

Milford Board of Education

Board of Education Meeting Minutes

December 13, 2010

Board members present:

David Amendola
Tracy Casey
Suzanne DiBiase
Jack O'Connell
Mark Stapleton
Jay Tranquilli
Robert M. White

Board members absent:

Diane Kruger-Carroll
Josip Jukic
Greg Oliver

Administration present:

Michael Cummings
Philip Russell
Wendy Kopazna

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Milford Board of Education held a Regular Business Meeting on Monday, December 13, 2010, in the Board of Education Room at the Parsons Complex. Chairman Stapleton called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. with the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance immediately following.

The evening began with a musical performance by the Foran Clarinet Ensemble led by Jessica Shearer.

II. STUDENT AND STAFF RECOGNITION

Mr. Cummings recognized the volley ball teams from Law and Foran for the collaboration with the Dig Pink fundraiser. The fundraiser was to promote breast cancer awareness. Combined, the school's raised four thousand three hundred dollars.

Recognized were: Molly Taylor, who is a co-captain at Joseph A. Foran, Sage Esposito, also a co-captain at Joseph A. Foran - Sage's accomplishments included All-State honors, All-Hammonasset Division honors, Coaches All-Star game selection, Connecticut Post All-Star Team and being named the MVP of the New Haven Register's All-Area Team. Caitlin Stapleton and Meaghan Abbott, both co-captain's at Jonathan Law, who were not in attendance due to a banquet were recognized for achieving 2nd Team All-State honors, All-Hammonasset Division honors, Coaches All-Star game selection, selection to the CT Post All-Star Team and the New Haven Register's All-Area Team.

Mr. Cummings then asked Alderman Greg Smith to join him in recognizing four star students who participated in the "Voice of Democracy Scholarship Competition" and the "Patriot's Pen Essay Contest." Both contests garner scholarships and incentives. This year, Aldermen Smith, who is the VFW CT District 2 Commander, submitted Jorrell Figueroa's essay and it won first place honors for the Voice of Democracy category. Aldermen Smith expressed his enthusiasm as he described Jorrell's inspirational essay.

Mr. Cummings explained the Patriot's Pen essay contest. This category encourages students to examine the nation's history combined with their own experiences in modern American society. With over 60 essays submitted, two 7th grade students received first place honors. They were Kayleigh Paskiewicz and Kayla Gosselin. Both students attend 7th grade at East Shore Middle School.

The final recognition of the evening went to Mr. Tom Acri. Mr. Acri is a history teacher at West Shore Middle School. Mr. Acri was nominated by the VFW for being the District Level Teacher of the Year. He will now advance onto the State Level of the competition. The first place winners of the state competition will move onto to the national level. Good luck to Mr. Acri.

Congratulations to all winners.

III. CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES:

Mr. White made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 8, 2010 Board of Education meeting. Mr. Amendola seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Cathy Berni – 96 Centennial Drive – Mrs. Berni encouraged the board to read a recent article in the New Haven Register titled “Waiting for Superman.” The article references the detriment of large class sizes.

Kathy Bonetti – 157 Seaside Avenue – Mrs. Bonetti, PTA Council President reported on the recent Council meeting. The Council discussed what PTA/O funds should be spent on. Reviving the Centsible Kids, a program that the district and Milford Bank initiated was discussed also. She then told the board the next PTA Council meeting will be held on January 20th at Meadowside Elementary School.

Lisa Biagioni – 73 Sentinel Hill Road – Mrs. Biagioni has concerns with changes being made to the Breathalyzer Policy, specifically with the using language “random use of the breathalyzer”. She feels that administration should be reasonably suspicious prior to administering the test. It is the wording of #2 that makes her feel uncomfortable. “(2) When school administrators have determined that alcohol use is a widespread problem among students before or at a specific school-sponsored activity, school administrators may institute a system by which they will randomly or systematically, and without individual suspicion that a student has consumed alcohol, require students to submit to an alcohol detection devise test in order to participate in the school sponsored activity.”

She supports the Attendance Policy changes.

V. CHAIR’S REPORT:

Chairman Stapleton updated the public on the superintendent search. He said the board has narrowed the search down to two finalists and will be moving swiftly ahead. The board is still committed to making a selection by January 1, 2011.

Dr. Stapleton then read a prepared statement that was a result of a board leadership meeting.

