick up volume. She also noted the numbers are different between Law and Foran and that maybe it could be that more students live within the 2 mile walking proximity to Law.

## Approved

Mr. Satti commented that students could participate in afterschool activities or athletics at the high school level.

There was more discussion about the Opt-Out program and the response being so low. Mr. Richetelli shared Fairfield implemented the program two years ago and has not had a large response either. The theory is many parents prefer not to Opt-Out in the event that their child may need or want to take the bus at some point. It was noted that of all of the students eligible to take the bus, only 60% take the bus in the morning and less take it in the afternoon. Following the discussion, Ms. Glennon asked if there was a consensus to re-open the Transportation policy to review the walking distances.

Two people responded, Mrs. Fucci and Mrs. Federico. There was not a consensus of the Board.

Mrs. Fucci asked if the walking distances were according to state guidelines. She was told yes. Additionally, safety and hazards are in the state guidelines. It would not behoove Milford to deviate from the established guidelines. If there is an appeal process it will not be in alignment with the state guidelines.

Mr. Richetelli told her they could be conformed to the city's needs.

Mrs. Fucci further said that a safety issue can happen with a block away or a mile. Ms. Glennon communicated with the mayor, Chief of Police and the Public Works on the safety concerns. Due to the Board still working on the reconfiguration of the elementary schools and redistricting, she does not support opening the transportation issue at this time.

Mrs. Glennon told the Board she sent letters to the mayor, Chief of Police and Public Works. They have indicated their promise of continuing to stay on top of the issues. In addition, bus drivers also report issues.

Mr. Richetelli noted that most often the issues lie on private property where snow has not been cleared.

Mr. Whiskeyman recalled conversations about students who fall within the walking distance but the route may need modifications before the route is deemed safe. Mr. Richetelli said he continues to work with Public Works, and they have been very receptive. In fact, there is currently a sidewalk program in place.

Mrs. Federico told the Board she was not on the Board when the walking distance concerns were raised. She is in favor of reviewing the walking distance after the reconfiguration occurs. She noted she has heard from many adults who have stressed that two miles is very long for students to walk to school.

## **V. BUDGET PRIORITIES AND ASSUMPTIONS**

Dr. Feser reported the Board approves the Priorities and Assumptions annually. The Priorities reflect the areas of importance used in the decisions around the budget and are more global principals. Assumptions provide financial forecasting and constraints. She then reviewed the priorities with the first being safety, the next six priorities are related to teaching and learning; one is tied to extra-curricular activities and athletics, one to the SRO program and one for implementation to research and explore possible specialized programs for grades K-12 to be implemented in 2016-17.

A Board discussion ensued around the School Resource Officer program. The Board will continue to split the cost of the program in the 2015-14 school year. Currently, there are four full time SROs in the schools and one substitute, when needed, who is a full time Milford police officer with prior SRO experience.

## Approved

While there is not a dedicated SRO in the elementary schools, the Police department has devoted time and resources in the elementary schools via its Public Information Officer and the sergeant of the SRO program.

Mr. Whiskeyman asked that a report be given to the Board measuring the SRO program.

Ms. Glennon asked the Board if they would be interested in hearing a report on the SRO program after the program has been in place for one full year. All members agreed.

Ms. Glennon asked administration to review to the class sizes according to level.

Mr. Cummings answered, K-2 has 20-22 children, 3-5 has up to 25 children, 6-8 has up to 25 and 9-12 has up to 30, however, some classes may have size restrictions i.e. science labs.

Mrs. Federico asked Dr. Feser to comment on the rigorous common assessments. Dr. Feser told her they are in place in a number of courses, but they are not in every course yet. The focus has been on grades 6-12 assessments. There have been a lot of revisions they are in their first year of testing to Common Core.

Dr. Gold Dworkin asked why there is not an emphasis put on the 5-8 science curriculum tied to the CMT and CAPT test. Dr. Feser indicated while it is important, it doesn't have a budgetary impact so would not be part of this document.

Dr. Gold-Dworkin suggested that Milford look at the next generation science standards. Mr. Cummings told her CMT and CAPT and the next generation science standards are not aligned. The State has not yet approved the implementation of the new standards and to move forward without them doing so makes it difficult for staff to follow two curricular paths. He indicated it would be helpful if the state would make a decision.

Mr. Whiskeyman asked about costs associated with the professional learning and how it will help the Board achieve its goal. He was told there is a key focus on increasing rigor around the assessments. The focus of 2014-15 was teacher evaluation. Dr. Feser told the Board a vast majority of work has been curriculum development. The district will continue to need the support of the Board. Mr. Cummings added having our own teachers work on curriculum allows them to "take it apart" so also serves as a form of professional development.

Dr. Feser then reviewed the assumptions. The first three are tied to the Long Range Plan. Numbers 5-8 are non-negotiable. The contract with Cenergistics will expire; however, funds could be used to invest in more energy efficient infrastructure.

Mr. Richetelli further explained MBOE participates in the CCM consortium with city. The district continues to research ways to increase energy efficiencies. For example, LED lighting is expensive to install. However, the return is enormous.

Mr. DeRosa would like to be provided with what the solar panels at Foran are feeding.

Dr. Feser reminded the Board the document is presented as a first reading. No action to be taken.

Ms. Glennon read the Public Comment statement.

## VI. PUBLIC COMMENT

## Approved

Tom Jagodzinski – 27 Berkley Terrace – Mr. Jagodzinski said the Board spent more time talking bus routes than budgets. Budget priorities and assumptions fail to address the district's overspending. Cut spending to slim down the district to get it focused on critical issues. The Special Education audit confirmed the department is 9M over in spending. The Board should insist that next year's budget should have 2M savings in this area. There should not be any programs implemented until the district fixes the overspending.

Joanne Poffenberger – 50 Green Street – Mrs. Poffenberger encouraged the Board to revisit the transportation policy on the distance for walkers. She is a teacher in another town. Students who walk long distances arrive school not ready to learn. She then encouraged the Board to be aware with the redistricting and the changes the teachers will be going through at the forefront. The teachers are struggling with all of the changes upon them. Keep teachers happy and you will find fewer will be looking for employment elsewhere.

Carol Thomas – 84 Thompson Street – Thanked the Board for their hard work. She asked the Board to re-evaluate the walking distance guidelines after the transition. Do right by the kids. She then told the Board she has three sons; one that has graduated and is doing well, one in eighth grade and freshman at Law.

Susan Krushinsky – 60 Crescent Drive – Mrs. Krushinsky would like the Board to review the transportation policy. She also asked the Board to reach out to more students to apply for the Opt-In program. She thinks some families are embarrassed or uninformed about the process.

Mrs. Fucci made a motion to recess at 9:01 p.m. Mr. DeRosa seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Mrs. Fucci made a motion to come out of recess at 9:29 p.m. Mr. DeRosa seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Mrs. Fucci made a motion to approve the Working Agreement between the Milford Board of Education and the Milford Federation of Paraeducators commencing September 1, 2014 through August 31, 2017. Mr. DeRosa seconded. The motion passed 8-1(Satti-abstention).

## VII. ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Fucci a motion to adjourn. Mr. DeRosa seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

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Mrs. Pam Griffin  
Recording Secretary

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Mrs. Laura Fucci  
Corresponding Secretary