

Regular Meeting  
January 25, 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 7:01 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 to suspend the rules, Mayor Burke recognized and invited Judy Lonergan to make a presentation. Mrs. Lonergan reported that \$23,000 was raised by the students during the Jingle Bell Festival. Mrs. Lonergan presented trophies to the Roberts School for raising the most money and the Brooks School for having the most participants. She explained that the trophies will be passed on each year to the top achievers. She continued by presenting all school and teams in attendance with their monies.

Discussion:

Ms. Van der Kloot thanked Judy Lonergan and congratulated her on the huge success of the event.

Mayor Burke invited Jenn DesAutelis to the podium.

Jenn DesAutelis, 21 Knollwood Road, Medford introduced herself as the Coordinator of the Medford Children's Art Showcase. She informed the committee of the new location for the exhibit this year. Due to the Meadow Glen Mall construction, it will be held at River's Edge. The event will be held from February 8-26 from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm Monday thru Friday only. She invited all to attend and see the wonderful accomplishments of the students. She thanked the Meadow Glen Mall for hosting the event for the past five years.

Discussion:

Ms. DiBenedetto requested that a letter of thanks be sent to the Meadow Glen Mall for their support for the past five years.

On the motion to revert back to the regular order of business.

On the motion of Mr. Skerry that the minutes of January 11, 2016 be approved:

Vote:

Yes: 7  
No: 0  
Absent: 0

On the motion of Ms. Van der Kloot 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 Mr. Skerry 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

#### Report on Project 351 Program 2016

Superintendent Belson reported that Project 351 is a youth service organization dedicated to building unity and leadership through the yearlong engagement and enrichment of an 8<sup>th</sup> grade service Ambassador from every city and town in Massachusetts. Youth are selected by hometown educators for an exemplary ethic of service and the values of kindness, compassion, humility, and gratitude. Created as an event of Governor Patrick's second inaugural and now convened by Governor Baker, Project 351 is a statewide non-profit that partners with an extraordinary community of educators, service and non-profit organizations, private sector and civic leaders, families, and volunteers to achieve this mission. After a cold and wet start, the warmth of community became the day's hallmark. Students celebrated Dr. King at Faneuil Hall's morning kick-off and listened and learned from Governor Charlie Baker as he reflected on "what defines an unsung hero" and the power of unconditional love in a family and community; impacted more than 25,000 neighbors in need of care through service across Boston, and arrived at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum for a town meeting. Superintendent Belson introduced Principal Paul D'Alleva. Principal D'Alleva explained that Joelle Brown was selected by her teachers to represent the City of Medford, because of her exemplary ethic of service and her values of kindness, humility and gratitude. Daily at the Andrews Middle School, Joelle's enthusiasm has a positive effect upon her fellow students. She is always kind and courteous to her peers and teachers and is never hesitant to help a friend in need. She is appreciative of all her teachers and shows her gratitude through her polite demeanor. Joelle is an exceptional young lady and incomparable role model to her peers. He introduced Joelle and her family. Joelle explained the day's events to the committee.

Discussion:

Ms. Cugno remarked that she has been a part of Project 351 many times and it is amazing and a joy to see these students work together. Mayor Burke and Ms. Van der Kloot were impressed with the students from Medford that took part in the Martin Luther King event last week. They both stated how well spoken they were. They made Medford proud.

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

Vote:

Yes: 7

No: 0

Absent: 0

#### Report on Focus K-2 Grant Program

Assistant Superintendent Diane Caldwell presented the report. Ms. Caldwell stated that Shore Collaborative, along with Medford, Cambridge and Malden has been awarded a Focus K-2 grant for \$112,000 for school year 2015-2016. This grant will support the statewide goal of improving literacy from kindergarten through second grade and will

enhance the role of educational collaboratives as a partner with ESE and school districts in early literacy. The grant allows Medford to participate in professional development/training on effective early learning literacy practices. These practices are designed to improve curriculum and assessment approaches exemplified for Focus K-2 a research based curriculum developed by Boston Public Schools. Boston Public Schools is piloting a similarly structured curriculum for first grade and has a second grade curriculum under development. The practices and content are aligned with the MA Curriculum Frameworks in English language arts, social studies and science as well as with the National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Medford is committed to a one year exploration into this approach.. Teachers Amanda Gass and Maria Skiffington are piloting Focus K-2 in their classrooms. Ms. Caldwell introduced Ms. Skiffington and Ms. Gass to the committee.

