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Milford Board of Education

Meeting Minutes
May 29, 2012

Board members present:

Tracy Casey
Suzanne DiBiase
George Gensure
Susan Glennon
James Maroney
Beverly Pierson
Christopher Saley
Earl Whiskeyman

Administration present:

Dr. Elizabeth Feser
Michael Cummings
Wendy Kopazna
James Richetelli

Board members absent:

Dora Kubek
Mark Stapleton

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Milford Board of Education held a Committee of the Whole Meeting on Tuesday, May 29, 2012 in the Board Room at the Parsons Complex. Chair Casey began the meeting by thanking the servicemen both past and present for the service to our country. She then turned the meeting over to Dr. Feser.

II. ENROLLMENT PROJECTION

Dr. Feser told the board the context for the meeting was to approve the 2012-2013 budget. The Board of Aldermen passed the budget that the board proposed. She then turned the meeting over to Mr. Cummings.

Mr. Cummings pointed out that there are a couple things different from the enrollment projection being put before the board tonight versus what was presented in January. Pumpkin Delight grade four decreased to five class rooms from six. Orange Avenue grade one decreased from five to four class rooms. He further said that administration is committed to keeping the alignment to the maximum class sizes of 20 for kindergarten. Kindergarten enrollment is very hard to project due to retainment, children going to magnet schools and moving out of Milford. Mr. Cummings then said that the classes have not yet been finalized.

Mrs. Casey asked Mr. Cummings asked if administration plans to maintain the number of teachers proposed in the January budget. Mr. Cummings told her the plan is to add elementary literacy coaches. She then asked him to explain that as they were not included in the budget presented and approved by the board.

Mr. Cummings told the board the math coach has been proven to improve math scores. The district currently has reading consultants. While the reading consultants have shown some improvements, they work in the reactive mode. The math coach works in a proactive mode.

Mrs. Casey asked if there are funds allotted for the literacy coaches.

Mr. Cummings told her that some funding would come from Title I funds and from reallocation of funds.

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Mrs. Casey clarified that adding the literacy coaches changes the budget that the board approved in January.

Dr. Feser told her that the administration only began discussing the literacy coaches within recent weeks because of the enrollment projections.

Mrs. Casey told the administration that she understands the desire and need for the literacy coaches. However, it changes the budget by adding a position that is not in the approved budget. While it may not change the dollar amount, it changes the staffing numbers.

Mr. Cummings told the board that it doesn't change the FTE. It changes the need.

Mrs. Casey then told the administration that the change is in positions. The position was not approved by the board. She further told the administration that just because you go down in enrollment does not warrant new positions to keep the number of staff. There needs to be clarity on what the board is to approve. The shifting of classes is something the board would not be involved in; adding position is.

Dr. Feser then said that the discussion began when the administration was made aware of the grant funds.

Mr. Whiskeyman asked if the job description would be different. He was told yes.

Ms. Glennon asked for clarity on the changes to the elementary enrollment.

Mr. Cummings told her that the kindergarten positions at Live Oaks, Mathewson and Orange Avenue were reduced by one. Grade four at Pumpkin and grade one at Orange Avenue were reduced by one.

Mr. Saley asked Mr. Cummings if the plan was to hire eight literacy coaches. Mr. Cummings responded by telling Mr. Saley that he hopes to hire eight. Some would be funded by grant money and reallocation.

Mr. Cummings then reviewed the middle and high school enrollment projections with board. He then told the board the next enrollment will be presented in August.

Following the discussion, the board reached a consensus that administration should seek the board's feedback before adding positions.

Dr. Feser told the board the Title 1 funds gave administration the opportunity to discuss adding literacy coaches. In addition, the enrollment numbers are fluid numbers.

Mrs. Casey told the administration the board has approved the budget that included dollars and positions. The board carefully reviewed the positions associated with the dollars. There was never a discussion of adding literacy coaches. The coaches will fall within a program. Therefore, it is considered adding staff. She further said that the board should discuss the position. She concluded by stating that the board is fiscally responsible for the budget.

III. TRANSPORTATION UPDATE/STRATEGY FOR REDUCING \$200,000

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Mr. Richetelli introduced Judy Messologitis who is the transportation coordinator for the Milford Public Schools. He then narrated a PowerPoint presentation (attached). He began by giving an overview of the current bus transportation for the district.

In reviewing the PowerPoint, Mrs. Casey asked for clarification of the transportation policy. Mr. Richetelli told her the current policy is incorrect. The administration will make the appropriate changes and present them to the board. They are related to the transportation distance K-5 students who live 1 mile will be transported, 6-8 students who live 1 ½ miles will be transported and 9-12 students who live 2 miles will be offered transportation.

Mr. Richetelli further explained there are currently two busses transporting to Trumbull VoAg. He recommended reducing it to one bus with a savings of \$40,000 to the district.

Mrs. Casey asked Mr. Richetelli to speak to that. She recalls the conversation regarding eliminating a bus has come up in the past. However, the parents rallied and the bus was not eliminated. How would this be different?

