

Organizational Meeting
January 9, 2012
School Committee Meeting
Council Chambers

The Organizational Meeting of the Medford School Committee was called to order by Paulette Van der Kloot, Senior Member in the City Hall Council Chambers at 7:04 p.m. Those present were Ms. Cugno, Ms. DiBenedetto, Mr. Falco, Mr. Scarpelli, Mr. Skerry, Ms. Van der Kloot, Mayor McGlynn and Superintendent Belson.

Mayor McGlynn stated that the purpose of the organizational meeting was to elect a Vice Chairperson and a Secretary for the year 2012.

Mr. Scarpelli placed the name of John C. Falco in nomination for the position of Vice Chairperson of the Medford School Committee.

On the motion of Mr. Scarpelli seconded by Ms. Cugno and Mr. Skerry

Voted: That John C. Falco be elected Vice Chairperson of the Medford School Committee.

Yes : 7 Cugno, DiBenedetto, Falco, Scarpelli, Skerry, Van der Kloot,
McGlynn
No: 0
Absent: 0

Mr. Falco was elected to the position of Vice Chairperson of the Medford School Committee for the calendar year 2012, by acclamation.

Ms. Cugno placed the name of Paulette Van der Kloot in nomination for the position of Secretary of the Medford School Committee.

On motion of Ms. Cugno and seconded by Mr, Skerry,

Voted: That Paulette Van der Kloot be elected Secretary of the Medford School Committee.

Yes : 7 Cugno, DiBenedetto, Falco, Scarpelli, Skerry, Van der Kloot,
McGlynn
No: 0
Absent: 0

Paulette Van der Kloot was elected to the position of Secretary of the Medford School Committee for the calendar year 2012, by acclamation.

On the motion of Mr. Skerry that the meeting be adjourned at 7:06 p.m.

Regular Meeting
January 9, 2012
School Committee Meeting
Council Chambers

The Regular Meeting of the Medford School Committee was called to order by Mayor McGlynn, in the City Hall Council Chambers at 7:06 p.m. Those present were Ms. Cugno, Ms. DiBenedetto, Mr. Falco, Mr. Scarpelli, Mr. Skerry, Ms. Van der Kloot and Superintendent Belson.

On the motion of Mr. Skerry, that the minutes of December 19, 2011 be approved:
Vote:

Yes: 7
No: 0
Absent: 0

On the motion of Mr. Skerry that the Bills/Transfer of Funds be approved:
Voted: That the Bills/Transfer of Funds be approved.

Roll Call:

Yea: 7 Cugno, DiBenedetto, Falco, Scarpelli, Skerry, Van der Kloot,
McGlynn
Nay: 0
Absent: 0

On the motion of Mr. Skerry that the Payrolls be approved:
Voted: That the Payrolls be approved.

Roll Call:

Yea: 7 Cugno, DiBenedetto, Falco, Scarpelli, Skerry, Van der Kloot,
McGlynn
Nay: 0
Absent: 0

On the motion of Ms. Van der Kloot to take papers out of order.

Vote:

Yes: 7
No: 0
Absent: 0

Recommendation to Approve Capital Bonding Plan for the Improvement of Technology
in the Medford Public Schools

Superintendent Belson said that the technology plan has been thoroughly reviewed and discussed by the advisory committee and the administration. It significantly and positively addresses both the infrastructure and hardware/software concerns that were raised during the preliminary development period. The plan is a viable initiative that will enable us to provide our students and staff with the tools they need to access a 21st

century education. While there will be a continuing need to budget for technology each year in our operating plan, this capital outlay will position us to move forward in a comprehensive and effective manner. Superintendent Belson introduced Richard Trotta, Director of Media and Technology and Allan Arena, Network Administrator to answer any questions.

Discussion:

All Committee members thanked the committee for the work over the past month. Mrs. DiBenedetto asked what was cut from the original plan? The main item was one device per student. Mrs. DiBenedetto also asked if students will be able to use computers/labs after school since many do not have computers at home to do their assignments? Mr. Trotta said that all labs will be open after school until 4 p.m. for students' use.

Mrs. Cugno said that she is concerned with the budget item down the road. We need money every year and we need a line item every year.