“Recently, the board leadership (Dr. Stapleton, Mr. Amendola & Mr. White) met with Mr. Cummings, Mr. Russell, Mr. Bugyi, Mr. Vitelli and Mr. Luysterborghs to discuss statements that were made at the July 12, 2010 board meeting regarding funding for athletics. A statement that was made in the ensuing discussion may have inaccurately left the impression that the athletic directors may have overspent their athletic budgets. This simply is not true. Neither athletic director over spent his budget nor did either place athletics on a higher priority over other district concerns. The funding issues that exist are a result of the current system of funding which relies on gate receipts and expenditures. These gate receipts can fluctuate greatly due to many uncontrollable factors that may affect attendance. Those include weather, holiday weekends and win/loss records etc. This system relies on an unpredictable income to pay fixed and controlled expenditures. This is a systemic deficiency and not one that was created or exacerbated by the athletic directors. To correct the deficiency, administration and the board will address how athletics are funded in the future. All those present at the above referenced meeting, expressed regret and apologies for any misrepresentation that may have been created about performance of either athletic director. Mr. Vitelli and Mr. Luysterborghs are held respected greatly and held in the highest esteem in the community as outstanding athletic directors, educators and individuals. It was the intention of all to move forward in the spirit with respect and cooperation in a manner that is in the best interest of all students in the high school community.”

Permanent Schools Committee liaison, Mr. White reported the committee met last week. They are waiting for some items on the punch list for Jonathan Law Phase III to be completed. The Foran Phase III is going well. Mrs. Casey added that the Foran Phase III-A is under review.

VI. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

1. Student Reports.

Kevin McFadden and Courtney Murray reported on the latest activity and upcoming events occurring at Jonathan Law High School. Daniel Evanich and Kate Sylvester presented the report for Joseph A. Foran High School. Both reports are on file.

2. Instructional Division

Mr. Cummings updated the board on Public Act 10-111 that was approved by legislation in May of 2010. Public Act 10-111 is a law that requires public school districts to make substantive changes that will, in the end, affect the Class of 2018. He then turned the meeting over the Mrs. Krois to further explain those changes.

Mrs. Krois delivered a PowerPoint to the board that explained in detail the five areas requiring immediate attention. Those areas are:

- Graduation Requirements for the Class of 2018
- Alternative Means for Earning High School Credit
- Required Student Support Structures
- Advanced Placement Program and the
- Teacher Evaluation Plan

Mrs. Krois explained the high school graduation requirements would not only increase from 22.5 credits to 25, the subject area requirement will change. She further explained the impact of the changes to the five areas listed. The added requirements will significantly affect the staff at the high schools.

The district is preparing an immediate task list that includes a fully articulated plan for responding to Public Act 10-111. The plan will be complete in March 2011.

Board discussion ensued.

3. Operational Division

a) Personnel Report

Mrs. W. Kopazna, Director of Human Resources, presented the report for November. The report included current job openings, new hires, retirements, resignations and terminations. She noted that the district is currently looking for long term substitutes to cover absences estimated over 45 days.

b) Energy Report

Mr. Russell introduced Mr. Chuck Fasnacht, vice president of Energy Education, to give an overview of his services. The board members were previously given a proposal (on file) to review.

Mr. Fasnacht explained how the district could potentially save approximately 6.5M over ten years by saving waste energy. Energy Education has worked with over 1100 districts across the country for over 25 years. The savings range is between 20 to 30%. He further explained the company teaches districts how to conserve waste energy. Hundreds of recommendations are brought to the district's attention. Those recommendations are then tailored to the district's needs. The company sends a representative out weekly to work with the expert. The company is paid with a small percentage of the district's savings so there is no out-of-pocket up front fee.

Mr. Amendola requested all cost savings factors over the last ten years. Mr. Russell told Mr. Amendola that administration has been paying attention to the big items. The company has the ability to review all items. The district does not have the expertise.

Mr. White added that if the savings is not found to fund the salary and costs, the district is reimbursed by the company.

Administration recommended the board's support.

Board discussion ensued.

Mr. Amendola recommended the position be reviewed before advertising the position.

Mr. Russell told the board the position would not participate in the bargaining unit. The person would report to the Operations Manager or the Assistant Superintendent. It would be an administrative position.

VII. CONSENT AGENDA

Mr. White made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda Items a-f. Mr. Amendola seconded.
Mr. O'Connell asked to move Consent Agenda Item a to New Business.
Motion passed unanimously with the noted change moving Consent Agenda a to New Business.

Mr. O'Connell would like to review the Berchem, Moses and Devlin invoices.

