

Millbury School Committee

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MILLBURY, MASS

DATE: April 8, 2009

PRESENT: Ms. Brady-Pojani, Chairperson, Mr. Thomas Clawson, Vice Chairperson, Mr. Borowski, Mr. Corey, Mrs. Vigneau, Mr. Bedard, Business Administrator, Mrs. Molnar, Dr. Reese, Mrs. Swenson, Ms. Frederick, Mr. Spain, Town Manager, Mr. O'Connor Finance Committee Chairman, and Mrs. Hitchcock, Superintendent.

TIME: 7:00 pm

LOCATION: Millbury High School Media Center

Ms. Brady-Pojani began the meeting at 7:05

Approval of Regular Minutes

Ms. Brady-Pojani asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the March 25, 2009 meeting. Mr. Clawson made a motion and Mr. Corey seconded the motion. All approved (4-0).

Budget

Mrs. Hitchcock began the discussion regarding the budget by stating that there was nothing new to address and she asked the School Committee if they had any questions regarding the summary they received. Mrs. Hitchcock stated that the staff had been previously made aware of most of the reductions. Ms. Brady-Pojani asked if there were any questions for the School Committee or Mrs. Hitchcock.

It was stated that the Finance Committee had recommended in a letter that the school department cut a little over a million dollars from their budget. In past years when financial restraint was an issue money was found to prevent layoffs. This year there is no money to find. Mr. Lyons, MTA Union President, asked if there are staff cuts will activity fees for students be put into the budget. Mr. Clawson stated that the School Committee had not voted on any of the budget cuts. Mrs. Hitchcock stated that she put activity fees for students back on the table. She stated that \$100.00 would be charge for one sport or activity and \$200.00 for two or more sports or activities with a family cap of \$200.00 for high school students. (Shaw \$50/\$100) Mr. Spain, Town Manager, stated that all Town Hall administrators and dept. heads agreed to a wage freeze. He also stated that the Town Manager took a wage freeze for 09 and 10. Mrs. Hitchcock stated that if the vote on the benefits package was approved she will use the money to restore positions. This would also be true of a wage freeze or furlough days. Mr. Spain

clarified that the Board of Selectman voted to approve a 60-40 split with the School Department and to giving the school department \$32,000.00 from estimated receipts.

Mrs. Hitchcock explained that the School Department will receive three pots of money for stimulus funding: Special Education will receive \$153,000 used towards four new positions. The second will be used for ongoing student achievement through Title I. The third pot of money for \$170,000 is the stabilization fund. This money must be used to improve academic programs and data software programs.

It was stated that Millbury has not received much press regarding the budget, however on Thursday, April 9th there is going to be an article in the Telegram and Gazette. Mrs. Hitchcock stated that she would provide Mrs. Allison Uccello, President of the Millbury Parents' Club, information regarding the budget to be distributed to all parents. Ms. Brady-Pojani stated that part of the reason they held on to the information was they were waiting to see if the state would come through with more money. It was stated that staff members affected by a layoff will be notified after the union votes of the benefit package. The second vote will include three items: a full year wage freeze, a .5 year wage freeze, and furloughs days. Mr. Lyons stated that after the votes are taken members of the Executive Boards will open up the contract to discuss any ramifications regarding the change to the contract. Mr. Clawson stated that four or five years ago an amendment was added to the contract without opening the contract and thought that this could be done regarding the vote results. Mr. Lyons stated that at that time a day was taken away and it was never returned. Mrs. Hitchcock stated that she was not aware of the union's intention to reopen the contract and that she would look into the matter regarding the return of day. Mr. Bedard stated that the day was definitely returned. Mr. Lyons also stated that he knew the School Committee was in a rush to have the votes. However, he stated that he was concerned that the second vote could not be taken until after school vacation.

Mr. Spain stated that although there have been discussions regarding postponing the town meeting it would not be postponed. He stated that a second town meeting, perhaps in June, will most likely be necessary. Mr. O'Connor stated that tomorrow night the Finance Committee will make their final adjustments and the budget will go to print on April 15th. It was stated that the budget voted in tonight may be optimistic and it could be worse. The best case scenario is that it remains the same. Last year the town didn't receive the final numbers until July 3rd. Mr. Spain stated that once the budget goes through the House later this month they will get a better idea as to the numbers because normally the Senate doesn't go lower than the House. Mr. Spain stated that the Board of Selectman and the School Committee has agreed they would have a special meeting to split the funds if they receive any more money. He also stated that this is the first time the state has cut the budget below the foundation budget. The level of services to the community will be reduced. He also stated that the money could have been calculated wrong and that it may go lower. Mr. Spain stated that his list of itemized cuts has been available since March 15th. He also stated that he did amend his budget according to the 65-35 split recommended by the Finance Committee; however, he changed it back to his original budget after meeting with the School Committee Monday night.

It was stated that the teachers would appreciate some indication if they are being considered for a layoff. Mrs. Hitchcock stated that they have begun the process of determining what positions will be affected. That is why they asked the employees to confirm their start dates. She also stated that they are keeping close tabs on kindergarten registration. Mr. Spain stated that the town employees affected have already been notified. Mrs. Hitchcock stated that she is committed to saving jobs and that whatever savings will go to hiring personnel back. Mr. Spain stated that the 60-40 split was determined by expenditures town versus school. He stated that the split should have been higher but he went with the 60-40 split early on because he didn't want to impact the School Department to that degree. It was stated that all unions in the school and town must vote on the healthcare package and that the savings will be appropriated to the town and School Department based upon actual enrollment savings. That is also true regarding the second vote regarding a wage freeze or furloughs. Mr. Friedman asked if school choice has been considered. Ms. Brady-Pojani stated that it was looked at every year and voted on every year. We are looking at everything to determine what is best for the schools and students.

