

Milford Board of Education

Committee of the Whole Meeting and Live Streamed on YouTube

Meeting Minutes

September 26, 2023

Board members present:

Adam De Young
Katherine Alling
Meghan Doyle
Andrew Fowler
Susan Glennon (Board Chair)
Tracey Irby
Gary Peluchette
Una Petroske

Administration present:

Dr. Anna Cutaia
Steven Autieri
Sean Brennan
Louis Giancola
Jennifer Stewart

Board members absent:

Emily McDonough Souza (maternity leave-excused)
Cindy Wolfe Boynton (Illness-excused)

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Glennon called the board meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. in Parsons's Board of Education room. By a roll call, eight (8) Board members were present.

II. CSDE GRANT AWARD TO MILFORD FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER

Ms. Maguire, Early Childhood Coordinator explained the process for a state grant that is specific to the Family Resource Center. Every two years, the Family Resource Center can apply for a state grant that supports the program. This year, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has allocated \$111,565.00 in grant monies to the Milford Public Schools Family Resource Center for the fiscal years 2023-2025. The CSDE requires that the Milford Board of Education approve grant acceptance.

Mrs. Petroske made a motion that the Milford Board of Education approve the CSDE Grant for the Milford Family Resource Center in the amount of \$111,565.00 for the fiscal years 2023-25. Mr. Fowler seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

III. MPS STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT RESULTS (2022-23)

Mr. Autieri narrated a presentation on the 2022-23 student achievement results for the Board (on file) and answered questions. The presentation provided a comprehensive view of student performance through various measures that assist in the extrapolation of data to help inform decisions about curriculum and instructional practice, as well as guide the design of professional learning. He shared the Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA) results for grades 3-8, Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) results in grades 5, 8, and 11 and College Board Advanced Placement (AP) subject area examination results. He also spoke about the Kindergarten Entrance Inventory data from the Fall 2022, Honors and Recognitions in the Fine Arts, Student Leadership and Community Engagement Recognitions, Graduation Rates, College and University Acceptances and Entrances.

While this information is important, he reminded the Board the district is committed to measuring student growth rather than standardized test scores. Examples of the district's work were shared for the different disciplines.

IV. PROPOSED 2024-25 BUDGET PRIORITIES AND ASSUMPTIONS

Dr. Cutaia reviewed the following seven budget priorities for the 2024-25 fiscal budget year with the Board.

- Continue to develop the core instructional program of literacy, numeracy, science, social studies, world language, the arts and social/emotional learning through the development of curriculum, high quality instructional practices and appropriate assessment tools.
- Enhance the wellness and development of all students and staff.
- Provide all staff ongoing professional learning in best practices and appropriate, high quality instructional resources in support of continued improvement in teaching and learning.
- Develop and implement a continuum of services for staff through an expanded Talent Management Department (recruitment, hiring, induction, growth & development, evaluation, recognition, and retirement).
- Maintain effective class sizes at all levels of instruction utilizing the following guidelines: Grades K-2 - maximum 20 and grades 3-5 - maximum 23.
- Provide 21st-century physical learning spaces that support high quality instructional practices, promote wellness and development, and ensure safe and secure environments.
- Support existing student extracurricular activities and athletics.

The priorities serve as starting points for budget development to ensure the Board's goals and commitments are attainable. Additionally, they support the work of the Vision of the Learner, High Quality Instruction and the Developmental Relationships Framework and Equity Framework.

Mr. Brennan discussed with the Board the 2024-25 Budget Assumptions (listed below). The Assumptions provide financial forecasting, constraints, and other factors that may impact the budget.

- In an economy that is experiencing high inflation, a potential recession, supply chain issues, continued labor shortages and growing need for competitive wage increases, we anticipate a significant impact on multiple aspects of the 2024-2025 budget.
- The district used ESSER II and ARP COVID funding to pay for thirteen certified positions in the 2021-2022 school year. In order to avoid a funding cliff when the grant money expires, as planned, four of these positions were included in the 2022-2023 general fund budget and five in the 2023-2024 general fund budget. For the 2024-2025 budget, the remaining four positions will be off of the grant and paid through general funds.
- Enrollment experienced only a slight decrease from last year (5,338 students in 22-23 vs 5,284 students in 23-24) and showed an actual increase at the elementary level from what was projected (total projected 2,438 students vs. actual 2,470 students as of August 28, 2023). It is anticipated that enrollment will continue to decline slightly in 2024-2025 and will remain fairly stable for the next 5-10 years.
- Decisions around staffing and program redesign or development will be driven by their potential impact on raising student achievement while honoring the commitment to be fiscally responsible.
- Due to higher inflation and the state of the current labor market, negotiated settlements with our employee unions came in at an average of 3%, hence having a greater impact on the 24-25 budget. The cost of hourly employees will rise to keep pace with the State's increasing minimum wage.
- The current health insurance plans for retirees, as contractually obligated, are projected to increase by 13-14%.
- Special education tuition and transportation costs can increase at any point during the year due to unanticipated costs based on students requiring services based on individual needs. Unanticipated costs can occur if a student transfers into the district or a student who is already in a specialized program requires a high level of intensive support due to medical complexities, unsafe behavior, or psychiatric needs. The district exhausts all options before recommending a student attend an out of district school. Additionally, we may need to develop additional in-district programming for specialized instruction. Based on our current population and expenses in tuition and transportation, we estimate a 15% - 20% increase in tuition and transportation costs.

- Transportation costs will rise by approximately 3% reflecting the contractual increase with Durham Bus. In addition, fuel (diesel and gasoline) prices remain high and will impact the 2024-2025 budget. We will continue to work with the City to determine when it is strategic to lock into a fixed price for fuel based on economic and market conditions. We are also in the beginning stages of developing a preliminary plan of how the district will transition to electric buses by 2035 as required by federal and state regulations. It is too early to determine what impact this will have on the 2024-2025 budget but it will certainly be a major factor in the cost of transportation in the future.
- After an extended period of stable and low energy prices, last year's energy market was extremely volatile. This was due to a number of global factors including the pandemic, record heat in some areas of the world and record cold in others, changing energy policies, the war in Ukraine, etc. These resulted in a shortage of natural gas supply and record high prices. We are currently locked into an unusually low rate through December 2024. We are actively working with our energy consultants and consortium to strategically lock in the best price moving forward from that date. However, we know that the rates will be significantly higher (possibly double in amount) than our current rate which will cause an impact in our 2024-2025 budget.
- The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) extended the deadline requiring school districts to adopt a state approved literacy program according to the Right to Read Act. While Milford Public Schools applied for a waiver, we have yet to hear a response from the CSDE. If our waiver is denied, we will need to be prepared to purchase one of the state approved programs estimated to cost us between \$1.1 and \$1.5 million for the first year of implementation, including the extensive revision of curriculum, purchase of required materials and necessary professional learning.
- The deadline for implementing two state mandates, HVAC system evaluation and menstrual product dispensers, were extended and will be implemented in the 2024-2025 school year. The HVAC system evaluation is expected to have a significant impact on the 2024-2025 budget.
- The district will continue to review and enhance our safety and security measures. This will include our continued participation in the SRO program as will our 50% funding share with the city.
- Efforts to find efficiencies within the budget will continue to be sought.

The Board provided feedback and suggested edits on both documents. The administration will present the priorities and assumptions for a second reading and approval at the October business meeting.

V. BOARD POLICIES FOR A FIRST READING

Dr. Cutaia said the administration continues to review policies to ensure they are compliant with legislative changes. The following three policies were discussed: 6161 Library Media Materials, 6161.7 Use of Proprietary Software Products, and 6177 Commercially Produced Video and Audio Recordings. Suggested changes will be made to the policies, and they will be presented for a 2nd reading and approval at the October business meeting.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mary Oake – Ms. Oake offered comments on the recent presentation on high school reassessment. She supports the administration in providing students with a second chance relative to testing. She provided a self-reflection on her years as a student.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Petroske made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Fowler seconded. Seeing no objections, Ms. Glennon adjourned the meeting at 9:37 p.m.

Recording Secretary: _____
Mrs. Pam Griffin

Corresponding Secretary: _____
Mrs. Una Petroske

Approved