Mrs. Van der Kloot asked Mr. Arena about the network update. Mr. Arena said that "guests" won't have access to the portal but will be able to get on the internet. She said that she supports the plan.

Mr. Scarpelli is concerned that the elementary schools were cut from 4 computers per class to 1. Mr. Trotta replied that the computers will be clustered in rooms and there will be a wireless cart for use. Mr. Scarpelli also said that the line item is crucial and we are going to have to be creative.

Mayor McGlynn said that the technology line item is already in place but the dollar amount must be determined.

Mr. Falco asked about the refresh line item. Mr. Trotta said that initially not much money would be required because the new computers would have a three-year warranty but as they get older more money would be needed. Mr. Falco asked what the time line is – when would we see new computers in the classrooms. Mr. Trotta explained that some things still need to be ironed out, so it could be several months. Mr. Falco asked Mr. Trotta if it is safe to say for the next school year. Mr. Trotta answered "yes."

Mr. Skerry said that he would like the public aware and to record in the minutes that he is employed as a Senior Criminal Investigator in the Office of the Auditor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Although he is in favor of the technology upgrade he cannot cast a vote due to his professional obligation.

On the motion of Ms. Van der Kloot to approve the Technology Plan:

Roll Call:

Yes: 6 Cugno, DiBenedetto, Falco, Scarpelli, Van der Kloot, McGlynn

Nay: 0

Present: 1 - Skerry

Absent: 0

New Business

School Committee Resolution

Be it resolved, that the Medford School Committee express its sincere condolences to the family of retired elementary teacher Rosemarie Caratelli. Mrs. Caretelli was a teacher for the Medford Public Schools for many years.

A moment of silence was held.

School Committee Resolution

Be it resolved that the Medford School Committee express its congratulations and best wishes to Dr. Melvyn Levine on the occasion of his retirement. Dr. Levine has been a pediatrician for 40 years and has been an important contributor to the health and well being of Medford children and families. Dr. Levine is the father of Andrews Middle School teacher Ian Levine.

Report on Goals and Objectives Agenda for School Committee Term January 2012 – December 2013

Superintendent Belson presented the report. He stated that budgets have been very tight in recent times. There is very little room for contingencies. We are overly dependent upon outside revenues to balance our bottom line. There are multiple items which are too thinly funded. Our staff levels have been reduced significantly and coverages for key operations are stretched. The state and federal governments are continuously asking us to do more with less. Administrators, faculty, and staff have accepted expanded duties but the ability to sustain their best efforts is compromised. We do not have sufficient opportunities to train the next generation of leaders because assistant administrative roles have been eliminated. We need to begin the process of systematically restoring positions. We should not believe that our current staff levels are optimum just because we are getting by on a daily basis. Excellent local initiatives in Medford including the health care conversion, energy conservation, recycling initiatives, and new partnerships will be helpful, but existing contracts with employee groups, increased mandates, and charter/choice costs can offset savings. As we approach budget FY 2013 we will have to consider our funding priorities. Staffing, class size, libraries, guidance, foreign language, extra-curricular, technology, maintenance, support services, etc. are always topics of interest. How much can the appropriated budget pay for and how much can be shifted to alternative sources of funding? How can services be provided in alternative ways? We still have to deal with FY 2012 (current year). We are only half way through and there is no guarantee that despite our most creative efforts we will finish with a balanced budget. The new education evaluation system must be discussed and negotiated with affected parties. The state is presenting its model template on January 10, 2012 as a guide but each community must negotiate the specifics locally. The state expects implementation by the fall of 2012. This seems unrealistic given the complexity of the new requirements. Further, it will be difficult to do even if there is agreement without more supervisory personnel. The emergence of new curriculum frameworks in English Language Arts, mathematics, and science all at once will require substantial help. We have made a start but it will take time and new materials. Furthermore, we are still waiting to see how the new consortium testing/assessment system will line up with the still emerging curricula. Our Capital Technology Plan was approved this evening. It is our expectation that it will be approved and funded. Still we must plan an ongoing support system for technology. We must also work on ensuring that what we get is used to optimum advantage by our teachers and students. The high school accreditation is scheduled for October 2013. There is a large amount of preparation that has been done and a large amount that still

