

Millbury School Committee Minutes

Date: April 14, 2010

Present: Ms. Brady-Pojani, Chairperson, Mr. Clawson, Vice Chairperson, Mr. Corey, Mr. Borowski, Mr. Rapose, Curriculum Coordinator, Mrs. Molnar, Director of Pupil Services, Mrs. Swenson, High School Principal, Ms. Simanski, Shaw Elementary School Principal, Ms. Frederick, Elmwood Street School Principal, Mr. Bedard, School Business Manager, Mr. Spain, Town Manager, Finance Committee, and Mrs. Hitchcock, Superintendent

Absent: Mrs. Vigneau

Location: High School Media Center

Time: 7:00 pm

Approval of Regular Session Minutes

Ms. Brady-Pojani asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the March 24, 2010 minutes. Mr. Borowski made a motion to accept the minutes from the March 24, 2010 meeting and Mr. Clawson seconded the motion. All approved 4-0.

FY 2011 Budget

Mrs. Hitchcock stated that most of the people in the audience know the information regarding reductions for each school building. She stated that she would present the reductions to the viewing audience. We have not experienced this level of reductions since the 1980's. She also stated that the Administration Team has worked very hard to look for reductions that affect the students in the least harmful way. Mrs. Hitchcock stated that when she presented the FY2010 budget she had stated that the supplies and materials account has been cut as much as it can be cut, therefore, we could not cut any further. It is very unfortunate that we must cut staff positions. These reductions will impact your children's education.

The Finance Committee is under the assumption that the School Department can absorb a 63.78% reduction. Last year we split the reductions with a 60-40% split. The Town Hall has stated that the Town would stick with the 60-40% split. The School Committee members have stated that they agreed to a 60-40% split for last year's FY2010 Budget only. This decision was based on the one year only and it was not intended for every year. Mrs. Hitchcock listed the reductions from Tier I from each school building. Tier I from the Elmwood Street School are one grade 1 teacher, one grade 2 teacher, and the head nurse's stipend. It was also decided that due to the above teacher cuts the Art, Library, and Technology departments will be cut two periods a day the positions will go

from 1.0 FTE to .73 FTE. The Shaw Elementary School will cut one reading coach which is a terrible loss because the Shaw School is in level 3 DESE restructuring with level 5 being the lowest level possible. We added this position to show the Department of Education what we are doing to elevate ELA scores. The one clerical position being cut is the Special Education Clerk. The Jr./Sr. High School will cut one Early Childhood teacher, one special education teacher, one foods/nutrition teacher and one librarian which may affect the High School NEASC accreditation. This position should be restored as soon as possible before NEASC comes again to the high school. These reductions total 7.7 FTE's. These savings result in 459,400.

Tier II reductions are necessary to cover the unemployment insurance for the reduced positions in Tier I. They include the Assistant Director of Facilities' stipend, one maintenance/Grounds position and one kindergarten teacher.

Tier III is the area in which the School Committee can vote to accept or reject the possibility of athletic and band fees. Scholarships or sliding fees will be available to families unable to pay a fee for their child to participate in athletics or band. Mrs. Hitchcock explained Tiers IV, V and VI. Tier IV will cut the Director of Facilities and the Director of Curriculum and Instruction positions to .5. Tier V cuts will cover the costs of unemployment insurance for the Tier IV and V cuts. They will be a Kindergarten aide, and Elmwood Classroom Imagine aide and an aide from somewhere in the district. The Tier VI cuts will be one grade 4 teacher, one physical education teacher, which will result in bumping the Elmwood Street School Physical Education teacher and one maintenance custodian position. Mrs. Hitchcock stated that that the high school librarian will bump the Shaw Elementary School librarian and the Shaw librarian will cut the Elmwood Street School librarian. The salary being saved is that of the person being laid off.

Mr. Borowski stated that six weeks ago the School Committee approved the budget during the public hearing. We would like to work with the Town and submit a balance budget at the Town Meeting, however, if we cannot come to an agreement with the Town then we are prepared to take the School Department's budget to the Town Meeting and let the community decide the final budget number.

Speakers RE: FY 2011 Budget

Mrs. Judy Bastarache, audience speaker, stated that she had three questions for the School Committee. She stated that she finds it funny that the School Committee and Town of Millbury submit a budget to the community on the night of Town Meeting before the correct numbers come from the state. She also encouraged the School Committee members to consider sports fees. She stated that education must take priority. She stated that her third question was why when Mr. Roach was the Superintendent was the split 50-50. She also stated that we have a superior Superintendent whose first response has been to the students and staff. She also stated that the elected officials should look at her with the same respect that we do as employees of the School Department. She stated that we have dedicated teaching staff.

Ms. Brady-Pojani stated that every year is the same in that the state numbers do not come in until after the town meeting. She agreed with Mrs. Bastarache that it is not right. She also stated that the School Committee is in contract negotiations, which could change some of the numbers. In regards to activity fees, she stated at the last School Committee meeting that she would like to have numbers that reflect activity fees across the board. Ms. Brady-Pojani stated that she would like to speak for herself regarding the commitment and love she has for the Town of Millbury. She stated that she has been on the School Committee board for 22 years and that she loves the school and the town. There was a discussion as to when the previous 50/50 split took place.

Mr. Roger DesRosiers, resident of Millbury and a teacher at Millbury High School for 32 years, stated that he was asking the impossible and to recognize the most difficult task during these economic times. This elected board's mission is setting policy and making sure that our schools are the best they can be. He asked that the School Committee consider the large state and federal mandates placed on the School Department, specifically Special Education costs and transportation and the strain these areas place on a budget. Therefore, you need to keep in mind the mandates place on the School Department to spend a certain amount of money and recognize the amount of money these areas are taking from the budget. He encouraged people to fight for the school's budget so that the school will have enough money for other areas.

Mrs. Kelly Foley, speaker, stated that it is her understanding that the Millbury Public Schools students attend more days than necessary. She stated that the schools have amazing teachers and that the amount of day's students attends school should be cut before any teaching positions are cut. She stated that maybe we should go back to students attending 180 days not 183 days. Mrs. Foley also stated that cutting teachers should be on the last tier. Ms. Brady- Pojani stated that due to contract negotiations the School Committee is not able to comment. A discussion took place regarding removing days from the school calendar and the amount of the savings. Ms. Brady-Pojani stated that we cannot discuss anything that pertains to teacher contract negotiations. In regards to the Tiers, the School Committee gives Mrs. Hitchcock a dollar amount to be cut and that the Superintendent and her staff come up with the cuts not the School Committee. A discussion took place regarding whether to cut school days or professional development days. Mrs. Hitchcock stated that Professional Development Days are somewhat mandated due to the level we are in according to the Department of Education.

Mr. John Bien, speaker, stated that if you included benefits packages with the cut positions the savings would be greater and therefore would not have to cut as many positions. Mr. Borowski stated that Mr. Bien's question was excellent. A discussion took place regarding where the health insurance costs are budgeted. Mr. Spain stated that the health insurance costs are budgeted on the town's budget. Mr. Bedard stated that the savings from the benefits packages were included. He stated that he first had to determine who was enrolled in the benefits package and then he appropriated the savings into the unemployment cost. He also stated it is very difficult to pinpoint the costs for unemployment since it is hard to determine how long an individual will be without a job.

Mr. Spain, the Town Manager, stated that some of the issues he and Susan are facing are very difficult. It is very difficult to look someone in the eye and tell them they are losing their job. However, the numbers from the State have not changed from the 4% cut. Mr. Spain stated that one of the reasons the Board of Selectman put on the agenda to raise meal tax was because the increase will generate 150,000 and if that measure fails to pass at the Town Meeting we will have to cut an additional 150,000.