Mr. Bedard asked Mr. Spain about a citizen's petition he had heard about to terminate health coverage for people serving on boards. Mr. Spain explained that if the petition passes all employees would have to pay 50% for their health insurance. He also stated that it may not be a lawful article and was not sure if it could be amended on the floor at the town meeting. He urged people not to sign the petition.

Mrs. Hitchcock was asked what effect the potential cuts would have on the fact that Shaw Elementary School is in Corrective Actions and what the ramifications would be of a larger class sizes. Mrs. Hitchcock stated that this is a serious concern we are doing a number of things we are hoping to achieve AYP. Dr. Reese was awarded a grant to hold summer school for students that need to increase their English Language Arts scores. We are looking at other ways to increase academic achievement and skills. The Department of Education will be looking at this situation. Mrs. Hitchcock stated that the three long term substitutes at the Elmwood Street School are not necessarily in the mix of impending layoffs. She also stated that depending on licensure there could be shuffling regarding positions. Mr. Rollins stated that it is very important that the community is aware of the situation. He also stated that that programs for the Arts has not recovered from the 80's recession. Mr. Rollins stated that there are many research articles verifying that a good arts program will increase MCAS scores. Mrs. Ucello of the Millbury Parents' Club asked that once the cuts are made to please communicate with parents. They want to help. Mr. Reilly stated that maybe is time to consider a Proposition 2 ½ Override and that simply there is not enough money to do things we used to do. The town must seriously think about it, much like Sutton did recently. Ms. Brady-Pojani stated that the Board of Selectman formed a committee to look into town finances and that would be the proper place to discuss the possibility of a Proposition 2 ½ override and that Mr. Clawson and Mrs. Hitchcock will serve on this committee. Mr. Bedard responded to a remark made by Mr. Rollins that the School Department does not have a rainy day fund as the regional school districts have.

Mr. O'Connor asked the School Committee if they would vote to accept the 60-40 split tonight. Mr. Clawson stated that he would make a motion to a consensus of the 60-40 split. It was seconded by Mr. Corey. All approved (5-0).

A discussion took place regarding the money from the local receipts. Mr. Clawson made a motion to accept the estimated value of the local receipts of \$32,000 to go to reducing the School Departments deficit and to agree to the \$939,386 reduction of the School Department's budget. (School Budget: \$17,102,659, Health Insurance: \$3,340,552, Life Insurance: \$3,600, which totals \$20,446,811) Mr. Borowski seconded the motion for discussion. A discussion took place regarding the amount of the savings from the Benefits package depending on which option is approved. Mr. Clawson stated that he is hesitant to place a number on the reduction until they have the number from the Benefits package. All approved (5-0). Mr. O'Connor stated that you have voted to accept the estimated value of receipts of \$32,000 to go to the School Department's reduction and agreed to cut 60% of deficit from your budget then essentially you have voted to accept the 60-40 split. Mr. O'Connor stated that the budget is now balanced.

Mr. Bedard reported on the National Grid financing program. He stated that after the municipal audit it was recommended to replace all lamps and ballasts at the Shaw Elementary School with energy efficient lamps and ballast. This will cost 30,010 which could be financed with a 0% finance charge over two years. There will be an additional \$1,200 on the bill and the savings will be \$1,600 a month. After two years there will be a substantial savings on this energy efficient lighting program. He also stated that the program is not limited to one building. Other districts that have gone with this program are very pleased. Mr. Bedard stated that the recommendation is to start this program. Mr. Clawson made a motion to approve the lighting program and Mr. Borowski seconded the motion. All approved. (5-0) Ms. Brady-Pojani asked that Mr. Bedard send this information to Mr. Spain.

Report of the Administration

Mrs. Hitchcock stated that the pole replacement at Windle Field will begin next week and that we will notify you when the work is completed. The Lion's Club and other effected groups have been notified that the work will begin next week. Mrs. Hitchcock also stated that Windle Field will remain closed until the work is completed.

Mrs. Hitchcock stated that she has had a number of calls from parents regarding next year's school calendar. She has proposed a preliminary school calendar with three furlough days built into the calendar. The first furlough day would be the Tuesday after Martin Luther King Day. This day would also allow the district to save energy costs. The second furlough day would be the last day of school which would be June 17th without snow days. She stated that they tried scheduling the furlough days with the least amount of affect on the students. The students would go from attending 183 days to 182 days. The teachers would go from 188 days to 186 days. And if we need three furloughs days we would use March 12th and that would give us enough time to notify parents. The students would begin school on Monday, August 31st which would give the students a

full week before Labor Day. The teachers would have Professional Development Days on August 27th and 28th. The earliest start for the teachers would be the week of August 24th, however, we have no desire to push back the student start date. Mr. Clawson made a motion to accept the preliminary calendar and Mr. Borowski seconded the motion. All approved (5-0).

Mrs. Hitchcock stated that you have received information about the serious incident at the High School a fire in a wastepaper basket. She stated that according to the Massachusetts general laws this is a felony charge.

Mrs. Hitchcock stated that a flyer is being sent to Shaw School parents to announce the English/Language Arts Summer School in order to address the additional support needed to improve students English Language Arts skills. Mrs. Hitchcock also stated that the schedule involving other summer camps using the Shaw School is all set.

New business

Mrs. Vigneau stated that the Community Service Learning teams' Immigration Night at the High School was very well attended and that is was a wonderful program.

Ms. Brady-Pojani asked for a vote to go into Executive Session for the purpose of collective bargaining. All approved (5-0).

Regular meeting adjourned at 9:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Lane
School Committee Clerk

Approved:

