

Regular Meeting
September 19, 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 7:05 p.m. Those present were Ms. Cugno, Mr. Falco, Ms. Guzik, Mr. O'Keefe, Ms. Van der Kloot and Superintendent Belson. Mr. Scarpelli was absent.

On the motion of Mr. Scarpelli, that the minutes of September 12, 2011 be approved:
Voted: Approval of Minutes.

Yes: 6

No: 0

Absent: 1

There were no Bills/Transfer of Funds

There were no Payrolls

Mr. Scapelli arrived at 7:10 pm

Update Report on Opening of Schools SY 2011-2012

Superintendent Belson presented the update. He stated that class sizes remain stable. Kindergarten numbers are good. Overall transportation is going well. Tapes were collected from the buses but who can view them is being reviewed by legal counsel. The city and school department are planning the transition to the GIC health care plan. This conversion is a major undertaking. A health fair is planned for October 17th at Medford High School. Superintendent Belson said that there is substantial action on Beacon Hill including the Casino Bill and the new Pension Bill. Also the new Education Jobs Bill proposed by President Obama could support public schools but likelihood of passage is unknown at this time.

Discussion:

Ms. Van der Kloot inquired about the after school Vocell bus to North Medford. She said that she has had calls that it is overcrowded and students are sitting in the aisles. She requested a count. Ms. Giombetti said that she would look into the matter.

Ms. Cugno asked about the middle school buses on Wednesday afternoons. She said that if they are going to continuously be 10-15 minutes late perhaps a note can be posted on the website for parents. Ms. Cugno also inquired about a master calendar that shows all school events. There have been conflicts and perhaps this would alleviate the problem.

Mr. Falco asked about the situation with Bus 14 and if a report on routes and number of riders could be given at the next meeting. Mr. Falco also inquired about the security at Medford High School and the possibility of moving the cameras to the front desk.

Superintendent Belson said that he does not have the dollars to put more people on at this time. Mr. Scarpelli asked about the crossing guard at the McGlynn School.

Superintendent Belson said that Chief Sacco states that all assignments remain the same. The crossing guard locations will be posted on the website.

On the motion of Ms. Van der Kloot that the report be accepted and placed on file:

Yes: 7

No: 0

Absent: 0

On the motion to take items out of order.

Yes: 7

No: 0

Absent: 0

New Business:

Acceptance of a wireless microphone as a gift to the Medford Public Schools donated by Patricia Papas, 3 Sheridan Avenue, Medford, Massachusetts.

On motion of Ms. Van der Kloot to accept the donation:

Roll Call:

Yea: 7 - Cugno, Falco, Guzik, O'Keefe, Scarpelli, Van der Kloot, McGlynn

Nay: 0

Absent: 0

School Committee Resolution

Be it resolved, that the Medford School Committee extend a warm welcome to incoming Tufts University President Anthony Monaco. The School Committee looks forward to continuing a long tradition of positive collaboration between the Medford Public Schools and Tufts University under the leadership of Dr. Monaco.

On the motion of Ms. Cugno resolution accepted and placed on file.

Resolution by Ms. Van der Kloot

Be it resolved that the Medford School Committee discuss the issue of withholding of recess as a disciplinary measure.

Further, that this matter be referred to the Curriculum Sub Committee for a preliminary review of this issue.

On the motion of Ms. Van der Kloot that the item be referred to sub committee

Yes: 7

No: 0

Absent: 0

Report on Team Medford School Supply Drive

Assistant Superintendent Beverly Nelson stated that for the fourth consecutive year Team Medford and Hallmark Health have conducted a drive to collect school supplies on behalf of the Medford Public Schools. This year's supplies exceeded last year's collection by \$5,000. We estimate the amount of supplies to be worth over \$15,000. We are extremely grateful to Hallmark Health and Team Medford for their work in making this drive so successful. We are especially grateful to Sam Tarabelsi from Hallmark Health who

organized the drive. Staples was again the major sponsor. This year they add a pallet of much needed Xerox paper in addition to what they have sent the district in the past. Members in attendance were thanked by the Mayor and School Committee and given certificates.

On the motion of Ms. Cugno that the report be accepted and placed on file:

Yes: 7

No: 0

Absent: 0

Report on Cross Country Targeted School Supply Donation

Diane Caldwell, Director of Elementary Education presented the report. Medford Public Schools would like to thank Sidney Wolk, CEO and Founder of Cross Country and Chris Small, Regional Manager for their generous donation of backpacks to our students. Twenty backpacks filled with school supplies including notebooks, markers, rulers, paper, pens, crayons and pencils were distributed at our elementary schools. Students from homeless families were the primary recipients. Also a number of them were saved for the holiday drive for the needy families.

On the motion of Mr. O'Keefe that the report be accepted and placed on file:

Yes: 7

No: 0

Absent: 0

Report on Medford Family Network Middle School Initiative

Superintendent Belson asked Marie Cassidy, Director of MFN to present the report. Ms. Cassidy explained that the MFN has received a one-year grant to present a series of programs to middle school parents and teachers. The program is entitled "Stepping into Adolescence." The program will enable them to reach out to parents of middle school students and cover important aspects of parenting for this age group such as setting limits and communicating with adolescents. This is an important initiative that is consistent with our "Whole Child" approach to education.

Discussion:

All members congratulated and thanked Ms. Cassidy for this innovative initiative.

Ms. Cassidy mentioned the fundraiser that is planned for November 4th at Springstep – "A Taste of Medford" tickets are \$20 each.