must be done. The Headmaster has organized well but he will be balancing the daily responsibilities of running Medford High School with the extensive analysis and planning required by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. The faculty and staff will also be working on two fronts. What considerations must be made budgetarily to ensure that the high school program, services and facility will meet NEASC standards? We have just completed the State Coordinated Program Review. We should see a report in March that will ask us to make certain improvements and adjustments in Sped, ELL, and Vocational Education. We will have to address these issues. Professional Development requirements will be increased as we receive new mandated training requirements from the state and federal government. ELL category training, differentiated instruction, new assessments, technology utilization and regulation compliance measures will be heavy on teachers and staff. Vocation Education programs will need support. Challenges from regional school recruitment will compete for scarce resources. We must look at how we can offer quality programs that attract students and find new partnerships for programs we cannot afford to capitalize. Charter Schools costs will continue to siphon dollars away from our schools. We must convince our legislature that this trend is counterproductive and undermines our capacity to provide programs and services to the vast majority of resident school age students. We must also do more to encourage students to stay in our schools. We must consider how our collaboratives can meet our needs more comprehensively and efficiently. New rules affecting collaboratives will be adopted this year. We must ensure that the new rules do not undermine services and create more bureaucracy. The State was awarded one of nine Early Learning Challenge Grants (50 million). We are part of that effort. There will be new assessment systems affecting kindergarten readiness. This will be worthwhile but requires extra time and effort in the short run. Since we have changed the kindergarten entrance date to August 31st we must now consider what the grade 1 cut off date/age will be next year. Some of our parochial schools did not change their cut off date with us. Will we accept younger students from their schools in grade 1 if they have successfully completed kindergarten? Our current large vehicle transportation contract will open at the end of this school year. Do we want to make changes in service or vendor? Buildings and grounds maintenance issues are important if we are to avoid major repair costs in the future. Custodial staffing is low and needs more assignment flexibility. We only have one supervisor and that does not provide adequate coverage. Our contract-cleaning contract at Medford High has been reduced over the last few years and we will need to bid a new agreement for FY 2013. We must complete our policy work with MASC this year and ensure that it is online. We are close but it is time to wrap it up. A good target given other priorities would be October 2012. It is important for us to accelerate our conversion to a Point of Service payment system for our food services. We have the vendor ready to go and with a few more technology upgrades we can begin implementation. This will help our food service to gain increased participation and modernize record keeping. Our strategies must be "Whole Child" centered if we are to be effective with all students who have needs. We are blessed with rich multicultural diversity and we need the capacity to understand, communicate, and serve the increased challenges that accompany these demographics. We need to revitalize our "Homefront" initiative to ensure that parents/guardians can assist us with the educational, social, and health needs of their children and youth. School councils and PTOs must play an enhanced role. While our

web based and cable communication systems have been good in recent years, we must work on even more ways to communicate with parents and the community on both daily and long term matters. Cyberspace and bullying must continue to have our focus. While we have a good plan in place, control of unwanted behaviors is a daily endeavor. Our collaborations with the police, district attorney, and other social service agencies must continue and be fortified. We only have children and youth approximately 15% of their total time each year. Nevertheless, what goes on outside of school affects student performance and our operational capacities. Our schools are safe and we want to keep it that way. Still an extraordinary amount of time is spent each year by school personnel dealing with issues that originate and fester beyond school walls. This evening we will be discussing the replacement of two retiring elementary principals. There are other key members of our administration who are at retirement age. We must begin to think about transition in leadership going forward. We should be looking at our structures as well as our personnel since the requirements for state and federal compliance are increasing. This includes our data management systems and staffing that supports our administrative team. Medford has done significant, outstanding work in recent years despite difficult budgetary circumstances. More good is already moving forward. The above comments about our challenges in no way diminishes the good that has occurred. It mere lays out the future needs of this school district. We are not alone. Most urban and urban rim districts face similar or worse situations than Medford. We have been leaders in many initiatives. Still we cannot accept the status quo. We must continuously challenge ourselves to face our needs head on and work together to find and implement solutions. Our focus is sharpened on the issues ahead. I am confident that we will move our schools forward with a rededicated partnership.

On the motion of Mr. Skerry to move approval:

On the motion, Ms. Van der Kloot to amend the main motion, to schedule a Committee of the Whole Meeting to sit and discuss issues and goals.

