

Milford Board of Education

Meeting Minutes

Regular Business Meeting

August 10, 2009

Board members present:

David Amendola
Tracy Casey
David Hourigan, Board Chair
Cindy Kopazna (arrived 7:10)
Jim Quish
Joanne Rohrig, Minority Leader
Jim Santa Barbara
Pamela Staneski
Greta Stanford, Majority Leader
David Steinlauf

Administrators present:

Harvey Polansky, Superintendent
Philip Russell, Deputy Superintendent
Michael Cummings, Assistant Superintendent
Susan Kelleher, Dir. of Pupil Personnel Services
Wendy Kopazna, Dir. of Human Resources

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Milford Board of Education held its regular business meeting on Monday, August 10, 2009, in the Board of Education Meeting Room at the Parsons Complex. Board Chair David Hourigan called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance immediately following.

II. CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

Mrs. Stanford made a motion to accept the July 13, 2009 meeting minutes as approved. Mrs. Rohrig seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

Bob Gemignani of 39 Lance Lane – His son attends Foran and plays hockey for the Milford Indians. He made note that the agenda only had the reinstatement of the football coaches and not reinstatement of the \$3,000 for the hockey program. The hockey program will have safety issues without the funds. He said that he checked the minutes from the original budget meetings held in January and did not see the budget cut. He concluded by asking the board to reinstate the \$3,000 into the hockey program.

Sal Follo – He is not a Milford resident. He is currently the Head Coach for the hockey program. He explained to the board that he started out coaching for the program for free. The assistant coaches do not get paid. The program has suffered an additional \$5,000 cut this year. Adding another \$3,000 will devastate the program and its participants. The kids that play hockey, love it. Everyone gets ice time and the children who have never skated need more time. Ice time will be sacrificed with the \$3,000 cut. He asked the board to restore the funds for the program.

Holly Bonessi of 157 Gulf Street – Mrs. Bonessi asked the board for clarification of “Public Comment.” It is a time for the public to address the board. She said she was appalled by comments made by a parent at the July 13, 2009 Board meeting. The comments made by the parent were not appropriate or accurate.

Mrs. Bonessi told the board her son is a hockey player. She said we, as a community, should be developing the students. The hockey program promotes that. She too would like to see the funds restored.

Mr. Broader of 386 Plains Road – The newspaper posted that the district is going to receive \$586,000 from the government to help Milford study how to save money. He suggested using some of that money to restore funds for the hockey program.

Michelle Olsen of 112 Hilltop Circle – She thanked administration for following through on the promises made about beautifying East Shore. The curtains look great.

Colleen Kirmaier of 181 Cedar Lane – Her son will be a senior at Foran and he plays hockey. She explained that the hockey program does a lot of fundraising and trying to do more to make up for the \$3,000 cut will not work.

Dennis Teixeira of North Street. His daughter attends the VoAg program. He understands administration has cut out some of the transportation for the program. This will cause his daughter to walk down North Street and cross the Post Road to reach her stop. There is a serious safety issue with crossing the Post Road. He asked the board to review the route and consider changing it.

IV. CHAIR'S REPORT

Chair David Hourigan told the board he recently received a letter from NEASC accepting Jonathan Law's two year progress report. This is very good news for the district. He then asked if there were any additional Liaison Reports.

Mr. Quish told the board there will be a Permanent School Facility Building Committee meeting soon.

V. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

1. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Polansky reported that administration has examined the bus routes for the Trumbull VoAg program. Some changes may occur due to safety concerns. He assured the board that this will be done while maintaining the cuts that were made by the board. Dr. Polansky then said there may be a need to add a partial bus to the routes, which may be found from a former route that is no longer needed. He assured the board again, the changes would stay within the board approved transportation dollars.

Mrs. Staneski requested the changes be reported to the board when they are completed.

Mrs. Casey requested to see how the different programs are being handled at all of the schools. She has knowledge that the children who participate in ECA are returned to the home school at approximately 5:00 p.m. She understands that the transportation from school to home is the responsibility of the student. She would like to see a comparison of the VoAg and the ECA transportation.

2. Instructional Report Graduation Statistics

Mr. Cummings shared the Graduation Statistics Report with the board. The district had 521 graduates in all. Seven will return in September. More than likely, those seven will graduate in January. He noted there was an increase of admissions to technology schools and the armed services from last year.

Mr. Quish requested a comparison of the former DRG with a breakdown of students attending two year colleges versus four year colleges.

CAPT/CMT

Mr. Cummings then shared an overview of the CAPT/CMT scores for the district. He told the board a better analysis will be reported to the board at the September Committee of the Whole meeting. The schools are currently engaged in the process of examining the scores and the students involved. The administrators will look at who has been teaching, the staff, how serious are the students who are taking the test and if the students would do better if the test was extended out a couple days.