On the motion of Ms. Gusik that the report be accepted and placed on file:

Yes: 7

No: 0

Absent: 0

Report on Medford Health Matters Communities that Care Youth Survey 2011

Superintendent Belson introduced Penelope Bruce and Brook Johns from Team Medford who presented the report. They explained that Team Medford is an initiative of the City of Medford and Medford Health Matters Substance Prevention Task Force. The goal is to aid Medford in building a community of adults, youth, and professionals who encourage and promote healthy youth. Team Medford invites the Medford community to be owners of Team Medford and its success and sustainability. The purpose of the

survey is to help Medford identify and understand the current risks and protective factors that either increase risks or reduce our community's assets. This survey is conducted every two years to students in grades 6-12.

Discussion:

Ms. Cugno asked if Team Medford has spoken with the youth groups in the city including the church leagues? Ms. Van der Kloot asked whether the findings were better or worse and where the specific troubles are? Ms. Bruce replied that the binge drinking is going up and that is a problem. Mr. Scarpelli said that the report is alarming. The marijuana use and dinking is frightening. He suggested that we need to look at something innovative with kids; we need to reach out and listen to them.

On the motion of Mr. Scarpelli that the report be accepted and placed on file:

Yes: 7

No: 0

Absent: 0

Report on "Rachel's Challenge" Program

Superintendent Belson introduced David Blauch, Student Support Specialist at Medford High School to present this report. Mr. Blauch said that Rachel Joy Scott was the first person killed at Columbine High School on April 20, 1999. Rachel was known for her kindness and compassion and positive ways of interacting with peers; the contents of her six diaries have become the foundation for the "Rachel's Challenge" program. "Rachel's Challenge" is coming to Medford High School on Thursday, September 29th. Powerful video/audio footage of Rachel's life and the Columbine tragedy will characterize a one-hour school presentation that motivates students to treat others in more positive, empathetic ways. The evening of September 29th from 7:00-8:00 p.m. in the Caron Theater at Medford High School the Rachel's Challenge speaker will conduct a powerful session with parents and community leaders.

Discussion:

Ms. Cugno asked if the evening program is open to middle school students. Mr. Blauch said that they are welcome but the program is not appropriate for any student younger than the sixth grade.

On the motion of Ms. Cugno that the report be accepted and placed on file:

Yes: 7

No: 0

Absent: 0

Report on Summer School 2011

Superintendent Belson stated that our summer school program enrolled 235 students this year. In order to receive credit a student must pass a summer school course with at least a C- or better. This year 83% of the courses were passed by our students. The success/failure rate remains relatively consistent with previous years. Each year there are six to ten students at the middle school level who need summer school success to move on to the high school in the fall. These students are too old to return to middle school if they don't pass summer school. When they fail summer school we are faced with the need for a "bridge program" to avoid "social promotion." Recent financial constraints have made it difficult to set up such a transitional program. However, we have concluded

that next year's budget must contain funding for such a program. The summer school program is wholly funded by tuitions of participating students.

Discussion:

Mr. Scarpelli questioned whether "social promotion" is when the student is too old? Superintendent Belson said that he wants students to be given every opportunity to be able to pass MCAS. Mr. Scarpelli asked for a copy of the policy. Ms. Cugno asked if it is possible to get a breakdown of attendance issues versus grades. Principal D'Alleva spoke in favor of a Bridge Program, saying that every year the numbers are increasing. Ms. Cugno asked if the Bridge Program is held during the summer? Superintendent Belson said that it is a school year program that would be housed at Medford High School designed as a remedial program. Mr. O'Keefe asked for a presentation of this model? Mr. O'Keefe was also concerned with an article in Boston Magazine about dropout rates. Superintendent Belson said that he thinks that Mr. O'Keefe misunderstood the article that Medford's dropout rate is under 3%. Ms. Van der Kloot asked for a report on dropout rates and the reasons. Ms. Cugno asked if this report and information could be furnished at the next meeting.

On the motion of Ms. Cugno that the report be accepted and placed on file:

Yes: 7

No: 0

Absent: 0

Report on Literacy Grant Program

Diane Caldwell, Director of Elementary Education reported that for the third year in a row Medford Public Schools has received a K-12 literacy grant. In the past our elementary schools staff has focused on the implementation of the Six Traits of Writing and teachers have worked to improve their skills in teaching students about ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency conventions and presentations. This K-12 grant will assist us in designing our own district literacy plan. The ability to read widely, think critically and strategically and communicate is essential. Medford wants to promote an appreciation for lifelong learning and love of reading and writing.

Discussion:

Ms. Van der Kloot mentioned that last year we held math nights for parents; would it be possible to have a Family Literacy Night?

All members voiced concern about the closing of schools on Election Days. They said that they had received numerous calls from parents regarding this. They would like to look into other options. Mayor McGlynn said that they should discuss this with the City Clerk.

On the motion of Ms. Van der Kloot that the report be accepted and placed on file:

Yes: 7

No: 0

Absent: 0

Report on MCAS Results Spring 2011

Assistant Superintendent Beverly Nelson reported that the data was not received until last week. Therefore the results are embargoed until sometime this week. Bernadette

Ricciardelli and Carolyn Joy have started the initial analysis. Mrs. Nelson said that as soon as the analysis is completed it will be provided to the committee.

On the motion of Ms. Van der Kloot that the report be accepted and placed on file:

Yes: 7

No: 0

Absent: 0

On the motion of Mr. Scarpelli that the meeting be adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Yes: 7

No: 0

Absent: 0

Ms. Cugno reminded everyone of the “*Fit for Life*” Walk on October 2nd at 9:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:

John Falco
Secretary