

Milford Board of Education

Meeting Minutes

Regular Business Meeting

September 14, 2009

Board members present:

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

Administrators present:

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

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Milford Board of Education held its regular business meeting on Monday, September 14th, in the Board of Education Meeting Room in 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

- a) Greta Stanford made a motion to accept the August 10, 2009 meeting minutes as approved. Joanne Rohrig seconded. With the noted language changes made by Mrs. Casey, the motion passed unanimously.
- b) Greta Stanford made a motion to accept the August 18, 2009 meeting minutes as approved. Joanne Rohrig seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mrs. C. Berni of 96 Centennial Drive – She reminded the board of store incentives where the schools can benefit. Some stores participating are Stop and Shop, Shoprite, Target and more. She would like it communicated throughout the district. It is an easy way for the district to receive free stuff.

Mr. M. Taylor of 340 Wolf Harbor Road – He expressed his displeasure with the way the president's speech was handled. He said his son was very upset that he was not allowed to watch the speech live. His son is very involved with his Youth and Government class. Mr. Taylor also understood that an email was sent after the original decision not to show the speech advising the staff that the class could watch it if it fit into their curriculum. Not showing the speech in real time diminishes the intent. He believes that was a mistake. That being said, it was a short speech by the president of the United States. The message was released on Monday, therefore, giving the district enough time to send the right message to the kids that "education is important."

Dr. Polansky told Mr. Taylor his decision not to show the speech district-wide never changed. He included that if a teacher chose to use the speech as part of their curriculum, they could do so. Dr. Polansky sent a message to the administrators notifying them of the decision the Thursday before the speech was to be aired. He said it was never meant to disrespect the president. He further said that he did not want to interrupt instructional time and the speech was going to be delivered during lunch waves in some schools. This would have been a logistical nightmare. He chose to make the speech available to all by putting a direct link to listen to the speech on the website and copies were distributed to all media centers.

Ms. L. Biagioni – 73 Sentinel Hill Road - She began by thanking the board for reinstating the football coaches at the two high schools. A students' involvement in athletics has been proven to improve academics. She then read a prepared statement that referenced the district's assessment tests. In her statement she told the board that every student learns at a different level. For this reason, differentiated instruction is a key component to enhance each student's learning ability. She also stated that she felt that Dr. Polansky missed a great opportunity when he chose not to allow the student's to listen to President Obama's address.

IV. CHAIR's REPORT

Mr. Hourigan read a thank you letter sent by Mr. Sal Follo. The letter thanked the board for restoring the \$3,000 for the hockey program for the 2009-10 school year.

Board Chair David Hourigan then called for the Liaison Reports.

Mr. Quish reported the Permanent Schools Building Committee approved the Jonathan Law construction projects. WM Construction of Stamford will perform the work and it will begin soon.

VI. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

1. Student Reports.

Bing Zheng and Bryce Delgrande 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. Superintendent's Report

New Teachers

Dr. Polansky reported 35 teachers were hired over the summer. The teachers were hired through resignations or retirements. He announced that no new teachers have been added to the budget. The new teachers present were then introduced to the board.

H1N1 Flu

Dr. Polansky told the board the district has been working closely with the health department to stay informed on the H1N1 virus. He said a communication letter was sent to the parent community this past week. Dr. Polansky then turned the meeting over to Dr. McBride, Health Director of the Milford Health Department to update the board on the H1N1 virus.

Dr. McBride narrated a PowerPoint presentation on the H1N1 virus. He began by explaining how the virus originated. He then shared the many different strategies to prevent the virus from being wide spread. Some key ways of prevention are to stay home when you don't feel well, get vaccinated, wash hands often and cover your cough. The H1N1 virus is an airborne virus. He also gave criteria for staying home when you do not feel well. It included having a fever of more than 100, vomiting and/or diarrhea. He also recommended that if you or your child has a health condition i.e. asthma, to talk to your medical provider to ensure proper medical care is given.

Dr. McBride then reported the Department of Health will be offering the seasonal flu vaccination at a variety of clinics. The seasonal flu vaccine will be available at the schools too. The parent would have to sign the appropriate paperwork to allow their child to receive the vaccination.

