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**MILFORD SCHOOL BOARD Minutes
(SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT No. 40)
December 7, 2009**

- 1. Call to Order** Chairman Bragdon called this meeting of the Milford School Board to order at 7:08 p.m. on Monday, December 7, 2009, in Milford High School Room # 182. Those present, together with interested citizens, were:

School Board Present Bert Becker, Peter Bragdon, Paul Dargie, Len Mannino, and Bob Willette.

Staff Present Robert Suprenant, Superintendent of Schools; Katie Chambers, Business Administrator; and Laurel Johnson, Assistant Superintendent of Schools.

Recorder J. Bradford Seabury.

- 2. Board Member Comments** Chairman Bragdon asked if there were any comments from Board members. None being brought forward, he continued to the next agenda item.

- 3. Public Comments** Chairman Bragdon asked if there were any introductory comments from members of the audience. None being brought forward, he continued to the next agenda item.

4. Reports and Presentations

- a. Superintendent's Report** Superintendent Suprenant reported on the Middle School's pilot experimentation with both weekly and monthly electronic notices and newsletters to parents, following a survey of parents' regards by Principal DeMarco. He noted that parents who wished to continue to get paper copies could do so/

Superintendent Suprenant commented about the Middle School Student Council and PTO's conduction of their annual clothing drive for SHARE, noting that more than 1,700 items had been donated by students' families—including a record day of receiving 514 items on one day.

Superintendent Suprenant noted that he had distributed a letter to the members of the School Board from the Milford Board of Selectmen, in which the latter had thanked the School Board for its assistance with the construction of the Garden Street Parking Lot.

Superintendent Suprenant expressed congratulations to the 27 students that had participated in the Milford Special Olympics Bowling Team at a recent competition at Leda Lanes in Nashua, where the Milford team had won Gold, Silver, and Bronze medals.

Superintendent Suprenant announced that Marc Maurais had informed him that the Milford Football Team for the fourth consecutive year had received the Division III Sportsmanship Award, as voted by the league's referees, while the Girls' Field Hockey Team had won the Sportsmanship Award for the second consecutive year.

Superintendent Suprenant then advised the Board members to check out the School's Website, noting that there had been a news event during the past week.

(1) McKinney-Vento Act

Superintendent Suprenant noted that there had been questions raised at the previous meeting about the McKinney-Vento Act. Assistant Superintendent Johnson explained that this was part of the No Child Left Behind Act, adding that Ms. Colleen Hackett was the Milford liaison. Ms. Hackett outlined the history of the No Child Left Behind Act, saying the overall intent of the McKinney-Vento Act was to address children facing homelessness. She distributed a handout, noting that the first page was a copy of what was in every student and teacher handbook, while the second page was a flowchart explaining what the organization did. She discussed examples of situations that had been addressed by the group, commenting on how help was provided in each such case, noting the special attention given to runaway/throwaway children.

Ms. Hackett outlined the basic procedure, noting the need to satisfy the child's right to stay in the School District until the end of the academic year, to provide transportation to the school of origin when needed, to enroll students even when required documentation was not available, and assistance with respect to eligibility for Title I services. Ms. Hackett also explained how she interacted with personnel in other school districts, the Welfare Office, and local school personnel to address some issues.

Ms. Hackett provided details concerning the different elements on the flowchart. She then addressed the third page of her handout, which presented a tabulation of students and services provided over the past six years, together with the costs involved.

Mr. Dargie asked about the typical time involved. Ms. Hackett said it varied from a month to a year and a half, explaining that home assistance did not have a timeline, but most covered a six to eight month timeframe. She confirmed that the right to an education continued so long as the situation of homelessness existed.

Mr. Mannino asked if Federal money was received to assist in this effort. Ms. Hackett said Title I funds helped but that Milford had to pick up the transportation costs out of the General Fund. Superintendent Suprenant

confirmed that it was a Federal requirement to provide this service. Assistant Superintendent Johnson confirmed that the program had been around since the 1980s but had been reorganized under the No Child Left Behind Act.

(2) High School Bleachers

Business Administrator Chambers said the fire code requirements had made it necessary to address some bleachers, which were not to be used until those repairs had been addressed. She said the repairs were started last Thursday, and should be completed by the coming weekend, saying the expected costs would be about \$14,300. She confirmed that these were the original wooden bleachers from the 1960s.

