

Regular Meeting
February 1, 2016
School Committee Meeting
Council Chambers

The regular meeting of the Medford School Committee was called to order by Mayor Burke in the City Hall Council Chambers at 7:00 p.m. Those present were Ms. Cugno, Ms. DiBenedetto, Ms. Kreatz, Ms. Mustone, Mr. Skerry, Ms. Van der Kloot, Mayor Burke and Superintendent Belson.

On the motion of Mr. Skerry that the minutes of January 25, 2016 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, Kreatz, Mustone, Skerry, Van der Kloot, Burke
Nay: 0
Absent: 0

On the motion of Ms. Van der Kloot that the Payrolls be approved:

Voted: That the Payrolls be approved.

Roll Call:

Yea: 7 Cugno, DiBenedetto, Kreatz, Mustone, Skerry, Van der Kloot, Burke
Nay: 0
Absent: 0

Superintendent Belson informed the public that around 9:00 a.m. a robo call bomb threat was received at Medford High School. It was assessed as a very low level threat by our professionals working closely with the police. A full sweep of the complex was conducted very quickly and our camera surveillance was checked to see who came and went to and from our building this weekend and this morning. The protocols of the Massachusetts State Police Bomb Squad were followed. All parents were notified this afternoon. We take every threat seriously and employ our best protocols and assessments to determine appropriate steps. A meeting has been scheduled with the police department for further discussion of school security on February 10th.

Discussion:

Ms. DiBenedetto asked if the parents were notified as soon as this happened?

Superintendent Belson replied that we did not want disruption of the day. Dr. Perella is calling tonight. Ms. Kreatz said that she received the call.

Update Report on Bloomberg Center for Citizenship & Social Responsibility
Superintendent Belson introduced Richard Trotta, Director of Media, Technology and Fine Arts to present the update. Mr. Trotta explained that the goal of the Center for Citizenship and Responsibility is to provide instructional resources, activities, coordination and training to support our mission of developing responsible global citizens who will be positive contributors to society. The center works with teachers, administrators, students and community members to develop a system-wide plan to integrate social-emotional learning, financial literacy, citizenship, career awareness, social emotional learning, resiliency, emotional intelligence and the mirror neuron into the district curriculum and activities. He explained the projects the students are involved in and spoke about the symposium scheduled for April 2nd. The topic is “Proactive Steps and Resources for Parents and Teachers”. The event will begin at 12:45 and end at 5 p.m. Mr. Michael Skorker who is doing an internship with Mr. Trotta elaborated on the symposium. He noted that the keynote speaker is Dr. Robert Brooks, Clinical Psychologist. The targeted age group is kindergarten through grade 8. Since there is limited seating, reservations are recommended and requested. More information is available on the Medford Public Schools website. Mr. Skorker introduced three students that are very involved with the center. He also reminded everyone of another important event being held on February 3rd at 6:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers at City Hall dealing with the addiction crisis.

Discussion:

Ms. Cugno commented that this is a critical topic and this is how we can bring the community together. She thanked them for doing this and also thanked the students for a great job. Ms. Van der Kloot said that it takes a lot of work to organize an event like this and thanked them. She asked if they have reached out to the service organizations in the city. Mr. Skorker said that Team Medford is collaborating with them on the symposium and they will be contacting many of the local organizations. Ms. Cugno asked why k-8 is the target group. Mr. Skorker answered that all are welcome but that prevention starts early.

On the motion of Ms. Van der Kloot the report was accepted and placed on file.

Vote:

Yes: 7
No: 0
Absent: 0

Report on District and Schools Accountability 2015

Deputy Superintendent Beverly Nelson presented the report. Ms. Nelson reported that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has publicly released their 2015 accountability determinations for all schools and districts in the Commonwealth. The purposes of this report are as follows:
To explain the Massachusetts Accountability System and the various changes for 2015, to report on Medford’s accountability status, and to interpret the findings based on the data we have received.

