

Regular Meeting  
October 3, 2011  
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 7:00 p.m. Those present were Ms. Cugno, Mr. Falco, Van der Kloot and Superintendent Belson. Ms. Guzik, Mr. O'Keefe and Mr. Scarpelli were absent. Ms Guzik arrived at 7:02 p.m.

On the motion of Ms. Van der Kloot, that the minutes of September 19, 2011 be approved:

Voted: Approval of Minutes.

Yes: 5

No: 0

Absent: 2

On the motion of Ms. Van der Kloot that the Bills/Transfer of Funds be approved:

Voted: That the Bills/Transfer of Funds by approved.

Roll Call:

Yea: 5 - Cugno, Falco, Guzik, Van der Kloot, McGlynn

Nay: 0

Absent: 2 – O'Keefe, Scarpelli

On the motion of Ms. Cugno that the Payrolls be approved:

Voted: That the Payrolls by approved.

Roll Call:

Yea: 5 - Cugno, Falco, Guzik, Van der Kloot, McGlynn

Nay: 0

Absent: 2 – O'Keefe, Scarpelli

On the motion of Mr. Falco to suspend the rules to take items out of order.

Vote:

Yes: 5

No: 0

Absent: 2

Mr. O'Keefe arrived at 7:06 p.m.

Mr. Falco read the report of the Committee of the Whole Meeting September 26, 2011. He stated that the purpose of the meeting was to review the Spring 2011 MCAS results. Since only three members were present a formal meeting was not held. The session proceeded as a discussion and no formal votes were taken. Superintendent Belson

provided an overview of this year's MCAS as well as information on State and Federal concerns regarding NCLB. He also presented some comparison statistics between Medford and other school systems. He warned that current rating systems can be arbitrary and misleading. Assistant Superintendent Nelson provided a technical review of the MCAS programs and results. It was pointed out that although Massachusetts leads the nation in performance, 91% of all Massachusetts school districts and 82% of all Massachusetts schools did not make AYP. It was noted that Medford's accountability status was raised from level 3 to level 2 based on MCAS progress.

Discussion:

Ms. Cugno apologized to members for not attending the meeting but she was very ill that evening. Mrs. Van der Kloot said that she sees areas of improvement but there are still areas of concern. She recently read in the Boston Globe that there was a scoring error and the additional cost of sending more reports was an added expense to the district.

Mrs. Nelson explained that the revised test data actually shows an increase in scores for the district.

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

Voted:

Yes: 6

No: 0

Absent: 1

#### Community Participation

Erin DiBenedetto, 21 Dearborn Street, Medford was given permission to speak as requested. Ms. DiBenedetto said that she had previously requested a review of the guidance department and the possibility of redesigning the workings of the department. She had received word that the department will begin to change to an alpha process so that all counselors will write recommendations etc. They will all have students in grades 9-12. She thanked the committee and Frank Howard for the change which will be very important.

Frank Howard, Director of Guidance said that Naviance is a wonderful tool but it is only a tool. Ms. Westmark is in the process of training on the program. He also said that many workshops are scheduled this fall for parents to help with the college application process.

Discussion:

Mrs. Van der Kloot said that at a recent PTO meeting many parents said that they are concerned that the students don't understand the application process. Mr. Howard said that he will be speaking to the PTO on October 18<sup>th</sup> regarding this topic. Ms. Cugno asked Mr. Howard for a report in June on the transition of the counselors including the pros and cons of the change. Mr. O'Keefe asked Mr. Howard if he could post the dates of these sessions on Channel 15 because they are very important. Also he suggested taping the programs especially the financial aid night to show on Channel 15.

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

Voted:

Yes: 6

No: 0

Absent: 1

#### Recommendation to Approve Sale of Old Music Instruments

Superintendent Belson stated that a recent appraisal of six older instruments in the possession of the Medford Public Schools Fine Arts department have been appraised at fair market value of \$26,000. It is our recommendation that the School Committee approve the sale of these items thru the appropriate processes. Funds acquired thru this sale will be placed at the disposal of the music department to purchase new instrumentation and other items for that program.

Discussion:

Mayor McGlynn suggested using the money to purchase instruments so that we always have instruments for the students. We need to have a couple of each type. Ms. Guzik asked why we have these valuable instruments sitting around. Superintendent Belson said that these instruments are not in use today.

On the motion of Ms. Van der Kloot to accept the report and place on file.

Voted:

Yes: 6

No: 0

Absent: 1

#### Recommendation to Hire School Nurse

Superintendent Belson requested approval of the recommendation of Margaret Donahue, RN,MS as a school nurse. This is a .6 position starting salary is \$31,216.00

On the motion of Ms. Van der Kloot to approve the recommendation.