Discussion:

Ms. DiBenedetto asked how does Focus K-2 relate to *Journeys*? Ms. Skiffington replied that it is integrated into *Journeys*. Ms. DiBenedetto said she wanted to be sure that *Journeys* is being taught to all students. Ms. Caldwell said that Focus K-2 builds and supports *Journeys*. Ms. Cugno asked if the entire \$112,00 is Medford's. Ms. Caldwell answered that Medford will receive \$52,000 for the school year. They will decide in June whether to rewrite the grant for three years. Ms. Mustone commented that it would be great to have full time kindergarten aides in these classes. Ms. Van der Kloot said she is planning a visit to the classroom but that the concept reminds her of the developmentally appropriate learning taught at the Hervey School many years ago. Ms. Cugno loves the concept of hands on learning and asked if all the school will be involved. Ms. Caldwell said that they have requested two representatives from each school to be involved.

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 Environmental Science Chapter 74 Program Approval

Superintendent Belson introduced Dr. Heidi Riccio to present the report. Dr. Riccio reported that in spring 2014 Medford Vocational Technical High School submitted ten applications for Chapter 74 approval including Environmental Science. While the school received seven approvals three including environment science were not approved. Despite efforts to employ a highly qualified instructor for environmental science, none were found in SY 2014-2015 which resulted in a delay of the final phase of approval. In December 2015, MVTHS offered this position on a part-time basis to exiting program advisory board member, Charles Saulnier. Mr. Saulnier accepted the position. He is a retired environmental science teacher from Essex Technical High School. On Jan. 21<sup>st</sup> the program was inspected by the DESE and a safety officer who oversees OSHA compliance. While it has not been officially approved, we are hopeful the program will be notified in the near future.

Discussion:

Ms. Cugno thanked Dr. Riccio for all her work. She asked why they didn't approve Design and Visual and Hospitality? Dr. Riccio answered that these two programs are

embedded into another program but in the next two years the goal is to hire two instructors for these areas. Ms. Cugno asked if she foresees developing any other new programs in the next few years. Dr. Riccio answered information technology and plumbing. Ms. Van der Klott commented that she met Mr. Saulnier two years ago and he has an extraordinary passion in the field. Ms. Kreatz commented that a critical shortage waiver from the DESE can be obtained if a full time teacher can't be found.

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

Vote:

Yes: 7  
No: 0  
Absent: 0

Report on Dual Enrollment at Bunker Hill Community College Health Assisting Program

Dr. Heidi Riccio presented the report. She stated that in SY 2014-2015 it was the intention of the MVTHS to increase post-secondary enrollment of graduating seniors. While there is some emphasis on college, the school saw a significant amount of college ready students opting to not take the SAT or do any deep school wide college planning. Working with the high school guidance counselors Naviance was incorporated into the curriculum and replicated advisory programming. It is our belief that the team effort of all helped MVTHS Health Assisting students see the value in partnering with Bunker Hill Community College and their STAND program. The program is offered at Bunker Hill Community College where students in the field apply to be admitted into a dual enrollment program. To become accepted, students must have qualified including taking the Accuplacer. STAND provides expanded programming to participants in fields such as nursing, medical imaging, medical assisting and respiratory therapy. Once students complete this program they are able to continue their education at a four year university or be certified through the Department of Public Health in a variety of fields. MVTHS has three students in the program. Dr. Riccio introduced Ketty Toussaint one of the students who recently was accepted to Massachusetts College of Pharmacy for fall 2016.  
Discussion:

Ms. DiBenedetto asked Ketty how she get to BHCC? Ketty answered that her friend has a car and drives them. Ms. DiBenedetto commented that credits from Bunker Hill Community College will transfer to a state school which is a great opportunity. Ms. Cugno commented that this is absolutely wonderful. Ms. Kreatz congratulated Ketty.

