

Milford Board of Education

Regular Business Meeting Minutes

April 5, 2010

Board members present:

David Amendola
Tracy Casey
Suzanne DiBiase
Diane Kruger-Carroll
Josip Jukic
Greg Oliver
Mark Stapleton
Jay Tranquilli
Robert White

Administrators present:

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

Board members absent:

Jack O'Connell

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Milford Board of Education held a regular business meeting on Monday, April 5, 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 recognized three groups at the meeting. They were:

Kathy Bonetti, Communications Coordinator

Steven Wright, secretary treasurer of the Connecticut Association of Board's of Education (CABE). He then presented Kathy Bonetti and Milford Public Schools with the Award for Excellence in Communication. Awards of excellence are given to districts annually when the district stands out for excellence. The award was given for the submission of the Milford Citizen's Guide. The guide was found to be an exceptional educational document, but also invites and encourages the citizens of the community to not only understand the budget process but to play an active role. He personally thanked Kathy for her hard work in developing the guide for the district.

West Shore Middle School

Milford Elks Lodge sponsored an essay contest titled "What it Means to be an American." Students from many schools, both public and private entered the contest. West Shore students placed in the top three. The students were:

Richie Dow, 8th grade, 3rd place
Elizabeth Rice, 8th grade, 2nd place
Maria Gjuraj, 8th grade, 1st place
Tom Acri, Social Studies Teacher

Foran High School

The Boys' State Swimming competition took place March 18th at Wesleyan University in Middletown. The Foran team did an outstanding job placing 3rd in the Class "S" Finals. In addition, Foran had two individuals earning high recognitions: Rich Enders earned All-State Honors and set a new school record by beating his father. Dylan Swanepoel was named to all the All-Area Swim Team by the CT Post and New Haven Register newspapers. Dylan has also earned All-State Honors as well as being the State Champion in the 500 Freestyle. He also set a new school record for Foran in this event, breaking the record set in 1983. Recognized team members were:

Josh Bartosiewicz	Andrew DeLuke
Chris Gilmore	Chris Sweeney
Stan Olsson	Jia Wei Fan
Richard Enders	Dylan Swanepoel
Matt Haselkamp	Kristin Skuches

Approved

Sportsmanship Award

Heather Saucier, Jonathan Law Basketball Coach has been selected to receive the “Rudy Canelli Sportsmanship Award” given by the New Haven District Board of Approved Basketball Officials. This award is presented to the coach who best exhibited outstanding sportsmanship this past season.

Coach Saucier’s three team captains joined her tonight to help honor her. Under her leadership, the team achieved success in reaching the Sweet 16 at the State level and the Ellite 8 at the SCC level. Recognized were:

Heather Saucier, Head Coach

Avery Rourke, Tri-Captain

Shayna Calandro, Tri-Captain

Casey Dulin, Tri-Captain

Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR)

The last recognition of the evening went to a sixth grade student of East Shore Middle School. T.J. Stuart received an assignment from his history teacher, David Cannizzaro, to write an essay for the Milford DAR chapter. The theme of the essay was “Transcontinental Railroad.” T.J.’s essay to first place in the State competition level. It will now be entered into the Northeast Regional competition. Mr. Cummings thanked T.J. and his teacher for the outstanding essay.

III. CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

- a) Mr. White made a motion to accept the March 8, 2010 meeting minutes as approved. Mr. Amendola seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
- b) Mr. White made a motion to accept the March 15, 2010 meeting minutes as approved. Mr. Amendola seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
- c) Mr. White made a motion to accept the March 17, 2010 (6:00 pm) meeting minutes as approved. Mr. Amendola seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
- d) Mr. White made a motion to accept the March 17, 2010 (7:00 pm) meeting minutes as approved. Mr. Amendola seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
- e) Mr. White made a motion to accept the March 22, 2010 meeting minutes as approved. Mr. Amendola seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Cathy Berni – 96 Centennial Drive – She thanked Mr. Cummings for all of his hard work during this time. She further said he has gotten the word out to parents about the budget. He has really communicated to the community. She trusts his judgement!

Lauri Fucci – Welch’s Point – With regard to the SFSF funds. In the proposed budget, there is an increase of 3.85% in the 2010-11 budget. Can the Board of Aldermen cut this?

She is confused how the stimulus money is paid out. Mr. Russell told her that the Federal Government gave Milford 1.5M which paid for 30.4 teachers. The 30.4 teachers will be paid for next year out of the 1.5M paid by the government. Those positions are not in the budget for next year. He offered her the opportunity to contact him for further clarification.