Voted:

Yes: 7

No: 0

Absent: 0

Mr. Scarpelli arrived at 7:31 p.m.

#### Report on State Accountability System and District Status

Assistant Superintendent Beverly Nelson presented the report. She said that schools and districts in Massachusetts are under the scrutiny of two accountability systems – one at the federal level and one at the state level. The federal accountability is known as Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and is part of the *No Child Left Behind* mandate. This year's report shows that 91% of the school districts did not make AYP based on 2011 MCAS results. President Obama recently offered states a waiver option that would exempt them from some of the law's sanctions if they meet certain conditions. Massachusetts intends to seek a waiver. The second accountability system overseen by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is also linked to student performance on MCAS. This system was put into place approximately three years ago. School districts receive a rating Level based on the performance of individual schools in the district. Again, as in the case of AYP one negative in performance cancels out all other positive gains. Mrs. Nelson said that the district this year has moved upward from Level 3 status to Level 2 since we no longer have any school that falls into Level 3 status.

On the motion to accept the report and place on file.

Voted:

Yes: 7

No: 0

Absent: 0

#### Update on Health Plan Conversion

Superintendent Belson presented the update on the changing health insurance plans for all employees. He said that it will be a very fast Open Enrollment Period, October 12 through October 26. All employees and retirees must RE-enroll in one of the GIC plans. Medford Public Schools will be hosting a Health Insurance Fair on October 17<sup>th</sup> from 12-5p.m. in the gym where representatives from all new plans and the GIC will be available to answer any questions. Please note: Early Release Day has been changed from Wednesday to Monday!

On the motion to accept the report and place on file.

Voted:

Yes: 7

No: 0

Absent: 0

#### Report on High School Dropout Statistics

Superintendent Belson reported that a comment was made at the last meeting that raised the question of the official dropout rate of the Medford Public Schools. The comment was made based upon the four-year graduation rate published by *Boston Magazine*. The graduation rate does not correlate with the dropout rate. The official statistic from the DESE District Profile for Medford shows that the grade 9-12 dropout rate is 2.9% and equal to the statewide average. The four-year graduation rate is 78% for Medford and the state average is 82%. This reflects on Administration's practice to not grant social promotions and to insist on actual achievement as the basis for a diploma. The five-year graduation rate for Medford is 91.9%. Older students may take additional time to graduate and/or receive a GED. Some students complete their courses of study but do not pass MCAS (9%). The five-year state graduation rate is 84%. Medford exceeds that rate by 7.9%. This information is the latest available. (2009-2010 school year)

Discussion:

Mr. Falco is concerned with the four-year graduation rate and asked why it is so low. It is below the state rate. Superintendent Belson explained that many students do not pass MCAS, social promotion is not granted, ELL students may take longer to graduate and some sped students can stay until age 22. These challenges are not uncommon to urban communities. Superintendent also explained that we must compare the rate with prior years. Mr. Scarpelli asked if we could see where ELL and sped increases are. He is concerned that the 78.8 rate is alarming. He would like to track these students. Ms. Cugno suggested tracking the graduation classes to see where they go in the long term; perhaps after college, and where the vocational students advance to. Ms. Van der Kloot asked why students leave school? She said that sometimes students have anxiety, depression or mental health issues that many don't realize. She asked if letters were sent

to students to invite them back. Mr. O'Keefe said that we need to recapture 2.9% of dropouts because it affects the community as well. He suggested a different type of program for this group of students. Ms. Guzik asked if a student leaves school to return to his home country, is that classifies as a dropout. Superintendent Belson answered that it is.

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

Voted:

Yes: 7

No: 0

Absent: 0

#### School Committee Resolution

Be it resolved, that the Medford School Committee express its sincere condolences to the family of Charlotte Galaid. Mrs. Galaid was a long time elementary school teacher at the Gleason Scholl and the mother of several outstanding Medford High School graduates.

#### Appointment of Delegate and Alternate Delegate to MASC Meeting

The name of Sharon Guzik for Delegate was placed in nomination. On the motion of Ms. Van der Kloot and seconded by Mr. Falco.

Voted:

Yes: 7

No: 0

Absent: 0

The name of John Falco for Alternate Delegate was placed in nomination. On the motion of Ms. Van der Kloot and seconded by Ms. Cugno.

Voted:

Yes: 7

No: 0

Absent: 0

On the motion of Mr. Scarpelli that the meeting be adjourned at 8:12 p.m.

Yes: 7

No: 0

Absent: 0

Respectfully submitted:

John Falco  
Secretary