

Milford Board of Education

Regular Business Meeting Minutes

January 11, 2010

Board members present:

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

Administrators present:

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

Board members absent:

Greg Oliver

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Milford Board of Education held a regular business meeting on Monday, January 11, 2010, in the Board of Education Meeting Room in the Parsons Complex. 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 began by recognizing the Jonathan Law and Foran students who were selected as the Connecticut Music Educators Association's Honors Music Ensembles. The Connecticut Music Educators Association sponsors a regional honors music festival to top performing high school musicians in the area of jazz, orchestra, band and chorus. These students were selected through a competitive audition process for a limited number of participation spots. The competed with students representing school districts throughout Southern Connecticut. Students selected will participate in the CMEA Regional Festival culminating with a concert performance on January 15 and 16 at Maloney High School in Meriden. He congratulated the following students and staff members:

Kate Sylvester ~ Foran Junior
Rebecca Giden ~ Foran Junior
John Hanson ~ Foran Junior
Matt Ventricelli ~ Foran Junior
Daniel Valteau ~ Foran Sophomore
Justin Fugal ~ Foran Junior
Alexandra Yankowski ~ Law Senior
Hannah Marin ~ Foran Senior
Mallory Marin ~ Foran Sophomore
Melissa Kandrach ~ Foran Senior
Joseph Mele ~ Law Senior
Jessica Shearer ~ Foran Director of Band & Music
Theresa Voss ~ Foran Choir Director
Jean Kovacs ~ Law Choir Director

The second recognition of the night was given to the Jonathan Law High School Band and Guard. On November 14th the Jonathan Law High School Band and Guard won first place in the Musical Arts Conference Championship (MAC) Class II which was held at Kennedy Stadium in Bridgeport. The title of Law's presentation was "Desert Winds". The band and guard won awards for best music and high general effect. Recognized were:

Joseph Mele ~ Student Representative
Jessica Ribas ~ Student Representative

Susan White ~ Student Representative
Kiana Riddick ~ Student Representative
Paul Marino ~ Director of Bands and Music (Jonathan Law)

The final recognition of the night was presented to Sean Kassouf. Sean won first place in U-Conn's Institute of Comparative Human Rights Essay. The University of Connecticut's Institute of Comparative Human Rights Department sponsored an essay contest open to Connecticut high school students in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. Students were asked to discuss what contributions they felt young leaders could do to help make advancement or promote a greater realization of Dr. King's dream. Sean will attend an observance ceremony at U-Conn, at which time he will be recognized for his achievement.

III. CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

- a) Mr. White made a motion to accept the December 14, 2009 meeting minutes as approved. Mr. Amendola seconded. Mr. O'Connell elected to abstain from the vote. The motion passed unanimously.
- b) Mr. White made a motion to accept the December 21, 2009 meeting minutes as approved. Mr. Amendola seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Joe Prisco – 11 Riverdale Road – He believes the Pumpkin Delight elevator is a priority. He spoke previously at a Board of Aldermen meeting in support of it. Find the money.

Ms. Stacy Godek – 154 Mary Ellen Drive – Ms. Godek spoke for her and another mother of a preschool aged child. She said they both are very pleased with the preschool program in Milford. The only problem is the elimination of transportation for the preschool program. It is very difficult to transport two children, especially when one is sick. She also stated that the parochial students are getting transportation. She would like the preschool bus added back into the budget. She then presented the board with a petition signed with over 100 signatures.

Mr. Mike Taylor – 340 Wolf Harbor Road – Mr. Taylor strongly encouraged the board to consider the Race to the Top Grant (RTTG). The grant will only bring a small amount of money, but it is worth the try.

Mrs. Trista Simoncek – 61 Governor's Way – The board will vote on the calendar soon. She wants the board to reinstate instructional time. The district has already lost time to early dismissals due to bad weather. It is time to get creative and find a better way to have professional development across the grades and not lose instructional time.