Mr. Richetelli explained that administration would set up approximately 6 depots for the students. The administration had recommended pick up and drop off be at the home school. This will give some flexibility.

Mrs. Casey also noted that ECA students are dropped off at the home high school. Those students have chosen to attend a school outside of Milford just like the VoAg students.

Mr. Whiskeyman asked if the depots would be within the mile radius for walkers. Mr. Richetelli told him there is the possibility that it would not.

Mr. Saley asked if the wording could be changed from depot to bus stop.

Mrs. Pierson clarified that there are 23 students who are transported to VoAg and there are 23 stops. Mr. Richetelli told her that was correct.

Mr. Richetelli then explained the next savings would be combining the parochial schools into one bus route. Currently, there are two buses. The schools have already been notified. This will provide a savings of \$100,000.

Mrs. Casey asked if another tier could be added to the VoAg bus; possibly a run to the late elementary school.

Mr. Richetelli explained the bus used to transport to VoAg is small. However, he would look into that for an added savings.

Finally, the consolidation of bus runs on the northern side of the city would bring \$60,000.

Board members asked Mr. Richetelli if more students could be placed on a bus. The bus stops at every corner. Could this be changed?

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He told the board the amount of students on a bus does not bring the costs down. The amount of tiers would bring the costs down. However, you need to keep to a 30 minute window. There really is a science to the allocation of buses and their associated runs.

Ms. Glennon asked if the bus drivers make modifications on their own.

Mr. Richetelli told her that they are not supposed to do that.

Mr. Richetelli then updated the board on the new site for Durham. He told the board that Durham has signed with the old site for Connecticut Limo as their home site. The site has a fuel tank. If the system can be accessed, then the buses may be able to purchase fuel at wholesale creating another savings to the district.

Mr. Saley asked for the different prices of retail and wholesale. He was told retail is \$4.05 and wholesale is \$2.85. That would be a considerable savings.

Dr. Feser thanked Mr. Richetelli and Mrs. Messologitis for the numerous hours working on the savings.

Mrs. Casey cautioned Mr. Richetelli that the previous administration tried change the bus transportation for Trumbull VoAg to no avail.

Mr. Saley asked if we offer a stipend to students that are transported out of the district. Mrs. Messologitis told him that the district currently does that for some students.

Mrs. Casey asked if the law states that we have to transport those students. She suggested that administration look at the law to ensure that we are currently transporting students per the law.

VI. 2012-12 BOARD OF EDUCATION BUDGET ADOPTION:

Mr. Maroney made a motion to approve the budget for 2012-2013 as proposed by the administration in the amount of \$86,882,363. Mrs. DiBiase seconded the motion.

Mrs. Casey told administration that the budget should reflect the changes to the number of teachers to literacy coaches. FTE allocated or at least include the literacy coaches.

Mr. Cummings told the board the only two positions being eliminated at this time are a 4th grade at Pumpkin and 1st grade at Orange Ave.

Mrs. Casey does not like the approach administration has taken on adding elementary literacy coaches. The administration is leveraging the number of teachers because of enrollment to pay for something. How will administration manage two specialist's across eight schools? Furthermore, the coaches were not in the original budget submitted to the board.

Mr. Cummings explained there were three positions being held in reserve in the event enrollment needs change.

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Mrs. Casey asked what would be done with those three positions if they are not needed.

Mr. Cummings told her that in the past, the board adopted the budget and told administration to manage the monies. Adjustments were made based on enrollment needs. For example, Meadowside chose to use a certified teacher as a floater. The teacher is not assigned to a specific classroom. That has worked for Meadowside.

Mrs. Glennon said she is not comfortable with the discussion. She would like to approve the budget as it is. However, if there is a need for literacy coaches, she would like to see a presentation.

Mrs. Casey agreed. She too would like to see a presentation.

Mr. Gensure told the board the budget is to be approved. He then said that the board should approve the budget that was approved by the Board of Aldermen and what the board approved in January.

Mr. Whiskeyman agreed.

Mr. Gensure said the literacy coaches will be part of a program and the board will look at the effectiveness to see how well it is doing.

Mrs. Casey said that the budget is being approved is that was presented with the headcount that was presented based on headcount based on students but to change positions would need board approval.

The motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None.

V. BOARD COMMENT:

Mr. Gensure applauded Mrs. Messologitis and Mr. Richetelli for the transportation presentation. He thanked them for the time and effort they put forth. It was a well thought out approach to reducing the budget by \$200,000.

Mr. Maroney echoed Mr. Gensure's comments. The board gave them a challenge and they met that challenge.

Mrs. Casey also thanked them on behalf of the whole board. She also expressed that they will need to communicate with the VoAg parents regarding the changes to the transportation.

XI. ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Maroney made a motion to adjourn. Ms. DiBiase seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

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Mr. James Maroney
Corresponding Secretary

Pam Griffin
Recording Secretary