State Senator Michael Moore thanked the School Committee for allowing him to speak. He stated that there will be a 4% reduction in state aid. Mr. Bedard asked if the casino will propel any local aid for Millbury. Senator Moore stated that he is not sure when the senate will take on this proposal maybe not until after the budget. He also stated that no community would fall below net level spending. Mr. Borowski asked Senator Moore his best estimate as to when the budget will be finalized since the Town Meeting is scheduled for May 4th. Senator Moore stated that the Senate will be going over the budget the last two weeks in May, so sometime in early June.

Ms. Brady-Pojani stated that a raise in the meals tax would be included on the agenda for the night of Town Meeting. Ms. Brady-Pojani asked Mr. Spain if the 60-40% split is voted down at Town Meeting and a 50-50% split is voted in how he would deal with the added reductions. Mr. Spain stated that he would make reductions the same way the School Department is making reductions by cutting positions. He was asked if the Town has made any positions reductions so far. He stated that the Town had made positions reductions. Mr. Spain stated that historically free cash has been high. Last year we had 1.5 million dollars and now we have 500,000.

Mrs. Lorna Pezanelli, Art teacher at the Shaw School, asked if the two new fire trucks the Town is asking for impacts this year's budget. Ms. Brady-Pojani stated that it was not part of FY2011 operating budget. It is capital and replaces the library project.

Mr. Borowski stated that students are not quantative. He stated that he could qualatively understand a classroom going from 20 to 23 students however students are not quantative. That is what's more important and why the budget should be left to the voters to decide.

Mrs. Heather Harris, audience speaker, asked what the expenditure per student is. Mr. Bedard stated that it is 9,370 per student. I know that Mr. Roach adamantly opposed to consider school choice. Mrs. Hitchcock stated that it could be long term as that once we accept a school choice student they may remain in the Millbury Public Schools until they graduate. She also stated that financially we would receive 5,200 per student and that is a huge gap since it costs more than that per student. Mrs. Hitchcock stated that space in the district is also an issue.

Senator Moore discussed a new bill proposal entitled the Municipal Relief Package. This means the tax abatement overlay account will be exempted by 2-1/2 tax levy and meaning there could be money available to use for other parts of the budget.

Linda Swenson, lifelong resident of Millbury and Principal of the High School stated that she is confused regarding the use of free cash. Last year we had 1.5 million and we are now down to 500,000 Mr. Spain stated that free cash comes from local receipts or revenues and money not spent in the previous year's budget. This year local receipts and revenues are down because of the economy. Mr. Spain stated that it is a bad practice to fund the operating budget with free cash. It should be used for one time expenditures but Millbury has historically used free cash to supplement the tax levy.

Mrs. Trish Desmarais, audience speaker, asked for further clarification on free cash. Mr. Spain explained that after the money has been certified the Town can decide to use the money on whatever the Town deems necessary. The Town of Millbury has historically used this money to keep the tax rate down. Mrs. Hitchcock stated that she was in a meeting with the Board of Selectman a month and a half after she started in Millbury and Mr. Bernie Plante, Chairman of the Board of Selectman stated that ten years ago an auditor came in and highly recommended that the Town of Millbury fix these issues regarding free cash. Mrs. Hitchcock stated that the Town's Financial Task Force should be the committee to fix this issue.

Mr. Tom Winston, audience speaker, stated that he was not a lifelong resident but that he married in. Mr. Winston stated that Mrs. Foley had made a great point to reduce the school year to 180 for students. He stated that he agreed with the last three days of school being cut in order to save teachers. He asked how this calendar policy was started in Millbury and how it was included in the teachers contract. Ms. Brady-Pojani stated that the School Committee was trying to be proactive and that the state was going to mandate that the school year would increase to 188 days. However, the state did not do what it said it would. Mr. Clawson stated that fifteen years ago due to the fact that this change would affect the working conditions of the teachers it had to be negotiated. Mr. Winston also stated that the Town employees should also potentially take three furlough days. This is a year of tough choices and looking at expenditures on the municipal side they should be much more thoughtful of their choices, i.e. a bench or a teacher. Ms. Brady-Pojani stated that the Town is also involved in municipal contract negotiations. He asked that the School Committee look at this issue closely as they negotiate the teachers' contract on our behalf.

