

Milford Board of Education

Regular Business Meeting Minutes

February 8, 2010

Board members present:

David Amendola
Tracy Casey
Suzanne DiBiase
Diane Kruger-Carroll
Jack O'Connell
Greg Oliver
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:

Josip Jukic

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Milford Board of Education held a regular business meeting on Monday, February 8, 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 the recognition by acknowledging Live Oaks Elementary School for participating in a fundraiser for cancer. Most recently, the school, led by kindergarten teacher Michele Smith, participated in Pennies for Patients. Spare change was collected over a three week period. The money was then donated to the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. To help efforts, a group of 5th graders made posters and canisters. Mr. Cummings thanked the group for their time and work involved in not only this fundraiser, but the others as well.

Recognized were:	Francesca Giannattasio	5 th Grade Representative
	Caitlyn Parisi	5 th Grade Representative
	Kasey Dugan	5 th Grade Representative
	Molly Champagne	5 th Grade Representative
	Shannon Dolan	5 th Grade Representative
	Audrey Sokol	Student Advisor
	Michele Smith	Kindergarten teacher/organizer

Mr. Cummings asked Theresa Voss to join him in recognizing two Harborside 8th graders. The southern region of the Connecticut Music Educators Association holds an annual middle school music festival. Students who prepared an audition for the festival chorus sang their audition piece alone in front of a judge. Based on their auditions, two eighth graders from Harborside were chosen to participate in the festival, which will take place at Haddam-Killingworth Middle School in late February.

Recognized were:	Natalia Amos	8 th Grade Student
	Victoria Toth	8 th Grade Student
	Theresa Voss	Choir Director

The next recognition went to a group from Orchard Hills. In December, some kindergarten students did a chapstick and children's book benefit for the Beth-El Shelter in Milford. They managed to collect 512 books and 140 tubes of chapstick for the shelter. A student thought of this after reading the book "Great Joy." The book dealt with homelessness. Mr. Cummings thanked the students and teachers for their coordination of the benefit and helping the community.

Recognized were:	Morgan Viesselman	Kindergarten Student
	Justin Hanelt	Kindergarten Student

Susie Dockendorff	Pre-K Teacher
Libby Spence	First Grade Teacher
Cathleen Steinau	Kindergarten Teacher (Coordinator of the benefit)

The final recognition of the night was given to a 3rd grade Mathewson student, Gracie McCarl. To Gracie, community service is nothing new. She has been participating in the annual fundraising for Beth-El Shelter for seven years. Recently, Gracie asked her birthday party guests to bring canned goods, past, cereal or peanut butter to benefit the Milford Food Bank instead of a gift for her. She then donated \$120 that she had received for her birthday to the special collection for Haiti. Gracie seems to use her birthday as a method of fundraising. She even collected pet food to donate to the shelter on a birthday a few years ago. Mr. Cummings thanked Gracie for her generous attitude.

III. CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

- a) Mr. White made a motion to accept the January 11, 2010 meeting minutes as approved. Mr. Amendola seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
- b) Mr. White made a motion to accept the January 19, 2010 meeting minutes as approved. Mr. Amendola seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
- c) Mr. White made a motion to accept the January 21, 2010 meeting minutes as approved. Mr. Amendola seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
- d) Mr. White made a motion to accept the February 3, 2010 meeting minutes as approved. Mr. Amendola seconded. Mrs. Casey noted that Mr. Oliver seconded the motion to go into executive session. With the noted correction, the motion passed unanimously.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Sami Yousef – 79 Avon Street – He supports middle school graduation. Two siblings graduated from middle school. It was exciting to see his parents delight. Everyone does not live forever. We have no choice over death.

Nancy Seltzer – 74 Camden Street – Milford Anti Hate Task Force – Anti-defamation League would like to invite teachers the Echoes and Teachers training. It is a rare opportunity and free. She would like teachers of Milford to consider attending. It is about the Holocaust.