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

Vote:

Yes: 7  
No: 0  
Absent: 0

Report on Boston Cares Collaborative

Dr. Riccio reported that in December 2015 MVTHS began a partnership with Boston Cares, an organization that pairs volunteers with necessary community service projects. Working with Rick Walwork and Lisa Donahue our first project was the construction of book shelves for the Martin Luther King Day of Service in Boston. Under the direction of Jon Word, carpentry students were supplied with the materials needed to create book

shelf kits that will be donated to Boston children to promote and encourage reading at home. They will begin working on toddler beds for homeless families as the next project.  
Discussion:

Ms. DiBenedetto asked if there is any way the students can go to see they houses where the beds will be going. Dr. Riccio said that SKILLS USA will partner with Boston Cares and will deliver the beds but sometimes families do not want anyone to see this so privacy must be respected. Ms. Cugno asked if this is part of the day or an afterschool project? Dr. Riccio said that the SKILLS will be after school but that students will do work during their program day.

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

Vote:

Yes: 7  
No: 0  
Absent: 0

#### Report on \$75,000 Grant for Adult Building Trades Program

Dr. Riccio reported that MVTHS became a partner with CONNECT, an organization in Chelsea with the mission “to help people achieve sustainable living wage jobs and financial resilience by partnering to provide essential skills, knowledge, and social capital in one central and supportive location.” As an educational provider, MVTHS has committed to three six-week training sessions for adult education. This training will provide up to 60 participants to prepare them to enter the world of work in construction related fields. Employers have committed to interviewing program graduates for employment. The partners have also committed to seeking participants in high demand areas including females, low income, persons of color, and low skilled. The first program will begin in May.

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

Vote:

Yes: 7  
No: 0  
Absent: 0

#### Report on Kindergarten Registration Process SY 2016-2017

Superintendent Belson reported that we are disseminating information on kindergarten registration earlier than usual this year so that we can inform prospective enrollees of our program and the process for enrollment. We will continue to advertise and inform so that parents will be aware of the Medford “K” advantage. We will use multiple media and direct contact at each school to achieve our goal.

Discussion:

Ms. Mustone said that many parents of preschool students would like to see kindergarten classes in action. Superintendent Belson said that he would look into this. Ms. Van der Kloot commented on the date of the first presentation, April 26<sup>th</sup> and asked if they could have one earlier? Superintendent Belson answered that he will check. Ms. DiBenedetto asked about the increase cost of making the part time kindergarten aides full time? She also said that she had requested a report. Superintendent Belson said that they had done a report and the increase would be \$65,000 (plus raises). He said that he would email the

chart. Ms. DiBenedetto said that she wants this a priority in the budget. She said that she is reaching out to our state representatives and encourages the other members to do the same. Ms. Van der Kloot suggested inviting them to a Committee of the Whole to discuss this. Superintendent Belson thought this is a great idea and said once the Governor puts out the state budget would be the best time to sit with them.

On the motion of Ms. Van der Kloot to schedule a Committee of the Whole meeting with state representatives to discuss priorities. Ms. Cugno suggested sitting down together before the meeting to form a list of priorities.

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 Middle School Selection Process SY 2016-2017

Superintendent Belson stated that each year fifth grade students have the opportunity to select the middle school of their choice. We are starting earlier than usual to notify parents and students of their option. We will use multiple ways to communicate to the parents and students so that they have ample opportunity to learn about our two middle schools. Both schools offer great programs. Each does have specializations which will dictate a percentage of the placements. Our goal is to populate both schools with a balanced enrollment that preserves good class size and a comprehensive curriculum.