V. CHAIR’S REPORT

Chairman Stapleton called for the Liaison Reports.

There were none.

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**

High School Graduation

Approved

Mr. Cummings told the board the decision has been made to have high school graduation on June 23, 2010 at 5:15 p.m., simultaneously. He had previously provided the board with options and it was administration's recommendation to hold graduation on the same day at the same time.

Budget Update

Mr. Cummings then shifted his focus to the very difficult 2010-11 budget and the recent Board of Finance cut of 2.2M. He told the board the Board of Aldermen will not vote in early May. However, administration is planning for the 2.2M cut. This is the second year of what looks like a three to five year economic crunch for the school system throughout the state. He further said the planning will need to be responsive to what has come before and what will come next. Last year, the district handled the cut by making Central Office cuts, delay buildings and grounds projects, textbooks etc. The stimulus money saved 30.4 jobs. Another chunk of money was given to the district and a few more jobs were saved. When you take just the 1.5M that equates to a 2% budget increase alone. The district is not in a position to find money the conventional way. That cannot continue. He then said a long term plan needs to be implemented.

He presented four options that may resolve the gap. They are:

1. Central office administrators would be eliminated. This would not be beneficial to the district. All positions are the infrastructure on how the system works.
2. Severely reduce staffing levels by going to contractual maximums. K-1 is 25 and 2-12 is 30. This would not have enough staffing cuts to meet the 2.2M cuts.
3. Closing one or more elementary schools and redistribute those children. This would bring a cost savings of between \$400,000 to \$500,000. This plan would need to be thought out for years to come. You would save more money would be saved if you move to a K-2 3-5 system. This would allow the class sizes to be within an acceptable range.
4. Combination of all three.

He said the cuts made this year are only the first step of the process. While he knows this is a major change and it will add quality to the educational process, he knows that it is a personal process. He also said that he has reviewed hundreds of ideas recommended by staff. Some of those recommendations will be implemented into the plan.

Mr. Cummings then announced that he will give an in depth presentation to the board at the Committee of the Whole meeting in April. He said every area will be affected by this decision.

Mrs. Casey said that Milford is not alone. Many districts are facing the same budget cuts and are looking at different ways to educate the students. She then said that people always talk about the jobs at Central Office. She then said that it would helpful if administration told the board what impact Central Office personnel have on the budget. The board could then be proactive rather than reactive.

Mr. Cummings told her that no area would be unaffected by budget cuts. He also said that every job is part of the infrastructure that makes the system run.

Chairman Stapleton said the cuts need to be made different than in years past. The plan needs to be a futuristic plan; one that is long term. We already know that 1.5M will be cut from the budget next year. He also said that Milford is not alone. School districts across the state and even country are having the same budgetary problems. He further said that Milford enrollment numbers are declining.

Mr. White stated that Milford could end up a stronger system with better schools, therefore, a better city. The plan is going to be a long term plan and not just a band aid. He looks forward to the presentation.

3. Operations Report

Personnel Report

Mrs. Kopazna reported the listing of job openings, as well as the personnel changes for March, 2010.

Mrs. Casey asked for an update on the principal replacements.

Approved

Mrs. Kopazna told her that the positions were posted and candidates to be interviewed have been selected. Mr. Cummings then said that administration would conduct interviews, but an offer would not be made until the budget is approved.

Budget Report

Mr. Russell presented the Budget Performance Report for March 30, 2010, as well as the Cash Disbursements Report. He explained the report and the series of accounts to the board. He told the board the 3302 account, Negotiation Services, is project to be over by \$79,000. He then recommended a transfer of \$80,000 from 1111, Certified Teachers, to 3302. There are a certain number of vacancies when teachers retire. The teachers retire at a higher rate than the teachers who are hired to replace them. He then said he will continue to monitor the account. He then reported 96.5% of the budget has been encumbered.

Mr. Amendola asked where the superintendents search money would come from. Mr. Russell told him the board would need to transfer the funds from another account. He then said that he will be conducting an analysis of the utilities and believes there will be a savings in the gas account.

Mr. Amendola asked how much money is in the freeze accounts for the schools. This money is held back and then given to the principals at the end of the budget season.

Mr. Russell told him that it is usually between \$120,000 to \$150,000.

Mr. Russell told the board that at a future board meeting, administration will be presenting a list of items that are needed by the school system. The items are mostly buildings projects. In the event of a surplus, the funds would then be used on those projects.

Mr. Russell then read the Thrift Plan from the Milford Federal of Paraprofessionals statement (see attached), as required by the State.