The Massachusetts Accountability System

In 2011 Massachusetts applied for an allowable waiver of exemption from of the provision of the federal No Child Left Behind Law which required that students reach proficiency levels by school year 2013-2014. Proficiency in Massachusetts was determined by achieving Proficiency on MCAS. Those states requesting the waivers were required to develop alternative accountability systems subject to approval by the federal government. Massachusetts's new accountability system was approved to replace the original NCLB requirement. Under the new system, schools and districts in Massachusetts are required to reduce the proficiency gap among the different subgroups of students by half by the year 2017. Each year the gap must lessen. We are now on an annual basis held to this new system which rates schools and districts Levels 1-5.

Although individual accountability ratings are given for each school, the rating of the school district can be no higher than the rating of the lowest performing school. Accountability ratings are based on a statistic called the PPI (Progress and Performance Index) which is a complex formula which DESE states is "based on 7 indicators that include performance on MCAS over a 4 year period, students' growth percentiles, science and other indicators." Each year the target number for closing the gap among subgroups increases since the goal of closing the gap is the year 2017. This year's target was 75. This year for the first time, school districts in the Commonwealth were allowed to have students were held harmless in accountability ratings. Despite being held harmless they were assigned ratings along with the districts that took MCAS. Logically there were questions related to using the same rating system for two very different assessment instruments. DESE's answer to this concern is that they have developed an equating formula called the "equipercentile linking." To date we do not have the magical ingredients for this formula and remain skeptical since according to psychometrics valid longitudinal comparisons can only be made when measurement instruments remain constant. How school districts can be rated on the same scale using two very different testing systems remains perplexing. While the final goal for performance is based on growth over 4 years, DESE has made several changes related to this year's reports and plans for an additional change for 2016. These changes include: Creation of a new subgroup called Economically Disadvantaged. This subgroup replaces the former Low Income subgroup which was reported through 2014 and was determined based on a student's eligibility for free or reduced lunch. The new Economically Disadvantaged group only includes students who participate in one or more of the state administered programs such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Transitional Assistance for Families with Dependent Children, DCF foster care program and Mass Health.

The change in the number of required students tested for the reporting out of a subgroup. The minimum group size for accountability determination was 30 students in 2014, 25 students in 2015 and will be 20 in 2016. This leads for the possibility of a new subgroup to be reported out that was not reported the previous year. This we feel poses two problems. First of all since the accountability system goal is to reduce the gap in performance among subgroups, as the required size of the group is reduced new subgroups for which we do not have previous data will emerge. If the subgroup configuration changes from year to year how is it possible to show progress or decline when looking at different populations? New for 2015 is the awarding of bonus points. PPI calculations for this year include the awarding of bonus points for moving 10% of the students from Proficient to Advanced and from Warning/Failing to Needs Improvement. No points are awarded for moving students from Needs Improvement to Proficient. This

means that if you have 10 students in the Warning category and move 1 student to Needs Improvement you are awarded bonus points; however if you have 100 students in Needs Improvement and move all 100 to Proficient you receive no bonus points. This defies the very purpose of what districts have been focused on since the inception of accountability, the moving of students to Proficient.

Medford's Accountability Rating.

Accountability ratings are provided for each school as well as for the district. Medford High School and Medford Vocational/Technical High School have been given an accountability rating of 1 which is the highest rating possible. Both middle schools as well as the McGlynn, Columbus, and Brooks elementary schools have an accountability rating of 2. The Roberts Elementary has received an accountability rating of 3. They received a score of 20 which was one point away from the required score of 21 which would have put them in level 2. Since one of our elementary schools is level 3 the entire district's accountability rating is 3. Title 1 schools who are rated level 3 must inform parents of this rating. Letters from the Title 1 office will be sent out to families of Roberts's students in order to comply with this regulation.