Mrs. Staneski asked how the approval process would work. Dr. McBride told her there would be a waiver for the student's parent to complete prior to the student receiving the vaccination.

Dr. McBride said the H1N1 vaccination is not available at this current time. It will be distributed in the next couple of months. The Centers for Disease Control has established a "priority group" who will receive the H1N1 vaccination first. All others would be considered for the vaccination following the first wave.

Mrs. Staneski asked when a student could return to school after being ill and was told the student needs to be fever free for 24 hours before returning to school.

Mr. Steinlauf asked what precautions the Milford Public Schools is taking to prevent spreading the virus throughout the district.

Dr. McBride told him that the school based clinics will help. Also, people following the recommendations will decrease the spread.

Mr. Steinlauf asked if you could get the H1N1 if you already had it and he was told yes.

Both Dr. McBride and Dr. Polansky believe education is very important. Therefore, letters have been sent to staff and parents. Hand sanitizers have been placed throughout the buildings. The custodians are ensuring the soap dispensers are kept filled at all times.

In closing, Dr. McBride told the board communication is important. He reviewed the numerous channels of communication to ensure that everyone is informed. He will continue to work closely with the Milford Public Schools.

Superintendent's Annual Goals

Dr. Polansky told the board his goals tie into the Governance Policy BSL4; the superintendent will be evaluated in the following four areas:

- educational leadership
- organizational management
- community and board of education relations and
- personal and professional qualities and relationships.

There are five goals. They are:

- Goal 1 –** Utilize the Strategic Roadmap to identify tangible indicators of the educational direction of the district. These include learning principles, instructional plans and ends policies. Administration will report on progress twice a year.
- Goal 2 –** High School Reform
Spend first year (R&D) examining best practices at the high school level. Dr. Polansky will report to Board by May Committee of the Whole of findings. A presentation will be given on high school reform at the October 26th forum.
- Goal 3 –** The superintendent adheres to board policies and provides updates regularly.
- Goal 4 –** The superintendent will supervise and communicate needs relative to human resources, business office, information systems, maintenance, food services, transportation and school construction. Updates will be provided on an annual basis.
- Goal 5 –** The superintendent will communicate with the board and community regularly and engage in meaningful dialogue relative to the school system. Dr. Polansky said he meets with the parent community quarterly and will report his feedback to the board.

3. Instructional Report

Enrollment Report

Mr. Cummings shared the Enrollment Report with the board. One kindergarten teacher (Simon Lake), second grade teacher (Live Oaks) and a fifth grade (Simon Lake) were added to keep the class size at the recommended range.

Mrs. Staneski asked where the 8th graders who are at The Academy are reflected in the Enrollment Report. Mr. Cummings told her that he would need to update the report.

Mr. Amendola questioned the enrollment at the two high schools. It seems Foran has increased. He asked why. Mr. Cummings said that the high schools are pretty much handled as open choice schools and that could be one reason. He further said the increase at Foran is due to the blip that was at East Shore and are now at Foran.

Summer Curriculum

Mrs. Scaramella shared the Summer Curriculum and Common Assessment Report with the board.

Mrs. Staneski feels the district does not do enough study or prep tests at the high school. Dr. Polansky said he has seen growth in the middle schools CMT and it should be credited to the district bringing reading into the curriculum. This is work in progress.

Mr. Quish asked Mrs. Scaramella to explain the improvement plan.

Mrs. Scaramella explained the principals met and reviewed the CMT scores. Every school is different. There are general development plans at the elementary and the middle school levels, but each school has its own development plan based on the scores for the individual schools.

Dr. Polansky told the board that the administrators met for two full days over the summer working on data teams going over how to disaggregate the CMT data strands and how it impacts daily instruction. The CMT is a summative assessment. It is the day to day instruction that needs to be looked at.

Mrs. Staneski asked how it translates to different work.