The task force has an event coming up – Billboard from Bethlehem by Bruce Barrett. It will be held at the United Church of Christ in Devon on February 15th.

Genevieve Chase – 4 Alana Drive – Taxpayer and employee of the Milford Public Schools. She is attending the meeting on behalf of the students at West Shore. She is in favor of Plan A of the survey recently circulated regarding the middle school graduation. However, she feels the children should not have to pay for anything. Students should come first. It is a rite of passage for them. There are so many programs that have been cut. Fundraisers will purchase the caps and gowns. The issue is the cost to families. There are families in the school system that are employed by the fire and police departments. Why not have them donate some of their time to the district.

Cathy Berni – 96 Centennial Drive – She took offense to the comments printed in the paper where the chairman of the board stated how the public feels. Every parent that she has talked to is totally against everything that is being printed in the newspaper. The focus should be on the misinformation that has been printed. She realizes that the board has been handed a bunch of lemons and hopes the board will work together and come up with lemonade.

Tom Acri – 88 Lenox Avenue – He is an educator and taxpayer. He teaches at West Shore. He has been a teacher for more than 10 years. He is in favor of middle school graduation. He feels that the parents and guardians should not have to incur any expense.

Merianne Vassallo – She is a teacher at Meadowside school. She then read a prepared statement (attached) supporting the early dismissal day schedule for the 2010-11 school year. She explained how the education field has changed over the years. An example is could be that when she went to school, special education or special needs students were taught separate from the

regular education students. Teachers today need to teach differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all learners. Early dismissal days give the teacher's time to collaborate and share best practices and replicate them.

V. CHAIR'S REPORT

Chairman Stapleton applauded Mrs. Bonetti for the "Citizens Guide" and "Putting Our Budget Into Perspective." Both documents were very well put together and easy to understand. Nice job to Kathy. The documents will be made available on the website.

He then asked for the liaison reports.

Mr. O'Connell asked the chairman if he had received an update on the budget from the Mayor. Mr. Stapleton told him the dialogue is ongoing. A public hearing was held on February 3rd. The consensus is many are in favor of the budget as presented. The next step will be to present to the Board of Finance on March 3rd.

Ms. DiBiase reported the Board of Aldermen approved the requests to fund the Foran High School and Pumpkin Delight projects.

Mrs. Casey asked if East Shore had been discussed and was told no.

Mrs. Casey recommended that the board have a discussion about East Shore again since the modulars are not being installed. There is still an ongoing space issue at the school.

Mr. Cummings suggested the board tour East Shore prior to the Committee of the Whole meeting at the end of the month.

Mrs. Casey asked for an update on enrollment at East Shore. Mr. Cummings told the board that enrollment at East Shore has decreased since last year. The problem is not the enrollment, it is being a team structure, and a requisite number of rooms are required. Seven teachers are currently functioning on carts. The hope was to put a brick and mortar addition at East Shore in the Capital Improvement Plan, but the Mayor did not choose to move forward with it. He also suggested the board hold a Committee of the Whole meeting at East Shore. The board could be given a tour of the school to gain a better understanding of the schools needs.

Dr. Stapleton told Mrs. Casey that the Mayor makes the final decision as to what goes in the Capital Improvement Plan.

Mrs. Casey said that is not what happened last year with the Jonathan Law project. What is the board's view on East Shore? She thought it was a high priority.

Mr. Russell explained how the CIP process works. While the Capital Improvement Plan is a five year plan, he further explained that the CIP is reprioritized annually and approved by the various departments. The Mayor will make the final prioritization. He also said that last year the Jonathan Law project did get approved off cycle, but that was the first time he had seen that happen.

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.

Dr. Stapleton said that he thought it would be a great opportunity to hold the Committee of the Whole meetings at the schools. The public and board members would be able to see the schools. It will be posted.

Mrs. Kruger-Carroll thinks it is a great idea. She noted that it is a meeting held in the public not a public meeting.