Interpretation of Data

Our administrative team over the past two weeks has been analyzing the data. We have provided you with some data related to district performance as well as performance of the Roberts Elementary School. As you can see in both ELA and Mathematics gains have been made. Extra credit for high growth has been given for our ELL students' performance on the ACCESS test. Our analysis of our student growth percentiles shows that we are in the moderate to high range for all groups across all schools. As a level 3 district Medford is required to work with DSAC (District School Assistance Center). The leadership team met with our DSAC coordinator Mary Ann Jackman and Regional Data Specialist Hilary Bresnahan on Friday January 22, 2016. We posed several questions about the data that to date remain unexplained. We are concerned about a system that is intended to measure progress over time whose tools for measurement vary from year to year. We liken the process to that of trying to hit a moving target. We have brought our concerns to the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents who has responded that Medford with its diligence in examining the data has brought to light aspects of this system unknown to most districts. We will continue to challenge what we feel is a system that works against the best interests of schools and students. One of our goals as a school district, with or without accountability systems, has always been focused on improving student academic achievement. We feel that we have made significant progress is moving students into higher levels of performance. Our student growth percentiles are strong (most in the 40-60+ growth range) and we continue to move students into the Proficient level. While we recognize that there are still areas of improvement, we are focused on making sure that the data that we use to make those improvements is sound. At this time we have unanswered questions on how the state has interpreted results not only for Medford but for all districts in the Commonwealth. We will continue to remain vigilant about the rating process and advocate for all our students.

Discussion:

Mr. Skerry suggested setting up a meeting with Ms. Jackman and Ms. Bresnahan to have the ratings explained. He said he is tired of Medford being misaligned. Our kids are working hard and its not what Medford or our kids deserve. Ms. Nelson explained that they are questioning the numbers especially with ELL. Ms. Ricciardelli commented that

the Latino/Hispanic subgroup and Asian are missing data at the Roberts and they are waiting for answers regarding this. She also stated that a meeting is schedule with Ms. Jackman and Ms. Bresnahan for February 8th. Ms. Van der Kloot suggested scheduling a Committee of the Whole meeting with the DSCAC representatives. Superintendent Belson commented that the schools are doing just fine. Some of the best high schools in the state are at Level 2. We are at Level 1. We do just fine on CPI. Perfect index deals with growth. There is complexity in all changes going on. Ms. Cugno is very frustrated they changed the formula of growth and said this is not fair. She suggested reaching out to MASC to get more support. Ms. Van der Kloot is very troubled by this. How will it be interpreted by the Roberts parents. It sounds like we are trying to make excuses. She hopes the letter to the parents is well drafted. Superintendent Belson answered that he is planning a forum at the Roberts to speak to the parents. Ms. Van der Kloot asked if the rating is for two years? Ms. Nelson answered it is for one year. Ms. Mustone commented that the teachers are wonderful and very dedicated. She reassured everyone that the Roberts is a fine school. Ms. DiBenedetto asked if the district is sending out letter to Roberts Title One parents or all Title One parents. Ms. Nelson said that she would check with Ms. Caldwell. Ms. DiBenedetto said that a corrective action plan needs to be made for the Roberts so it does not remain a Level 3 school. She said that families moving into the city see us as Level 3 and we are so much better than this. We need to do better. She would like a subcommittee on curriculum to be scheduled. Superintendent Belson said that we are doing a lot of good things at this school. There are many ELL students here and other students with many challenges. The school is a good school and will continue to be. "Lets not beat ourselves up".

On the motion of Ms. DiBenedetto to schedule a subcommittee meeting on curriculum
Vote:

Yes: 7
No: 0
Absent: 0

On the motion of Mr. Skerry the report was accepted and placed on file.
Vote:

Yes: 7
No: 0
Absent: 0

Report on Distracted Driving Program

Superintendent Belson reported that n Tuesday, January 26, 2016 our junior students attended a powerful presentation on "Distracted Driving" in the Caron Theater. The program was sponsored by the Massachusetts Trial Attorneys Association. It was the fourth time at Medford High. It was a powerful program that engaged our students and "drove" home the unmistakable reality that even a few moments of "distraction" can alter your life and the lives of others in a permanent way.

Discussion:

Mayor Burke said that it was such a moving presentation. She said that it could have been presented to any forum. It makes you look at things another way. We all need to be so conscience of this. Ms. Kreatz said that it was very moving and heartbreaking hearing

the stories. Many of us are not aware of all the distractions. Mayor Burke commented that the students were very respectful. Ms. Van der Kloot said that she saw the presentation last year and when she catches herself being distracted she thinks of it.

On the motion the report was received and placed on file.