Mrs. Kathy Huber – 277 Roses Mill Road – Mrs. Huber is the President of PTA Council. She invited the board to attend the next PTA Council meeting, which will be held on January 21st at 7PM and Calf Pen Meadow. Mr. Silver, from Silver, Petrucelli Associates will give a brief overview of the Capital Improvement Plan.

Mrs. Huber then said the budget process is very difficult. She would hope the budget discussions are open to the public.

Mrs. Arlene Alessie – 14 St. Andrews Lane – Mrs. Alessie shared her discontent with the Enrichment Program for the district. She told the board the program is flawed and needs to be reviewed.

V. CHAIR'S REPORT

Board Chairman Mark Stapleton told the public the upcoming weeks will be difficult as the board will be addressing the budget. He hopes the focus is on the students. Given this economy and the new board, this will be an enormous process. He also noted that if the charter allowed for staggered terms, the school system would be better served.

Mr. O'Connell asked the chair if he has met with the Mayor to discuss goals. He further said the board should know what the goals when discussing the budget.

Dr. Stapleton told the board that he, as well as administration have had conversations with the Mayor about the budget.

Mrs. Casey said that she hopes that affiliation with parties will not play a role in the board's decision. The mission is to look at the best interest of the kids.

Mr. Amendola told the board the budget presented will be the “Superintendent’s”. The board will then discuss it and approve an amount. It then will become the Board of Education’s budget.

Dr. Stapleton then called for the liaison reports.

Mrs. Casey reported that she attended the Permanent School Facility Building Committee meeting. She told the board the Law Phase III project is ahead of schedule. The Foran Phase III project bid came in 27% under. She also said that a letter is forthcoming requesting the board to formally withdraw the project request for classroom portables at East Shore.

Ms. DiBiase said the Board of Education was not discussed at the Board of Aldermen meeting.

Mr. Tranquilli had nothing to report from the Planning and Zoning meeting.

VI. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

1. Student Reports.

Bing Zheng 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.

2. Instructional Report

Mr. Cummings deferred his report to the end of the meeting.

3. Operational Report

a) Personnel Report

Mrs. Kopazna reported there are quite a few openings. The positions are mostly in athletics. Coaches in their first three years have to reapply annually.

Mr. O’Connell asked if there was a reduction in teaching staff due to the decrease of 2 ½% in enrollment from 2008 to 2009.

Mr. Cummings told him that you cannot take the number and then reduce staff. It depends on where the decreases fall. For example, the reduction of 15 second grade students could mean six at Live Oaks, one at Orange Avenue, two at Mathewson, four at Meadowside and two at Simon Lake.

b) Budget Report for December

Mr. Russell presented the Budget Performance Report for December 31, 2009, as well as the Cash Disbursements Report. He explained the report and the series of accounts to the board. He told the board the tuition account is over budget. He will continue to monitor the account. He then reported 93% of the budget has been encumbered.

Mrs. Casey asked Mr. Russell to omit names from the Cash Disbursement list.

VII. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS:

The consent agenda included one item this month. These were:

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

Chairman Stapleton asked for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda items.

Mr. White made the motion to approve the Consent Agenda Item, as published. Mr. Amendola seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Stapleton called for a 10 minute recess at 8:20 p.m.

Chairman Stapleton called the meeting back in order at 8:30 p.m.

VIII. ACTION ITEMS:

a. Unfinished Business
None

b. New Business
Chairman Stapleton turned the meeting over to Mr. Cummings for the Race to the Top Grant discussion.

Mr. Cummings told the board the State is encouraging local education agencies to participate in the grant. The grant is part of the education reform program that was enacted as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). If the State is awarded the grant, the State could qualify for \$175M over a four year period. Milford could receive \$500,000 over a four year period. The grant offers an unprecedented level of additional funding to states and their participating local education agencies (LEAs) to implement comprehensive education reform across four key areas:

- Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the work place;
- Building data systems that measure student success and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction;
- Recruiting, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals; and
- Turning around our lowest-achieving schools.