- b. Monthly Reports** **Milford High School Renovations Committee** — Business Administrator Chambers reported that the only thing new was that the brick walkway by the track was in, adding that this had been done by a fund raiser run by the Milford On-Track organization.

5. New Business

- a.** No **New Business** items were taken up at this meeting.

6. Old Business

- a. Budget Work Session** Superintendent Suprenant distributed a handout sheet he had prepared in response to the Board's request at the last meeting to reduce the budget by \$1,000,000. He said this reduction had affected staff, but he had made decisions based on the philosophy of resulting in the least impact on the children. He said Administrators had made an effort to meet with each and every person whose position would potentially be affected, prior to their hearing it via the public media. He also noted that those people had been informed that they would be able to apply for positions vacated through the nominal 10% turnover at the end of each year.

Superintendent Suprenant then gave a broad overview of the positions listed on the sheet, noting that there were further details on the back side of the sheet. He noted that the top table listed seven positions that Administration felt could be eliminated, with the following breakdowns for each building level showing the overall impact for that level. He noted that none of these reductions were considered desirable, but they had been selected on the basis of least impact. He noticed each administrative team had been asked to reduce by percentage applicable to their particular level.

Business Administrator Chambers noted that there were revenue increases to reduce the total reduction requested by the School Board. Ms. Chambers then provided details of specific reductions, noting that \$19,000 had been added back in because of an error in the original budget, and that another \$4,034 had been required to be added because of refinement of an

earlier estimate with respect to transportation costs. She noted that actual dental/medical costs had also been included in this version. She noted that she now expected that the current year's budget would be fully expended. She confirmed that the health insurance costs were more than had been expected, saying more people were picking up coverage than had been anticipated.

Ms. Chambers then addressed budget projections provided in the meeting packet, saying she expected \$130,000 more than had previously been anticipated. She discussed details of the revised budget projection, explaining the projected increases. She confirmed that promises had been made amounting to more than \$384,000 (for early retirees, etc.), which represented School District obligations—noting, however, that the auditor had said that some school districts were not funding similar obligations.

Mr. Dargie asked what the annual amount would be. Ms. Chambers said the number fluctuated, so she could not specify the amount.

Superintendent Suprenant provided details concerning other items listed in the reduction memo, noting that the balance had to be picked up mainly through reduction in personnel. He noted that an effort was being made to reduce the Science cycle (including curriculum and equipment), with three different options being offered for each building level, depending on how much of the Science curriculum was reduced in each case. Superintendent Suprenant recommended that the School Board select Option B, explaining that there was a growing dilemma between what could be offered, both on the short term and the long term. He said Option B was a fair compromise between Options A and C, for a full reduction of \$345,271, which would meet the objectives.

Chairman Bragdon asked Superintendent Suprenant to go through Option B, explaining details about each item, and Superintendent Suprenant did so, commenting on the ramifications of each listed reduction. He confirmed that all positions reduced from full-time to any smaller percentage would remove the persons in those positions from benefits. He confirmed that this approach would be running the risk of losing employees because of the loss of benefits. He emphasized that the Heron Pond principal still expected to provide all require minimum requirements with respect to music, art, and physical education, but many worthwhile activities would go away, such as enrichment activities, special recess activities, etc. He noted that the SPED summer therapy program would be significantly reduced.

Mr. Willette noted that there was no co-curricular reduction in the entire listing. Superintendent Suprenant confirmed this to be so, saying co-curricular salaries had not been raised this year, adding that he felt these activities were part of the overall education obligation to the district.

Chairman Bragdon asked about the ATC equipment. Assistant Superintendent Johnson said this was the equipment discussed at the recent meeting, including computers for graphic arts, equipment replacement, and television equipment.

Mr. Steve Vetak, a teacher at Milford High School and a coach, said he believed a lot of effort had gone into these reductions. Noting that he received a coaching stipend, he said he had a problem with the concept that co-curricular activities could not be cut, if the School District was in a crisis mode. He expressed a belief that everything should be up for discussion. He then asked how the \$1,000,000 reduction affected the tax rate. Chairman Bragdon said there would be a 3.4% increase, Mr. Vetak said he wanted to know why \$1,000,000 was selected, asking if everything had really been scrutinized—noting that he did not see reduction in the number of students. Mr. Bragdon said he had made a motion to make that reduction because of the zero increase in cost of living, saying it was difficult to propose a budget that had a significant increase in spending costs, since inflation was flat or negative. Mr. Vetak expressed a hope that the Board would reconsider, saying every position should be examined.