Vote:

Yes: 7

No: 0

Absent: 0

Report on State Budget Proposal by Governor – H2

Superintendent Belson reported that On Wednesday, January 27th Governor Baker presented his FY 2017 budget proposal. The proposed budget is a \$39.1 billion document that makes some new investments in targeted areas such as unrestricted local aid, child welfare, and substance abuse prevention. Major areas of the government see limited increases and many accounts are level funded. There are no new taxes but there is a plan for corporate tax relief over four years. The proposed budget holds new spending at a 3.5% increase although revenue is projected to increase by 4.3% next year. The administration hopes to close a \$635 million gap that currently exists and to reign in the costs of Mass. Health. It should be remembered that this is only the beginning of the state budget process. The House and the Senate will weigh in with their own versions. They will then go to Conference committee to iron out their differences. It will then go to the Governor who could veto some of the Legislations actions. It will then go back to the Legislators for a veto review which often leads to overrides of the Governor's vetoes. This whole process usually doesn't complete until late June. However, we should get a pretty good idea on how it will play out after the Senate and House do their initial work. The following is a preliminary view of the proposed budget and how it might impact Medford. The cherry sheets are attached to this report for your review. Unrestricted local aid is increased by \$480,827. This is municipal aid money. It is more than usual. Chapter 70 general education aid is \$96,340 higher than last year and is equivalent to approximately \$20 per pupil. The distribution is lower than last year based upon a change in state weighed calculations and is \$5 per pupil lower than the minimum aid of FY 2016. Medford is a "Hold Harmless" district. No new provisions are made to address the recommendations of the recent Foundation Review Committee. The quality kindergarten budget line was level funded but the distribution rules are changing. It is likely if the Governor's plan is sustained that we will get approximately \$109,550 in FY17 rather than the \$143,362 in FY16. Non resident transportation is level funded. That will help offset the Minuteman bus as it has this year at about 50%. Homeless transportation is level funded and will only pay a portion of the anticipated liability. It all depends on how many are homeless across the state and from Medford. Charter school funding is a real sleight of hand proposal. This year the line item was \$54 million below the formula for reimbursement. The Governor proposes increasing that line item by \$20.5 million dollars which doesn't close the gap. He also wants to change the distribution formula from the current six year plan to a modified 1-2-3 year plan depending on your communities charter enrollment and economic disadvantage. This proposed method would cost Medford reimbursement funding over the next few years. We should strongly oppose it. In the current tense the projected net charter cost increase over last year could be \$547,611. Furthermore, DESE may allow Mystic Valley to grow

its enrollment by 400 students. This could affect us. The charter debate on Beacon Hill is critical to us. Also there is a ballot question in the fall. The special education Circuit Breaker funding is level funded. These cost factors for extraordinary placement in Sped inevitably go up. The DPH School Health Services Grant is also level funded and we can expect a small reduction in that distribution. School Choice costs in FY17 are projected at 62,600 versus 16,712 in FY16. The Early Education and Care Department funds some of our early childhood operations. There are several programs involved. The Governor's consolidates some of the funding streams so it is unclear which programs will benefit and which ones will be cut. This needs to be fleshed out over the next deliberative period. The Childrens Trust Fund which is a major contributor to our Family Network is level funded. Overall, the Cherry Sheet proposed by the Governor assigns \$814,088 in new receipts to Medford and \$869,051 in new charges. This is a negative of \$54,963. This is a very preliminary snapshot which we will continue to analyze and refine. Also we will strongly lobby our statehouse delegation for adjustments that are more supportive of our needs and objectives.

Discussion:

Ms. Mustone asked Superintendent Belson to explain school choice. He said that this is when a student is allowed to go to another district. However, he explained that Medford does not participate in school choice.

On the motion of Mr. Skerry the report was accepted and placed on file.

Vote:

Yes: 7
 No: 0
 Absent: 0

Report on Minuteman Regional Technical High School

Superintendent Belson stated that Minuteman Regional Technical High school currently serves 673 students from many different communities. There are 16 member towns who enroll 396 students and 277 students come from non-member towns. When Minuteman was originally built in Lexington (1975) it projected serving 1000 students. The history of Minuteman enrollments tells us that it was a very unrealistic projection.

