

Approved

**Milford Board of Education**

**Special Meeting Minutes**

January 22, 2020

**Board members present:**

Adam De Young  
Andrew Fowler  
Susan Glennon (Chair)  
Rita Hennessey  
Warren Pawlowski  
Una Petroske  
Betsy Ratner  
Cynthia Twiss  
Nicole Wasson  
Cindy Wolfe Boynton

**Administration present:**

Dr. Anna Cutaia  
Dr. Amy Fedigan  
Jim Richetelli  
Carole Swift  
Wendy Kopazna

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. Glennon called the special meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance.

**II. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Ms. Glennon acknowledged receipt of several emails from parents regarding the reduction of class size in the budget and staff regarding the media aides.

Ms. Glennon read the Public Comment statement.

**III. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Kristyn Liebelt– 94 Monroe Place and Marie Olden – 43 Woodside Terrace – Ms. Liebelt and Ms. Olden are Pumpkin Delight parents. Ms. Liebelt said she continues to support purposeful play for younger grades and the budget allocation for this. She also spoke in favor of keeping the media aide positions. She shared a diagram board made by children at Pumpkin Delight depicting their feelings about the media aide at the school.

Tracy Oulette – 180 Walnut Street – Ms. Oulette is a media aide at Orchard Hills Elementary School. She told the Board media aides do more than technology and sited examples of her work. The job is more than a clerk. Her job consists of a whole bunch of different trades. She explained ways the young students look to the aides for guidance in selecting reading materials as well as computer support.

**IV. FINAL QUESTIONS AND APPROVAL OF BUDGET**

Ms. Glennon asked Administration to update the Board on questions received following the January 16<sup>th</sup> workshop.

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Dr. Cutaia shared the cycle for Chromebooks (4 years), spoke to the Frontline net costs and descriptions, grounds projects, and staffing.

Mr. Fowler asked Dr. Cutaia to speak more about the rationale of elimination of 15 media aides and adding eight technology specialists.

Dr. Cutaia replied the current position does not meet the current technology needs of students. The media aide job is more library based rather than a broader school focus. She further said that the district does not need 15 positions and whatever the title of the position, the recommendation would be to reduce from 15 to eight staff members. She reminded the Board she was brought in to be innovative and progressive. The conversation is not about the people but re-visioning the scope of work. The change is needed to support the changes being brought forth. All current media aides can apply for the new position or any other position in the district for which they are qualified. She indicated those individuals who have the qualities/skills needed will be given priority.

With no further questions, Mr. Pawlowski asked for a recess at 7:22 p.m.

The meeting was called back to order at 8:00 p.m.

Ms. Glennon explained that Dr. Cutaia's proposed budget would be the starting point of the voting process, followed by any amendments Board members would like to make. She explained how the motion and amendment process works.

Mrs. Petroske made a motion to approve the Superintendent's proposed 2020-2021 budget as presented, in the amount of \$98,472,780 and direct the Administration to transmit it to the Mayor. Mr. De Young seconded.

Ms. Glennon asked for discussion.

Mrs. Petroske made an amendment to reduce account 7340 – furniture & fixtures by \$173,024 for a new total of \$391,560. Mrs. Twiss seconded.

Mrs. Petroske said the flex furniture in kindergarten should be piloted for one-year vs a total roll-out. This will ensure administration purchases the appropriate furniture for the younger students.

Mr. De Young noted his support of the flexible furniture but he agrees with piloting the furniture in kindergarten.

The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Glennon asked if there were any other amendments.

Mrs. Petroske made a motion to reduce account 4305 – grounds projects by \$265,000 for a new total of \$120,500. Ms. Wasson seconded.

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Mrs. Petroske said the play scape and the oil tank removal projects are in the Capital Improvement Plan for bond authorization. The assumption is they will be approved; therefore, they are not needed in the budget.

The motion passed 9 yes/1 abstention (Fowler).

Ms. Glennon asked if there were any other amendments.

Mr. Fowler made a motion to reduce accounts 7340 furniture and fixtures by \$41,880, 1111 teachers by \$520,000 and 7310 equipment by \$22,784. Mr. Pawlowski seconded for discussion.

Mr. Fowler said the science labs do not address the present needs. Math and English test scores are flat which puts Milford in the middle of the pack. Enrollment has decreased and costs have gone up. He believes citizens would rather the Board focus on the Math and English. The science labs can be revisited when test scores mirror our budget, which he says is in the top 5 of the DRG and when our Math and English test scores are in the top 5, we can discuss paying for science labs.

Mr. De Young supports science labs in the elementary schools. Science is an integral part of student development, informs Math and excites students. The labs will support the Next Generation Science Standards. It is the next step that will progress the district forward. He does not believe whether to fund a budget item or not should be based on just test scores. He does not believe Math and Literacy are being overlooked in the budget but considers it all part of the whole.