Ms. Tricia Shea said she had been a bit put off by the requested reduction, noting the impact on the teaching staff, and she questioned whether Milford was ready for a high turnover or to be a “part-time” school district.

Mr. Scott Crocker, the electronic media consultant at the High School, asked what reductions would be made in the work loads of those people whose hours were being cut. He noted that his own position took pressure off other staff personnel, suggesting that similar considerations existed for other staff members whose workloads would be reduced.

Mr. Bob Williams, the High School woodworking teacher, said the change would have an impact on his life, but that he was concerned about the impact on the students, noting that his shop was open all day, currently, but this condition would be affected if his hours were cut, so the shop would only be open only half the day.

Ms. Susan Schedin said she still had a question as to how the \$1,000,000 figure had been arrived at. Chairman Bragdon said the intent had been to reduce the school budget to a 1% increase. Ms. Schedin said all costs had gone up, saying she was disturbed about the reduction in services to the kids. She said she could not make that same percentage of cut in her home budget. Mr. Bragdon said the original tax rate had been 4.3%, but that it was now 3.5% with the new figures.

Ms. Sena Maziarz, a Physical Education teacher at Heron Pond said she would be affected by the reductions, saying the minimum requirements recommended 150 minutes of PE per week for Elementary School kids, but students were getting only about one third of that at this time.

Ms. Helene Bureau, said the gain in the curriculum had achieved phenomenal results, and she expressed a belief that this reduction would affect, that gain. She said the "extra" efforts had resulted in significant benefits, which would be lost.

Chairman Bragdon said the total health projection had come down to \$4,700,000, saying the \$652,000 of reductions left about \$450,000 reduction in instructional related items. He asked if a 10% reduction in the health insurance could affect the staffing changes. Superintendent Suprenant pointed out that there were contractual agreements, so that mutual agreement would be required. Chairman Bragdon said the health insurance costs were really driving the district, saying something would have to be done, or other significant changes would be needed in the future.

Chairman Bragdon said that a further reduction of an additional \$750,000 would be needed in order to get a zero impact on the tax rate.

Mr. Becker asked if any of the organizations had been approached to see if there were anything they could do to ameliorate the amount of staffing reduction. Superintendent Suprenant said he had not done that, officially.

Chairman Bragdon noted that the original proposal had looked for a \$460,000 increase in salaries, with a \$750,000 increase of benefits.

Chairman Bragdon moved that the Board approve Option B. Mr. Willette seconded the motion. Chairman Bragdon said some direction to the Superintendent was needed, saying he was open to other suggestions.

Mr. Mannino asked if information about the impact of reductions in co-curricular costs could be obtained by the time of the next meeting. Superintendent Suprenant said that could be done. Mr. Bragdon then withdrew his motion, saying he wanted time to find other ways to get to the bottom line to be presented to the voters. Superintendent Suprenant said he would guess that about 75% to 80% or more of the budget was tied to salaries, so significant reduction would affect positions, which would mean eliminating a program. He urged the Board members to think about what they were asking, including increased costs to families whose children were engaged in these activities.

Chairman Bragdon expressed concern about the \$300,000 increase in the fund balance. Business Administrator Chambers said authority was limited, with the State not having provided any legislative means to fund it. Chairman Bragdon said there would possibly be a need for a further \$300,000 reduction at a later meeting to address this issue.

b. Default Budget

Business Administrator Chambers distributed copies of a revised Default Budget projection, noting that it included the same corrections she had discussed earlier with respect to the regular budget, as well as a handout pertaining to a tax impact analysis with respect to the budget. Chairman Bragdon said he had been informed that the Budget Committee had not been informed of the change in the budget that had been made by the School Board at its last meeting. He expressed an apology for this communication block.

Ms. Chambers discussed the changes that had been made in her projections for the Default Budget, noting that updated actual and/or guaranteed insurance rates were being provided in this version--adding that further changes in some of the figures would have to be done.

Chairman Bragdon noted that the Default Budget was required to include the prior year's budget plus any contractual obligations, including estimates of what the costs would be for heating fuel, etc. He said he felt the purpose of the Default Budget was to establish numbers that the School District would have to live, with, so he questioned some of these increases—citing as an example the In-School GED program costs. He asked if there were a contract; Superintendent Suprenant replied in the negative. Chairman Bragdon confirmed there similarly was no contract for the athletic officials, but there were contracts pertaining to the transportation figures. He proposed that the Default Budget should only include the increases for which the School District had contractual obligations in writing—and he then so moved--that only items for which a written contract for a specific rate existed would be included. Mr. Dargie seconded the motion.