The following is the current enrollment from member towns:

Action	33	Lancaster	39
Arlington	120	Lexington	57
Belmont	26	Lincoln	11
Bolton	9	Needham	25
Boxborough	7	Stow	13
Carlisle	5	Sudbury	25
Concord	17	Wayland	2
Dover	2	Weston	5

Seven of the member towns are actively considering withdrawal from the regional district under a one-time option. Normally withdrawal would require a unanimous vote of all members. The seven communities would decrease current enrollment by 57 students. The communities are Boxborough, Carlisle, Dover, Lincoln, Sudbury, Wayland and Weston. The seven communities can only leave if they approve the new regional

agreement which would diminish their voting equity if they were to stay. The Minuteman School Committee devised this one time offer because with seven communities in opposition there would be no constructive way to gain sufficient town meeting support across the region. The seven projected leaving districts recognizing that if they stay their per pupil cost would be extraordinary for a limited number of student when the new building was constructed and the projected capital debt costs were apportioned. For example, Weston would pay approximately \$49,000 per student plus any special needs cost assessment. Minuteman is the most expensive vocational school in the state with the exception of the agricultural schools.

As previously stated non member cities/towns currently provide 277 students as follows:

Boston	25	Watertown	66
Medford	34	Others	109
Waltham	44		

The current base tuition for out of district students is \$17,500 plus \$4,500 if special needs services are required. The rate is set by the Commissioner. Minuteman has the MSBA tentative go ahead to build a new school in Lincoln for 628 students. The towns that remain in the district must approve bonding for \$144.9 million plus interest on a 30 year period. State funding is projected to be \$45,206,061 for the proposed 257,745 square foot school. If the project goes forward, the school is expected to be open for the fall of 2019. There are many non financial contingencies to be worked out before construction could take place on the Lincoln site.

Medford Impact:

Currently we have 34 students at Minuteman. This year 17 seniors will graduate and no ninth graders can go there under the new state regulations. Also the expansion and development of our own vocational program will keep future students home. Three years ago we had 50 students at Minuteman. We also have cooperative arrangements with neighboring districts such as Cambridge, Somerville, Waltham, and Boston through our SOLVED Collaborative. The reduction of our enrollment at Minuteman will enable us to save significant funding which can be reinvested in our own school system. The collaboration between the high school and the vocational school is also a major achievement since it will enhance college prospects for our vocational students and provide occupational skill training options for our high school students at a reasonable cost. We will keep you posted as events move forward.

Discussion:

Mayor Burke asked the Superintendent although Lincoln wants to withdraw from Minuteman they want to build a new school in Lincoln? Superintendent Belson answered yes. Ms. Mustone asked what program most Medford students go to Minuteman for? Superintendent Belson answered that it varies from year to year but presently it is horticulture. Ms. Van der Kloot commented that even though Medford is not a member district they argued that we should pay a bigger share because we send students there, correct? A capital assessment? Superintendent Belson replied that this is an unfunded mandate. Ms. Van der Kloot asked if Minuteman's students can be absorbed into other vocational schools? Superintendent Belson said that most vocational schools are full. Ms. DiBenedetto commented that by keeping freshmen home, once they are with their friends they won't want to leave, this is a significant change.

On the motion of Ms. Van der Kloot the report was accepted and placed on file.

Vote:

Yes: 7
No: 0
Absent: 0

New Business

School Committee Resolution

Be it resolved, that the Medford School Committee express its sincere condolences to the family of John Donahue. Mr. Donahue was the brother of retired Supervisor of Health Eileen DiBattista.

School Committee Resolution

Be it resolved, that the Medford School Committee express its sincere condolences to the family of Catherine Silver. Mrs. Silver was the mother in law of Fire Chief Frank Giliberti.

School Committee Resolution by Mr. Skerry

Be it resolved, that the Medford School Committee express its sincere condolences to the family of Robert McLaughlin. Mr. McLaughlin was an Army veteran and former Medford Police Officer. He was the uncle of John McLaughlin, Director of Buildings and Grounds.

School Committee Resolution

Be it resolved, that the Medford School Committee express its sincere condolences to the family of William Hamkin. Mr. Hamkin who died suddenly was a graduate of Medford High School. Mr. Hamkin was the brother of Sheila McGlynn and brother in law of Mayor Michael J. McGlynn.

A moment of silence was held.

On the motion of Ms. Cugno that meeting be adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

Vote:

Yes: 7
No: 0
Absent: 0

Respectfully submitted:

Robert E. Skerry Jr.
Secretary