VII. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS:

Mr. White asked for a motion to approve consent agenda items a-g. Mr. Amendola seconded.

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

- a. Voucher List (Disbursements): Administration recommends approval of the Disbursement report. (EL-6, EL-7)
- b. Graduation Date & Time: Administration recommends approval of June 23, 2010 at 5:15 p.m. to be the graduation date and time for Milford Public Schools
- c. Budget Transfers: Administration recommends approval of budget transfers in the amount of \$80,000 from series account 1111 to series account 3302
- d. Certified Resolution: Administration recommends approval of the Certified Resolution for Housatonic Community College Classroom Use
- e. Project #084-0167 EA: Administration recommends approval of the Alternative High School (The Academy) Project #084-0167 as complete.
- f. Overnight Field Trip: Administration recommends approval of The Academy overnight field trip to Washington, DC as part of the Interdistrict Grant from April 12-14, 2010.

The motion passed unanimously.

VIII. ACTION ITEMS:

- a. Unfinished Business
Mrs. Casey asked for an update on the Lacrosse program discussion.

Mr. Cummings said that Mr. Russell has reviewed the plan. He and Mr. Russell are planning to meet with the parent.

- b. New Business
Mr. White made a motion to approve the Chairman to write a letter to MEA regarding discussion of proposed budget cuts. Mr. Amendola seconded.

Approved

Chairman Stapleton told the board it would be a letter to engage in conversation and to come up with ways to save money.

Mr. Oliver asked how it would be handled; like a board retreat or business meeting.

Mr. Stapleton said he is going to send a letter to the MEA and then schedule a meeting.

Mr. Russell said that the chairman sent a letter last year. One furlough day or a pay freeze was requested from all of the unions. No concessions were made last year.

Mrs. Casey said that all unions were approached last year and the discussions were focused on salaries. She believes that this will be a different approach to discuss other ways to address the budget shortfall.

Chairman Stapleton said the intent to have a discussion of cost savings.

Mr. Amendola agreed to this meeting. He also said they could have it without attorneys.

The motion passed 9-1 (O'Connell absent).

X. BOARD COMMENT:

Mr. Amendola said policy changes should be on hold until a new superintendent is named. He explained that every superintendent or board member is entitled to their opinion. However, the policies should stay status quo until the new person is seated.

Chairman Stapleton said that a board retreat would need to be scheduled to discuss policy and procedural changes. Inconsistencies have been brought to his attention. The board can review them at a board retreat.

Mrs. Casey said that the board would only approve board policies not administrative policies. She also said that the acting superintendent should not be making any changes to policies without making the board aware of the change.

Mrs. Casey recommended that the Committee of the Whole meeting locations be identified soon and communicated to the board. She said space and attendance projection should be taken into consideration when planning a location.

Chairman Stapleton likes the idea of having the Committee of the Whole meetings at the schools. It allows the board and the public to get the feel of the schools and in some cases how programs in the district work.

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 8:25 p.m.

Robert White
Corresponding Secretary

Pam Griffin
Recording Secretary

**MILFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM**

Deputy Superintendent of Operations

To: Milford Board of Education

From: Philip G. Russell
Deputy Superintendent of Operations

Date: April 5, 2010

Subject: Restatement of Adoption Agreement for a “Thrift Plan for the Milford Federation of Paraprofessionals”

In May of 2001, the Milford Board of Education previously adopted the “Thrift Plan for the Milford Federation of Paraprofessionals” as an alternative to a traditional pension plan. This Thrift plan was established as a result of labor negotiations with the Paraprofessional union. Before 2001, the paraprofessional employees did not have any post retirement monetary benefits.

Essentially, the plan is a defined contribution program where Milford Public School employees contribute up to five percent of their salary, all of which is matched by the Milford Public Schools. The funds are sent to an independent Trustee (currently Charles Schwab Inc.), and those funds are invested for the eventual use and benefit of the individual paraprofessional upon retirement.

In 2005 the plan needed to be amended due to changes in the regulatory act titled “The Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001 (EGTRRA).

Since then, the Pension Protection Act of 2006(PPA), the Heroes Earnings Assistance and Relief Tax Act of 2008 (HEART), the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 (EESA) and the Worker, Retiree and Employer Recovery Act of 2008 (WRERA) were passed. All of these Federal laws must be incorporated into the existing Thrift Plan through the restatement process.

Under Policy Governance, I am authorized to make these changes and am required to report that these updates are being made to the plan.

PGR/m
File: 4-5-10 MBOE