The board recessed at 8:50 p.m.

Chairman Stapleton called the meeting back in order at 9:02 p.m.

VIII. ACTION ITEMS

Unfinished Business

Mr. White made a motion to approve the Attendance Policy 5113 as presented by administration. Mr. Amendola seconded.

Mrs. Casey asked if there were any parts of the policy that would need to be changed due to regulation changes.

Mr. Cummings said that legislation has not approved any changes.

The motion passed (7-0).

Mr. White made a motion to approve the Truancy Policy 5113.2 as presented by administration. Mr. Amendola seconded.

Mrs. Casey asked for clarification of four or two days and was told the recommendation is two.

Mr. O'Connell recommended administration to meet with the administrative judge in Milford and discuss truancy.

The motion passed (7-0).

Mr. White made a motion to approve the Breathalyzer Policy 5131.65 as presented by administration. Mr. Amendola seconded.
Mrs. Casey asked Mr. Cummings to respond to #2 in the policy as it was referred to under Public Comment.

Mr. Cummings said the administration having the ability to administer the breathalyzer with due cause is beneficial. The policy needs to be in place with the school climate.

After some discussion, Mr. Cummings told the board it is the school district's job to keep the children safe when they are on school premises. This policy helps ensure that.

The motion passed (6-1 DiBiase).

Mr. White made a motion to approve the 2011-12 Budget and Priorities. Mr. Amendola seconded.

Mrs. Casey said that she wanted to make sure the budget and priorities reflects the loss of the 1.5M stimulus funds.

Mr. Cummings told the board the document is not voted upon, only reviewed. Therefore, no vote is necessary.

Mr. Amendola removed his motion. Mr. White removed his motion. Both motions were withdrawn.

New Business

Mrs. Casey made a motion to table the salary compensation for the assistant superintendent in accordance with a conversation and a decision that was reached at a previous meeting. Mr. White seconded the motion.

Dr. Stapleton then called for the vote.

Mrs. Casey asked for a discussion.

Chairman Stapleton told her that she was asserting things that were discussed in an executive session and should not be discussed in a public meeting.

She told the chairman that had the decision made during the executive session been followed, this item would not have been on the agenda.

Chairman Stapleton said that he had a different recollection of the meeting.

Chairman Stapleton called for a roll call vote. By roll call 4Y-3N (Y-Casey, DiBiase, Tranquilli & White/N-Amendola, O'Connell & Stapleton), the motion passed.

IX. BOARD COMMENT

Mrs. Casey asked for clarification of comments made during the Chairman's Report. She wanted clarity that the statement the chairman made was not a board report. Rather a statement that was decided upon after a meeting was held by board leadership. She further stated that her understanding is that there is a budget with series of accounts. The administration can move funds around within a series. However, if funds need to be moved from a series to cover a shortfall, the board will need to take action. Mr. Russell confirmed that is correct. The meeting where the original comments were made, the board was voting on moving funds to cover a shortfall. Therefore, she needs clarity that if there is a shortfall, then the athletic directors did not budget enough and the funds were overspent. She does not understand how there was a mis-statement made about that.

She further said board leadership cannot make comments about individual performance about anyone other than the one employee they supervise, who is the superintendent.

She concluded by saying there are ongoing meetings of which decisions are made yet when you leave the meeting with lack of clarity. She requested that the board chair find a way to ensure complete clarity.

Dr. Stapleton reminded the board and the public the statement he made earlier in the meeting made no comments about the performance of the athletic directors. In terms of the most recent comment – he has no recollection on no one tabling salary compensation of the assistant superintendent. Other board members concur. He is disappointed that Mrs. Casey did not bring that to his attention.

Mrs. Casey told the board chair that she sent an email to the majority leader; Mr. White and he forwarded it onto Dr. Stapleton. Dr. Stapleton told her and the board they should be directing their requests directly to him.

Mr. White clarified that he mis-read his notes when leadership reviewed the board agenda. However, his recollection was that the decision to table the compensation item was discussed at the executive session.

Mr. White then read a prepared statement sent in by Mrs. Kerri Rowland. See the attached.

Mr. White then clarified a mis-print made in a newspaper article. It stated that the board has made a selection for the superintendent. He reiterated what Dr. Stapleton said earlier. The board is still in the process of selecting a new superintendent.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Stapleton asked for a motion to adjourn.

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

Meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Robert M. White
Corresponding Secretary

Pam Griffin
Recording Secretary