Mrs. Casey asked if she would be able to attend an early release day to see how it works. Mr. Cummings said he welcomes the idea.

2. Instructional Report

Mr. Cummings updated the board on Harborside's situation where a pipe had burst. The day was spent cleaning the mess up. He thanked Mr. Bradbury and his crew for their efforts. Three classrooms have not been fixed. The school will be open tomorrow.

Early Release Days

Mr. Cummings told the board that every district accommodates teacher professional development. He said there are many other school districts that have early release days. He then shared a PowerPoint (on file) to help explain the process. The early dismissal days are used to improve performance to state standards. He explained the culture of education has changed over the last 12 or so years. He said changes are occurring at the state and federal levels. There is no better way to get the teachers to learn different techniques than having them meet as a team to collaborate. Data proves that it is working. The teachers are working towards the goals.

Dr. Stapleton said that professional businesses have been doing it for a long time.

Mr. O'Connell asked how much testing was done to determine that the collaborative conclusions were being implemented into the classrooms in broad scale.

Mr. Cummings said that Milford has an evaluation system in place. It is a state law. However, he believes the teachers want what is best for the kids. It is a continuous cycle of work. He said the board may want to look at the evaluation process at a future meeting.

Mr. Cummings said this is a culture shift and it will take multiple years. He further told the board minutes are kept of all meetings. Knowledge of kids comes before the knowledge of curriculum. While the task is written for the high end student, the teacher will then need to rewrite the task to get the same outcome for the regular student. He explained it is dynamic between three components; student, teacher and curriculum. If the student population changes, you need to change how you teach the curriculum. The goal is to strike a balance. He then shared the work that has been going on at the various school levels. Staff members were surveyed on their understanding of the work before and after the training. The percentages increased across the district. Collaborative, problem solving work is what the teachers are being asked to do now.

Dr. Stapleton asked Mr. Cummings how long has data been gathered in the district.

Mr. Cummings told him that the district has been using data effectively for approximately four years.

Following the presentation, Mrs. Kruger-Carroll said while she does understand it is needed, is there a different way to deliver it.

Mrs. Casey said that you cannot start the process and then stop it. You need to continue it to completion.

Mrs. Kruger reiterated that the timing seems to be bad. If she was on the board last year, she would have voted against the plan. Taking away instruction time is not the best decision.

Mrs. Casey asked Mr. Cummings what the impact be if we stopped it.

Mr. Amendola told the board the early release time began five years ago. The district has done very well with this plan. The contract language does not allow the work to be at any other time.

Mrs. Casey noted that when the early release time was brought up, there really wasn't a choice. It is what had to be done to make RTI (Response to Intervention).

Chairman Stapleton called for a 15 minute recess at 9:05 p.m.

Chairman Stapleton called the meeting back in order at 9:25 p.m.

3. Operations Report Food Services Report

Mr. Russell introduced Mrs. Faustich, Food Services Director to the board.

Mrs. Faustich gave the board the highlights of the Food Services Financial Report. To date, 47,000 breakfasts have been sold and 265,000 lunches. There are 70 employees and all staff is certified in sanitation. They are non-profit and self sustained with a budget of 2.6M. All revenue is generated from selling lunches and ala carte items.

Human Resources Report

Mrs. Kopazna reviewed the personnel recommendations with the board. She also noted that the anticipated principal openings have been posted. She concluded her report by notifying the board that Milford Public Schools will be participating in the Fairfield County Educator Recruitment Fair. The fair is very well attended and generates approximately 1,000 candidates.

Mr. O'Connell asked Mr. Russell to add Berchem, Moses and Devlin to be on the agenda as Item C. under the Operations Report.

Mr. Russell told him that administration will give more detail on the invoices.

Mr. O'Connell said that he feels administration should consider hiring a lawyer on staff with the appropriate support. It appears that the district is heading toward \$300,000 next year for legal expenses.

Mr. Russell said that it has been an unusual year because of arbitration for administrators and special education attempting to keep students in house.