Mrs. Kerri Guyen, audience speaker, stated that our parents never had to pay activity fees for their children but I would be willing to pay across the board to save a teacher.

Mr. Michael O'Connor, Finance Committee, stated that he is waiting for the discussion over the Budget to be over before asking for clarification regarding the 178,000 on page one. Ms. Brady-Pojani stated that the School Committee is not able to discuss this matter due to teacher contract negotiations. Mr. O'Connor stated that this was 178,000 was never part of the initial services budget. Ms. Brady-Pojani stated that due to contract negotiations they could not comment on this issue. Mr. O'Connor also stated that at the March 24th School Committee meeting the Superintendent stated that after the cuts to the budget the School Department was barely above net school funding. He stated that

the Finance Committee did some figures on the cuts and found that the School Department was well above the net school spending. Mr. Clawson asked where that put the School Department. Mr. Bedard stated that a community must spend a minimum on net school funding, which is set by the State. He stated at first look at this year's budget it appears we are close to being near or under net school spending once the reductions are made to the budget. However, health insurance costs (paid by the Town) are included into the Net School Spending calculation which puts us well over Net School Spending. He also stated we need to reduce transportation costs in the calculation because that cost is not eligible for Net School Spending. Mr. O'Connor stated that he would like to acknowledge publicly that this is Chairperson, Ms. Brady-Pojani's last public meeting and would like to thank her for the five years he has been on the Finance Committee she always asks if he has any comments or questions and he wanted her to know that he appreciated her efforts.

Report of the Administration

Mrs. Hitchcock stated that she was pleased to announce that three Destination Imagination teams have made it to the state competition.

Mrs. Hitchcock stated that she was requesting that the School Committee approve the Wheelabrator Symposium' Trip to Sunset, Florida. There are 10 students, 4 adults, 2 teachers, and one administrator (Mrs. Swenson) attending. Mr. Borowski made a motion to approve the trip to Sunset, Florida and Mr. Corey seconded the motion. All approved 4-0.

Mrs. Hitchcock requested that the School Committee approve a preliminary calendar for the 2011 school year. She stated that Central Office has been receiving calls as to when the first day of school will be. The parents are trying to schedule their vacations. The calendar may be adjusted if needed, however the first day of school will remain the same. Mr. Corey made a motion to approve the preliminary 2011 calendar and Mr. Borowski seconded the motion. All approved 4-0.

Ms. Brady-Pojani stated that there would be a joint meeting with the Board of Selectman on Tuesday, April 20th.

New Business

Mrs. Swenson stated that the High School Robotics team will compete in May.

Ms. Brady-Pojani officially thanked the parents and community members for their support over the years she has served on the School Committee. She also stated that she has enjoyed getting to know the kids. The thing she will miss most is presenting diplomas to the senior class at graduation.

Mrs. Swenson, High School Principal, stated that the annual report from NEASC contains many accommodations and no recommendations. She also stated that the

budget cuts will reflect in the annual report submitted by Millbury. She also stated that a senior had been accepted to Stanford University. Mrs. Swenson thanked Ms. Brady-Pojani for all she has done for the School Department. She stated that she has enjoyed working with her and that she appreciated the fact that she always listened.

Mrs. Uccello, from the Parents' Club, asked if there will a point where parents will know the breakdown of activity fees. She also stated that as a parent she has no problem with paying an athletic or band fee. Ms. Brady-Pojani stated that information will be provided to parents once activity fees are voted on. She also stated that she asked for an amount that would be saved if we charged for all activities across the board. Activity fees should not be as high as athletics or band because there are no transportation costs, only stipends. It was stated that the fees discussed would be \$100 per student/per sport with a family cap of \$200. Hockey participation will have an additional fee. It was stated that if the School Committee approves charging fees it will be for athletics and band students only.

Old Business

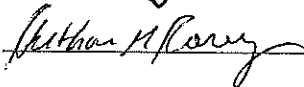
Nothing to report at this time.

Respectfully submitted

Donna Lane
School Committee Clerk

Approved:





only 2 s/c
members could
sign, A & B