Dr. Polansky told her that if one school is struggling in “math” and another school is being successful, then that should be made public. Sometimes it is curriculum. The district may need to rewrite curriculum based on what a student should know when they leave third grade. We need to determine what the kids know and work backwards. The elementary principals are working together to define what is working. If the task is not rigorous, then we are not promoting what ties to standards. The district is now doing an assessment of every task.

Mrs. Casey would like a report of the enrichment program at a future Committee of the Whole meeting.

Mrs. Staneski asked for a report on the half day professional development. She was told that Mr. Cummings would provide an update throughout the year. Each building will post agendas online and follow up by posting the minutes. They will be posted on their schools websites.

Mrs. Casey asked if there is a plan to put all of the schools trimester with the State standards changing. Dr. Polansky told her no. That decision was made by the middle school committee when they brought back best practices. He did state that he sees a change in the way we communicate with parents. Once Powerschool is fully implemented, the parents will be able to view attendance, quizzes etc.

Professional Learning and Growth

Chairman Hourigan turned the meeting over to Mrs. Krois to update the board on the professional learning that took place over the summer. Mrs. Krois gave an overview of the summer programs that occurred. Programs included “curriculum writing sessions”, development of district focused curriculum and instructional model, instructional sessions, AIMSWeb, July and August professional development for administrators, understanding autism spectrum disorder.

She then updated the board on the new Team program which will replace the Best program. The new teachers will need to do five modules with their mentors, two in the first year and three in the second year. A reflection paper is to be done upon conclusion of the program. The reflection paper will be presented to a committee which will be housed in-house. Dr. Polansky told the board this is a clear shift of responsibility from the State to the LEAs.

A discussion ensued about the new Team program. In the end, this program will require a lot of work from the new teachers, their mentors and the district to maintain. It will be a real challenge.

Chairman Hourigan asked for ten minute recess at 9:15 p.m.

The meeting was called back into order at 9:30 p.m.

4. Operational Report

a) Personnel Report

Mrs. Kopazna shared the Human Resources report with the board. She said the district is almost fully staffed. There were 38 new teachers hired for the 2009-10 school year. Long term substitute teachers and paraprofessionals are still needed to handle the day to day needs.

Mrs. Kopazna reported that the focus of the department will now shift to completing the various mandated State reports.

Mrs. Kopazna also delivered the Human Resources Year-End Report for September 1, 2008 – August 31, 2009. The report is given annually and outlines the responsibilities of the department.

b) Budget Report for May

Mr. Russell presented the Budget Performance Report for August, as well as the Cash Disbursements Report. He reported 27% of the budget has been spent.

Mrs. Staneski asked Mr. Russell if he researched the school book auction. Mr. Russell said that he has not received a return call and will have to follow up. However, he has researched reverse auctions with his counterparts and it seems to be done mostly on larger projects.

Mr. Hourigan asked if the paraprofessional pension number could change. Mr. Russell told him that a paraprofessional can elect to put up to 5% in their pension account and the district would need to match it. The amount encumbered could change.

c) Summer Projects

Mr. Bradbury showed a PowerPoint presentation that highlighted some of the projects completed over the summer. The slides showed before and after photos of the work. Some projects included: Pumpkin Delight reconfiguration of principal's office to enhance better communication between secretary and principal; new sidewalk at JFK for safety reasons; reconfiguration of Harborside parking lot to provide better drop off for students; Room 25 remodel at Live Oaks; Jonathan Law flooring and ceiling tiles were replaced; East Shore cosmetic upgrades, major renovations to the Foran pool and more. (PowerPoint on file.)

He further said the turn around for the Harborside bus reconfiguration is not completed but hopes to have it completed in the current school year.

Mrs. Staneski asked where the money came from that was used for the East Shore projects. It was not on the list of summer projects. Dr. Polansky told her that administration transferred unused money from the retirement account to spruce up East Shore in lieu of getting the portables. This was discussed at a previous meeting.

Mr. Amendola asked if there were any contributions from the city in regard to the Foran pool renovations, as the city uses the pool. Mr. Russell told him no.

Mr. Quish asked for the cost of the summer projects and was told just over \$1M. Money needed to be shifted to accommodate some projects that exceeded their budget.