Dr. Polansky said the district needs to visit area high schools that are doing well. Best practices were brought forth in middle schools. The same needs to be done at the high school level. The preparation given in the middle schools will help at the high schools level as well. The next year will be spent developing best practices and synthesizing them into a high school package.

Mr. Santa Barbara asked if the district is losing children to the private sector. Mr. Cummings said that the district is losing some to private schools. There are also serious concerns with the delivery model of students in special education. The district needs to learn how to provide resources and remediate learning for all students who are identified or not.

Dr. Polansky told the board that RTI (Response to Intervention) will help the district. He also said that administrators have been working on staff placement to align the districts best teachers are teaching the young students.

Mrs. Staneski said she would like to see how many A's, B's and C's were received in 9th grade. She is concerned with the drop in the scores from 9th to 10th grade.

Mrs. Casey would like to see a list of schools that correlate with the test scores, and the schools that are accepting the students at the Committee of the Whole meeting.

Mr. Cummings then said that overall, the district has made positive progress with the CMT. The district has had a breakthrough year for reading at the middle school level. The ability to bring language arts content into science and math is paying off.

A discussion ensued.

Mr. Cummings explained that the early release Wednesdays will be dedicated to developing a level of tests and examination of student work and curriculum aligning to the students needs.

Advanced Placement Test Results

Mr. Cummings reported that 359 exams taken. Students were allowed to take AP tests in courses whether they took the class or did not. Results have shown that the more AP exams a student takes, the better they do on the exams.

Mr. Quish said he understands a more thorough analysis will be given in September. He requested to see a comparison of the reference groups, the graduation statistics, and a breakdown of four-year schools versus two-year schools, the schools applied to and getting into. He would also like to see the CMT and CAPT scores listed by school and a cohort analysis.

High School Transition

Mr. Cummings told the board the district needs a program to send the students who are not ready for the regular high school program. The district currently has six students who have not graduated from 8th grade. All of the students have attendance issues. One student has been in 6th grade for three years. He then told the board that he is working with Mr. Blake at The Academy on a program that would teach the students basic skills to prepare them for 9th grade.

Therefore, administration will need to add .4 FTE at the Academy to accommodate this. The costs involved with the addition are \$16,000. This money is in the current budget.

Mrs. Staneski asked if the children would be better served taking a GED program. She questioned the dollars associated with this program. She was told the students are not age eligible to take the GED.

Mrs. Kopazna suggested the students be home schooled. Dr. Polansky brought up the social element involved with attending school. He would not want to reward a student for not attending school.

Dr. Polansky said the law requires that students be provided an education until they are 21. Out placement could exceed \$50,000. This program will allow the students the opportunity to attend a program in a well suited place for \$16,000. If they are sent to the high school now, they will fail.

Mrs. Staneski asked if the Project Graduation grant would be available for this situation and was told the mission of the grant is very different. Dr. Polansky told her the State may at some point require the district to provide an environment. An example would be an outbound experience.

A discussion ensued about new program. In conclusion, some Board members were mixed over the new program.

Enrollment

Mr. Cummings shared the Enrollment Report with the board. He told the board July was a slow month for enrollment. The board has placed two teachers on contingency. If the district has a need to utilize them, they would be considered new hires. He reported at the current time, class sizes are balanced. He also notified the board that all teachers affected by the RIF were recalled.

Chairman Hourigan asked for a recess at 8:55 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 9:10 p.m.

3. Operational Report

Personnel Report

Mrs. Kopazna, Director of Human Resources, presented the report for July. Currently there have been 28 new teacher hires. The district is still interviewing for nine or 10 more teachers.

Mr. Quish asked for clarification of the guidance stipend. He was told there are two levels. It is in exchange for working 10 extra days (not in the contract).

Mr. Amendola asked how the new State law would impact our substitute teachers.

Mrs. Kopazna said that substitute teachers who do not have a bachelor's degree used to be able to get a waiver from the State. That is no longer allowed. There are 12 to 15 current substitute teachers who do not have bachelor's degrees. The affected teachers have received notification of the new procedure.

Chairman Hourigan asked administration to change the language "terminate" in the Personnel Report to another word that appropriately describes "Reduction in Force".

Budget Report for July

Mr. Russell presented the Budget Performance Report for July and the Cash Disbursements Report. 19% of the budget has been spent. Salaries will be encumbered in September. He reported the district may see a surplus in the gas account if there is a light winter.

Food Services Report

Mrs. Faustich reported the 2008-09 food services financials ended the year with a surplus of \$86,929.00. She reported the breakfast participation had no change and the lunch program participation decreased 4%. She then told the board she anticipates that she will purchase a refrigerated truck with the surplus generated this year.

VI. CONSENT AGENDA

Greta Stanford made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda item a., as presented. The Consent agenda included:

- Voucher List Disbursement

Motion passed unanimously.