He then explained there is a lot of work to be done by staff and administration.

Mrs. Casey asked if other towns are participating. Mr. Cummings told her that he would assume that they would. You would be frontlined to receive more money as programs are developed. Even small cities are willing to sign up for it, not to get money, but to participate as a community.

After a brief discussion, Chairman Stapleton asked for a motion to accept the Race to the Top Grant.

Mr. White made a motion to participate in the Race to the Top Grant and authorize Mr. Cummings to forward it to the State. Mr. Amendola seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Cummings shared a PowerPoint presentation outlining the proposed 2010-11 Superintendent's Operations Budget (see attached). He said the budget emanates the work that has been going on in the district over a number of years. Administration has taken the current economic situation and the fact that the stimulus money will run out next year into consideration when the budget was developed. He then told the board the recommendation is an increase of 4.97%. He reviewed the Priorities and Assumptions of the board and the Theories of Action of district with the board. This is clearly the framework and philosophy of the budget. He confirmed that a lot of the content is compliant with RtI. Mr. Cummings then explained how the district's Theory of Action and the Strategic Roadmap are aligned to the proposed budget.

Mr. O'Connell said that he disagrees with the major premise that Mr. Cummings is taking stating that the board only has 8.5% to work with and the board has to meet current obligations. Other boards across the state and country have opened up collective bargaining agreements. If we do not do that, other accounts are going to be short changed. He said that he fundamentally disagrees with that. He believes the unions should be approached to have discussions about furloughs, class size increases and layoffs.

Mrs. Casey would like to have a breakdown of where the priorities and assumptions fall within the 2010-11 budget for the next budget meeting. Her hope had been not to look at every line, but how the budget change is aligned to the priorities and assumptions.

Mr. Cummings told the board that administration used the priorities and assumptions to build the budget. He also said that that administration cannot go to the different unions and ask for concessions. That is a board's responsibility. He said that if the board changed that, that would change the budget. He then told the board that the State statute dictates that the budget be delivered to the mayor by January 31, 2010. He also explained the 4.97%

increase is partly due to the 1.35% increase given last year. There is very little room, but to seek concessions or cut staffing.

Mr. Cummings explained 4.17% of the \$85,442,983M budget will be spent on salaries and benefits alone. The other .85% will be spent on transportation, tuition, utilities, maintenance and instructional accounts. He then told the board that fundamental changes will need to happen if the budget is cut.

Mrs. Casey asked for a high level breakdown of the budget with the priorities and assumptions assigned to them. She would also like administration to identify contractual and non contractual items.

Mr. Cummings agreed he would do that. He also noted that he took the priorities and assumptions very seriously. Administration took into account the contractual obligations, advancing the district and aligning all that, while spending the money very wisely.

Mr. O'Connell agrees the budget faithfully follows the priorities and assumptions. He said the increases of \$4M for salaries and benefits is \$3.3M of that. There are other accounts that are seriously underfunded. As a board, we should stand up and do something.

Mr. Amendola asked the chair to direct the superintendent to find out what the cost would be to open the contracts.

Mr. Cummings agreed to research the costs involved.

Mr. O'Connell said that we need to look at furlough days and/or class sizes. Right now, the class sizes are luxurious.

Mrs. Casey said that last year, the board sought concessions from every union. Only one union was willing to open their contract. She asked Mr. Russell to explain what occurred last year.

Mr. Russell said he developed spreadsheets for the various unions with the dollars equal to one day furlough and a 1% decrease in pay. The board met with each union independently. No union agreed to either option.

Mrs. DiBiase said she doesn't completely disagree with what Mr. O'Connell said. She said he is just trying to find money.

X. BOARD COMMENT:

Chairman Stapleton asked the board members for any other comments they may have relating to Board business.

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 9:45 p.m.

Robert White
Corresponding Secretary

Pam Griffin
Recording Secretary