Dr. Polansky said that there will be a Ground Breaking ceremony at Law in October. Mrs. Garagliano will be sending all invitations.

Dr. Polansky also told the board that Mr. Bradbury will present an update on projects to the board at the December meeting.

d) Transportation Update

Mr. Russell gave a presentation on the district's transportation needs. He said there is an average of 3,400 children moving from one level to the next this year. With that change, it requires the bus routes to change tremendously. This occurs every year. He told the board the State does not set a time limit for regular education children to ride the bus. However, there is a 45 minute limit for special education. He also reported that there is approximately a 45% of schools population being transported by buses.

Mr. Russell told the board that two weeks prior to the beginning of school post cards are sent to the riders giving them their bus number, stop and the time it will be at the stop.

Mrs. Staneski said she received a post card this year. She felt it was unnecessary to take the time and spend the money to send the cards given these economic times. The stops are posted in the local papers and put on the district's website.

Mr. Russell told her the district would rather have the transportation problems ironed out before the start of school. Dr. Polansky supported the thought of sending the post cards as a communication tool.

Mrs. Staneski disagrees.

Mrs. Staneski asked why darkness in the morning is considered a safety measure for the VoAg students.

Mrs. Casey asked for clarification of the difference between transporting VoAg, Aquaculture and ECA students. Mr. Russell told her that ECA is treated as a voluntary program while VoAg and Aquaculture are State mandated.

Mrs. Staneski asked Mr. Russell to research the bus route for the St. Mary's bus stop and the public school bus stop on Point Lookout. The St. Mary's bus is going into a loop while the other children need to walk to the corner.

Mrs. Casey publicly thanked Mr. Russell and his office for their assistance on the first day of school. Her daughter accidentally got on the wrong bus. She did make it to her school and Mr. Russell's office confirmed it.

VII. CONSENT AGENDA

Greta Stanford made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda items, as presented. Joanne Rohrig seconded. The Consent agenda included:

- Voucher list disbursements, August 2009
- Use of Facilities, Cornerstone Christian Center to use Jonathan Law High School auditorium from October 18, 2009 to June 27, 2010
- Overnight field trip, Jonathan Law Natural Helpers trip to Camp Hazen, September 24-25, 2009

Motion passed unanimously.

VIII. ACTION ITEMS

Unfinished Business

None

New Business.

None

IX. BOARD COMMENT

Mrs. Casey thanked Dr. Polansky for hosting a great Opening Day Convocation. Mrs. Casey, Mrs. Rohrig, Mrs. Stanford, Mrs. Staneski and Chairman Hourigan attended the meeting. It was a wonderful pep rally.

Mrs. Stanford told the board before the President's Speech was to air she was contacted by a reporter from the newspaper and asked to make a statement. She told him as a former teacher of biology and chemistry, she would have to continue to stay with the days curriculum and not show the speech because she would not be seeing those students again for six days. The class would be on another lab. However, she did say that she thought it would be very appropriate for history and civic classes to have the speech televised. When the article appeared in the paper the word OBJECT was posted in the article. That was untrue. She never quoted that statement. She supported the president and campaigned for him.

Mrs. Staneski invited the board to attend a presentation given by Ginger Katz on September 23rd at 7 p.m.. She will be speaking on teen substance abuse, party culture etc. This will take place at Milford Hospital at 7:00 p.m. The Milford Prevention Council

will be bringing in a guest speaker to both high schools on October 20. Anyone interested in information, please contact Mrs. Staneski.

Mr. Quish said he felt that the president's speech was an opportunity lost. The message of students taking responsibility of their own future is important and the reinforcement of the president's speech is valuable. The event in real time does take on a more emotional experience.

Mr. Hourigan reported that he ready two letters of correspondence. He was asked to read them publicly. The board is not in the habit of reading personal letters publicly. The public is welcome to attend a meeting and read them.

He then congratulated Dr. Polansky for a smooth opening day of schools.

X. ADJOURN

Greta Stanford made a motion to adjourn. Joanne Rohrig seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 10:30 p.m.

Greta Stanford
Corresponding Secretary

Pam Griffin
Recording Secretary