VII. ACTION ITEMS

Unfinished Business

Mrs. Stanford made a motion to remove "reinstatement of assistant football coaching positions at Jonathan Law and Joseph Foran" from the table. After a roll call vote 9-1 (Rohrig), the motion passed.

Mr. Quish wanted to bring up the costs of letterman jackets provided at Law and Foran. He said if the board did not fund the costs of jackets, those funds could be used to reinstate a coach.

Chairman Hourigan said the budget reflects one head coach and four paid assistants. Currently Law would have six and Foran would have seven.

Mr. Vitelli recently told the board that volunteers have to go through the same standards (CPR and a coaching class with a cost of approximately \$400). He said he shared a comparison with the board. Milford is down coaches compared to other districts. Football is a different sport. It has expenses that far exceed any other sport. The fundamentals and the technique of this sport are physical. Players can get hurt. Many students have never played football. He said he is certain there is the need for at least one more coach.

Mrs. Staneski asked why football needs more than other contact sports.

Mr. Vitelli told her that soccer only has two. He told the board they need to explore coaching of all athletics.

Dr. Polansky said he is currently in discussions with CIAC regarding the five standards associated with athletics. It will involve staff, students and parents. A full accreditation will be done.

Mr. Santa Barbara asked how difficult it has been to recruit coaches. Mr. Vitelli told him it has been difficult.

Mr. Amendola asked Mr. Russell for the total athletic budget. Mr. Amendola emphasized that Milford cannot compete with other districts that only have one high school. Milford has two high schools. The board continues to cut out dollars and put them back in.

Mrs. Casey stated that Dr. Polansky has said the recommendations did not come from him. She had asked Dr. Polansky to go back and come forward with his best recommendation.

Mrs. Kopazna said she too is disturbed by Dr. Polansky telling the board he did not recommend the cut. She then added that she has been very troubled by the boards actions. The board has not kept with their original decision by opening up every item the public brings forward.

Mrs. Rohrig told Mrs. Kopazna the request to reinstate the assistant coaches came after safety and the lack thereof was brought to her attention.

Mr. Quish asked Dr. Polansky what he thought the proper staffing is for assistant coaches.

Dr. Polansky told him four assistants. However, with the significant cuts made to the budget during the approval process, he felt that athletics needed to share the burden of the cuts.

Mrs. Staneski told the board she would not support reinstating the assistant coaches for football if the board does not reinstate the \$3,000 hockey cut.

Dr. Polansky then told the board that if the football coaches are reinstated, the athletic directors will need to reallocate monies within those series of accounts. He would then ask the directors to report back to administration.

Mrs. Staneski said that she would hope the cut would not affect the quality of uniforms etc. She hopes the district will complete a full report with the CIAC and build on the findings.

Mr. Amendola questioned the timing of certain projects and if they were “necessary” in this economic time.

Mr. Santa Barbara moved to question. Mrs. Stanford seconded. By a roll call vote 8-2 (Kopazna/Steinlauf), the motion passed. Chairman Hourigan directed Dr. Polansky to find the monies from within the athletics budget.

Mrs. Casey made a motion to add “reinstatement of \$3,000 to the hockey program by reallocating the money from the coaches’ athletic budget”. Mr. Amendola seconded. The motion passed.

Mrs. Casey said that this has been a very difficult budget process. She said that the Board learned of the administration’s disagreement with the cuts agreed to in the budget after the budget was approved. She said the good news for the future is that the Board spent significant hours together at an off-site retreat focusing on the budget and how it should be put together via policy governance. Specifically, it is the board’s job to develop true guidelines for administration and administration to make the budget cut recommendations.

Mrs. Rohrig would like to defer to the athletic director and administration for their recommendation.

Dr. Polansky told the board it would be unpopular to say no. However, he feels there needs to be sharing of the burden by the hockey program. He then said he would go back to the athletic directors to find \$10,500 of cuts in the athletic account.

Mr. Vitelli said he would take the direction from the superintendent and find the money. He also said he feels it is necessary.

Mr. Steinlauf said he doesn't want to keep doing this. He said if we can now find the money, it should have been the priority two months ago.

Mrs. Kopazna said that she agrees with Mr. Steinlauf. While she is a proponent of athletics, she believes the board can not continue to revisit decisions made by the board.

Mrs. Casey moved to question.

Chairman Hourigan repeated the motion on the floor is to reinstate the \$3,000 to the hockey program by reallocating the funds within the athletics budget. By a roll call vote 8-2 (Kopazna/Steinlauf), the motion passed.

VIII. BOARD COMMENT

Chairman Hourigan told the public that both the republicans and democrats spent a lot of time discussing the budget. Various cuts were made. Some issues were brought to the board's attention and modifications were made. Tonight, a change to the Academy program was discussed. It has been a very difficult year. The board made the appropriate decision.

IX. ADJOURN

David Amendola made a motion to adjourn. Joanne Rohrig seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 10:30 p.m.