Before further discussion, Mr. Amendola called for a point of order. He said that before you can discuss an item under Consent Agenda can be discussed, it would need to be moved to New Business.

Mr. White made a motion to move Consent Agenda Item d. The Academy Overnight Field Trip to New Business. Mr. Amendola seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

VII. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS:

The consent agenda included many items this month. These were:

- a. Voucher List (Disbursements): Administration recommends approval of the Disbursement report. (EL-6, EL-7)
- b. Education Specifications for Pumpkin Delight Elementary School Elevator Project: Administration recommends approval of the Ed Specs for the construction of an elevator at Pumpkin Delight and authorize the Acting Superintendent to apply for the State reimbursement grant.
- c. Education Specifications for the Phase III Expansion and Alterations for Foran High School: Administration recommends approval of the Ed Specs for the Phase II Expansion and Alterations for Foran and authorize the Acting Superintendent to apply for the State reimbursement grant.
- d.
- e. Overnight Field Trip: Administration recommends approval of the Foran Varsity Cheerleading team to attend the Cheerleading Competition at the Connecticut Convention Center, which takes place February 13-14, 2010.
- f. Overnight Field Trip: Administration recommends approval of the Jonathan Law Ski Club trip to Smuggler's Notch, VT from March 5-7, 2010.
- g. Overnight Field Trip: Administration recommends approval of the Foran Youth and Government Group trip to Hartford, CT to attend the Youth and Government Conference March 19-21, 2010.
- h. Overnight Field Trip: Administration recommends approval of the Jonathan Law Wrestling Team trip to the Class "M" State Championships in Windham, CT from February 19-20, 2010.
- i. Overnight Field Trip: Administration recommends approval of the Foran Wrestling Team trip to the Class "M" State Championships in Windham, CT from February 19-20, 2010.
- j. Overnight Field Trip: Administration recommends approval of the Foran High School Band and Choir trip to the CMEA All State Music Festival from April 8-10, 2010.

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

Mr. White made the motion to approve the Consent Agenda Items a-j, except for item d, as published. Mr. Amendola seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

VIII. ACTION ITEMS:

a. Unfinished Business
None

b. New Business

d. Overnight field trip: Administration recommends approval of the Academy's requested trip to Plymouth, MA from June 7-10, 2010. The trip will include visits to Plimoth Plantation, Mayflower II and a whale watch. Mr. White told the board the nurse's signature had been crossed out. He did not understand what that meant. Mr. White then made a motion to table consent agenda item d. The Academy's requested trip to Plymouth, MA from June 7-10, 2010. Mr. Amendola seconded.

Mrs. Casey requested administration to give the purpose of the field trip. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. White made a motion to approve the 2010-11 Academic Calendar as presented by the administration. Mr. Amendola seconded. Mr. Cummings explained the calendar is better aligned to the marking period structure.

A discussion ensued about CEUs. The state mandates that the district has to provide the CEUs. The contract dictates the work time for the union employees. By a roll call vote 7-2 (Kruger-Carroll/Tranquilli), the motion passed.

X. BOARD COMMENT:

Mrs. Casey thanked Foran for the invitation to attend the drama club presentation of Charlie Brown. The whole board was invited and it was a great show.

She then said that based on Public Comment, she would hope the board will be receiving the survey and its results.

Mrs. Casey said based on last year's conversation about the graduations, she said the board needs to discuss them sooner than later. Administration should bring a proposal forward.

Mr. Oliver thanked Foran for the drama presentation. He said that he and his family enjoyed it very much. He also thanked Mr. Cummings for his work and extra time that he has put in.

Mr. White asked for the anticipated date of the "new website" to be rolled out to the public. Mr. Cummings said that he has reprioritized projects a bit due to other matters. He will give the board an estimated date soon.

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 10:25 p.m.

Robert White
Corresponding Secretary

Pam Griffin
Recording Secretary