Ms. Wolfe Boynton said the need for young people to be critical and independent thinkers is lacking. There will be tangential positive effects of having the science labs in the elementary schools. Science is hands-on, teaches problem solving and challenges students to be critical thinkers. Being analytical and independent learners will spill over to the areas of Math and English, as well.

Mrs. Twiss said curriculum has to be an ongoing process. She understands that the Next Generation Science Standards pushes us to think about science curriculum and the labs. However, she does share the concern about the costs.

Mrs. Hennessey said if our students are to meet the Next Generation Science Standards and with STEM skills being in demand for future jobs, we need to fully fund the labs and staff them with science teachers who can meet the specialized needs of the Next Generation Science Standards. She believes this will be a vehicle to raise all scores.

Mrs. Petroske said this will help with critical thinking and raising scores. HQI is supported in this budget which addresses how we teach our children to think and learn in all subjects. While it is a lot of money, she thinks it's a critical investment that will keep the district competitive.

Ms. Wasson supports the labs and the science teachers. The science labs will support the new science standards and will allow the designated space needed for projects and the time needed for students to fully explore the lab and curriculum.

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Ms. Ratner said the goal is to build a better student. She is in support of adding science labs and in support of the co-teaching model of the science teacher and classroom teacher.

Mr. Fowler said Math and English build the basis for science and the critical skills used in science. The labs are a lot of money and he is not completely sold on the need. He would rather support HQI to raise Math and English test scores and thinks taxpayers and students will benefit more if we focus on math and English at this point rather than build science labs

Being no further discussion, Ms. Glennon called for a vote on the amendment that Mr. Fowler made.

By a roll call vote, the motion failed 9 no/1 yes (Fowler).

No further amendments were offered. Ms. Glennon asked Mr. Richetelli to confirm the total budget amount reflected by amendments that were approved as being \$98,034,756.

Ms. Glennon restated the motion was to approve the 2020-21 budget as amended in the amount of \$98,034,756 and direct administration to submit it to the Mayor.

Mr. Pawlowski said this was the hardest budget he has worked on because of its progressive nature. He agrees Dr. Cutaia was brought on make us a progressive district. He thanked all who provided input and noted that the Board has heard their comments.

Ms. Wolfe Boynton said that she has heard meaningful comments and has received a lot of emails. Dr. Cutaia has shown a real commitment to the transformation of the school system and the individuals who work in the school system. She did ask that Administration be conscience of those who are losing their positions.

Mr. Fowler thanked everyone for the opportunity. It has been enriching.

Mrs. Twiss said the process and information received has been valuable. She noted her time in public education and considered contracts that must be honored, the district vision and goals and the needs of the next generation of learners. She agrees staff need professional development. Teaching is a craft. The amount of money is astronomical; however, Milford is a city of many needs and different family situations.

Mrs. Hennessey said it has been the hardest budget she has worked on. She sees this budget as representing changes in pedagogy and opportunity for science in elementary school. Changes in personnel are difficult. She believes overall, we are looking for something that will benefit all to the children of Milford, which will benefit everyone else as well.

Ms. Ratner acknowledged the difficult decisions and the emails and calls she received. She sees people wanting to move into Milford. These are exciting times.

Mr. De Young thanked everyone that came to speak at the workshops. He is excited to see the progressive budget. He appreciates the transparency of Administration and their willingness to talk through what was requested by the Board members. He understands the Board has a fiscal responsibility that he takes seriously. The city is growing, the grand list is growing. The city is

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experiencing an economic renaissance. He sees that as a mandate to move the district even further, so people continue to want to be a part of it. He thinks this budget supports this and the progressive ideas that are being brought to the table. He acknowledged the reductions the board made without dramatically impacting teaching and learning. He hopes the Board of Finance and Board of Aldermen will see the work the Board did on this budget and know that this was thought through with the kids in mind.

Mrs. Petroske said she appreciated receiving all of the emails and the people who spoke. She said she is putting her faith in the administration in that they are moving in the direction the Board has asked them to move. Change is hard and painful but also exciting. She hopes that everyone finds that this becomes an opportunity in another way.

Ms. Glennon thanked Dr. Cutaia and staff for engaging in a thoughtful process. She thanked the Board and acknowledged the time spent thoroughly reviewing the budget against the priorities and assumptions, goals and the commitments made by the last board to go in a certain direction which she feels is also supported by the feedback received during the superintendent search. The Board's intent was to take a system-wide look at the district. The elementary piece is important to her and is the foundation for everything that comes after. The science piece will support the expectations of students when they get to middle and high school. It is part of the big picture and will have far reaching effects beyond just science.

Being no further discussion, she called for a vote to approve the budget as amended making the total amount \$98,034,756.

The motion passed by a roll call vote 9 yes/1 no (Fowler).

Ms. Glennon asked for a motion to adjourn.

Mrs. Petroske made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Fowler seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:43 p.m.

Corresponding Secretary: \_\_\_\_\_  
Mrs. Una Petroske

Recording Secretary: \_\_\_\_\_  
Mrs. Pam Griffin