Vote:

Yes: 7
No: 0
Absent: 0

Report on the Retirement of Two Elementary Principals and Plans to Conduct Search for Replacements

Superintendent Belson reported that he has been notified that both Brooks Principal Michael Simon and Columbus Principal Joan Yaeger will retire at the close of the current school year in June 2012. It is important organizationally to begin a process for filling these two significant leadership positions. Their early notification gives us an advantage for recruitment of highly qualified, licensed professional principals. Therefore, advertising for these two positions will begin in January 2012. Administrative interviews will be held in February and parental/faculty interviews in March. It is our intention to make an appointment before April vacation if at all possible. We will follow the same process that we have used in recent years to screen and identify our finalists. The

Medford School Committee will interview all finalists and provide insight to the Superintendent before any selection is made.

On the motion of Mr. Scarpelli to accept the report and place on file:

Vote:

Yes: 7

No: 0

Absent: 0

Report on Project 351

Project 351 is an initiative of Governor Deval Patrick's office that is designed to inspire, challenge, and motivate our next generation of learners and leaders to give back and make a significant impact on the community. The program is built upon the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King. This year Medford will be sending two ambassadors to the program from the McGlynn School eighth grade. The selected students are George M. Damaa and Ann Viet Le. Principal Edwards describes these two students as kind, mature, and respectful individuals who exemplify good citizenship. They both have been called upon to help new students adjust to the school. Each has a very strong academic record. We are confident that Medford's two representatives will shine among all the participants statewide.

On the motion of Mr. Skerry to accept the report and place on file:

Vote:

Yes: 7

No: 0

Absent: 0

Ms. Cugno requested a letter be sent to the two students.

Report on State Ethics Commission Two Year Training Requirement

Every two years all current state, county and municipal employees must complete the Ethics Commission online training program. New public employees must complete this training program within thirty days of their hire. This rule applies to all elected officials as well as appointed personnel. The Ethics Commission Training Program may be found at the following URL web address: http://db.state.ma.us.ethics/quiz_MEthics/index.asp. All public personnel must complete this requirement by April 2, 2012. The Medford School Committee Members as subject to this rule. Therefore please participate in the online training session and submit the "certificate of completion" to the Superintendent of Schools. All Medford Public Schools personnel are being informed of this renewing requirement and will be expected to complete the same by April 2, 2012.

On the motion of Ms. DeBenedetto to accept the report and place on file:

Vote:

Yes: 7

No: 0

Absent: 0

Report on Emergency School Closing Notification System

Superintendent Belson presented the report. He stated that the closing of school on an emergency basis most frequently occurs during the winter season for inclement weather. However, the closing of a school or schools could occur for other reasons as well. For example, there could be an electrical or water problem. The closing of a school normally occurs before the school day starts, but it might be necessary to close a school before the school day ends. Such a decision is made by the Superintendent in consultation with the building principal and other public safety officials. There are many factors considered when a building must be closed and the students are already in place. These items include nature of the problem, time of day, age of students, vulnerability of students, weather conditions, availability of transportation and ability to contact parent/guardian. Sometimes it is better to keep students in school with imperfect conditions. Parents and guardians are advised to have a backup plan for coverage if school must be closed. We do not encourage “latch key” solutions for younger children. If school is in session during inclement weather, parents can choose to keep their child/children home. We try and keep schools open to the greatest extent possible recognizing that home coverage for working parents may be difficult and that for some students school provides breakfast and lunch. The decision to close schools for inclement weather is not always an easy one to make. There are many factors. Sometimes it is a single factor and sometimes it is the multiple impact of several factors. We try to make the call as early as possible. Often times it is the evening before if conditions are certain. Safety is our primary concern.

Discussion:

Mr. Scarpelli asked why Medford does not utilize a delayed opening. Superintendent Belson said that the buses are used multiple times for different routes so it would be difficult to delay opening. Also that the atmosphere of the day changes for the day so it is a nonproductive day.

On the motion of Mr. Scarpelli to accept the report and place on file:

Vote:

Yes: 7
No: 0
Absent: 0

On the motion of Mr. Falco that the meeting be adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Yes: 7
No: 0
Absent: 0

Respectfully submitted:

Paulette Van der Kloot
Secretary