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

Vote:

Yes: 7  
No: 0  
Absent: 0

#### Report on Academic Support Grant Programs

Deputy Superintendent Beverly Nelson presented the report. She stated that Each year the Medford Public Schools is eligible for a state grant (Academic Support Grant). This grant funds programs designed to prepare students to take the state mandated test. Since 1998 this test has been MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System). Originally the grant funded programs for students at all grade levels. For the past several years the grant is targeted to prepare students to take the high school high stake exams. Medford has been able through the grant to provide both during the school year and summer programs. These programs are free of charge but according to grant guidelines can only serve students whose past performance on the MCAS (English, mathematics and science) indicates that they will be challenged by the high stakes exam at the high school level. The district organizes and run many programs using this grant money. All programs have proven to be helpful to students in preparing them to meet the

high school competency requirements in English, mathematics and science. Curriculum and materials are prepared by our directors and our faculty teaches in these programs. Each year the grant has been reduced. This year grant appropriation is \$15,300 a reduction of \$7,200 from last year. As a comparison the grant allocation in 2012 was over \$34,000. Tutorial programs are ongoing to prepare students for the retests in November (English, mathematics) February (biology) and March (English, mathematics). Our after school and Saturday programs for English for grade 10 students have already begun. The mathematics program will begin in February. We offer both an afterschool and Saturday option to meet the various schedules of students. Having two options has helped to increase participation. Letters are sent home to parents with registration forms. Grade 8 students will be taking PARCC this year. Our grade 8 prep program is planned to take place on Saturday mornings beginning in March to help prepare students for this new exam. Mathematics will be offered from 8- 10 and ELA from 10- noon. The program will consist of 6 Saturday sessions. This is the first year we have offered a grade 8 program during the school year. Letters will be going out to eligible students in February.

Discussion:

Ms. DiBenedetto said that she applauds the creativity especially opening the program for Grade 8 students. She asked if an online program could be developed? Ms. Nelson said that we did have an online program for the biology retest but perhaps next year they could develop one especially if more funds are cut. Ms. DiBenedetto asked the Superintendent if he could look into more online tutorial programs especially for Curtis/Tufts students. Superintendent Belson replied that it is our plan to talk to you about technology and you will see a lot coming forward but we have to make sure we have the money. Ms. DiBenedetto said she would like to see this piloted next year. Ms. Cugno said that we must be careful because not all homes have laptops. She suggested a program for students who want extra help perhaps through community school where parents pay a small fee.

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 Secondary School Class Size

Superintendent Belson presented the report. He stated the chart provided you with a snapshot of the average class sizes of four major subjects at each of the middle schools and at the high school/vocational. All of the class sizes are very good and well below the contractual maximums. Since middle schools are organized by teams the average class size across the disciplines is generally constant. The high school and vocational school have multiple merged classes. While the high school has many different classes based upon specializations, the average class size for major core subjects are very good. In a follow up reports you will receive information on other subjects beyond the core four majors.

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

Vote:

Yes: 7  
No: 0  
Absent: 0

#### Financial Report

Director of Administration and Finance Pat Velie presented the report. She reported that as of the writing of the report the general fund budget is 54.41% expended. She discussed the list of current projects completed by buildings and grounds. Ms. Velie also reported on homeless students, security, special education, substitute teachers, telephones utilities and vocational out of district.

#### Discussion:

Ms. DiBenedetto questioned the listing of repairs and asked if the Curtis/Tufts lights have been repaired. She said that Alicia Hunt plans to send a report and asked if the Superintendent has had time to look at this. Superintendent Belson answered not yet but the list compiled by Ms. Velie is completed jobs. We have to be careful spending money in January. He said he would get more information from Alicia Hunt. Mr. Skerry inquired about an energy audit for the cafeterias. Ms. Van der Kloot asked how the school breakfast expansion growth impacts the breakfast program. Ms. Velie said that it is covered by a federal grant program so it will not be effected. Ms. DiBenedetto asked if all homeless students currently have transportation. Ms. Velie replied yes.

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 Resolutions:

Be it resolved, that the Medford School Committee express its sincere condolences to the family of Joseph LaPorta. Mr. LaPorta was a prominent member of the school administrative staff for many years serving as the head of the drivers education program and school security. Mr. LaPorta was active in local Kiwanis and many other local community service organizations.

A moment of silence was held.

On the motion of Ms. Cugno that meeting be adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

#### Vote:

Yes: 7  
No: 0  
Absent: 0

Respectfully submitted:

Robert E. Skerry Jr.  
Secretary