Mr. Dargie expressed agreement that this approach followed the intent of the law, saying he did not agree with respect to the fuel costs, however. Chairman Bragdon asked that a revised Default Budget be provided at the next meeting of the Board if this motion were approved. **Vote:** All members voted in favor, and Chairman Bragdon declared the motion to have carried unanimously (5–0).

c. Warrant Articles

Chairman Bragdon reviewed the articles that had been discussed at the previous meeting, saying the members of the negotiating teams had come to a tentative agreement, but this would be discussed in nonpublic meeting, as would the possible real estate purchase. Accordingly, the only proposed article to be discussed at this time, he said, was the proposed addition for the Jacques School, along with High School parking and an emergency generator, with the latter having been killed at the last meeting.

Mr. Dargie said there was still a need for additional space at the Jacques School, noting that the Kindergarten population would continue to fluctuate—adding that the big reason to do it now was that 75% State funding aid was currently available but was apt to go away in the near

future. Chairman Bragdon asked if all the needed information to present an article before the voters would be available. Mr. Dargie expressed a belief that it would be essentially the same as presented before.

- d. ATC Warrant Article** Business Administrator Chambers said the Tech Committee most likely was going to propose an article to create a capital reserve or trust fund to cover desired updating of the ATC equipment. She noted that there was about \$20,000 remaining in the existing fund, which could be used to cover some of the equipment costs.

Ms. Chambers said there was an existing fund for playground equipment, but it did not contain any money. Chairman Bragdon directed the Superintendent's Office to investigate that situation, to find out what money existed in the account, if any.

7. Housekeeping Items

- a. Nominations** Superintendent Suprenant said there were no nominations at this time.
- b. Approval of Minutes** Chairman Bragdon addressed the 11-16-09 meeting minutes. Mr. Dargie requested a change be made to show that the minutes had been approved, not the manifests. . Mr. Dargie then moved that the Board approve the minutes as corrected; Mr. Bragdon seconded the motion. **Vote:** All members voted in favor, and Chairman Bragdon declared the motion to have carried unanimously (5-0).
- c. Approval of Manifests** Chairman Bragdon addressed the manifests awaiting approval, listed as including Vouchers Nos. 13, 1085, 1086, 1087, 1088, 1089, 1090, 1091, 1092, 1093, 1094, and 1095. Mr. Dargie moved that the Board approve the manifests as listed; Mr. Becker seconded the motion. **Vote:** All members voted in favor, and Chairman Bragdon declared the motion to have carried unanimously (5-0).

- 8. Public Comment** Chairman Bragdon asked if there were any closing comments from members of the audience. None being brought forward, he continued to the next agenda item.

- 9. Non-Public Session** Chairman Bragdon moved to go into non-public session under the provisions of NH RSA 91-A:3 II (c), *Matters which, if discussed in public, likely would affect adversely the reputation of any person*, and (d) *Consideration of the acquisition, sale or lease of real or personal property which, if discussed in public, would likely benefit a party or parties whose interests are adverse to those of the general community*. Mr. Dargie seconded the motion. **VOTE:** Messrs. Becker, Bragdon, Dargie, Mannino, and Willette all voted in favor of the motion, which carried unanimously (5-0). Chairman Bragdon then declared the Board to be going into non-public session at 9:49 p.m.

The superintendent informed the board about a personnel issue. Mr. Bragdon moved that the Board approve a leave of absence request under Article 6-E, paragraph 6 of the MTA collective bargaining agreement; Mr. Becker seconded the motion. **Vote:** All members voted in favor, and Chairman Bragdon declared the motion to have carried unanimously (5-0).

The superintendent presented three early retirement requests, noting that the MTA contract required the Board to approve at least three per year. Mr. Bragdon moved that the Board approve the three early retirement requests; Mr. Dargie seconded the motion. **Vote:** All members voted in favor, and Chairman Bragdon declared the motion to have carried unanimously (5-0).

The Board discussed matters pertaining to real estate.

Chairman Bragdon declared a recess at 10:30 p.m., calling the meeting back to order at 10:40 p.m.

Mr. Bragdon moved that the Board approve the tentative agreement reached between the negotiators for the board and the administrative group; Mr. Willette seconded the motion. **Vote:** All members voted in favor, and Chairman Bragdon declared the motion to have carried unanimously (5-0).

No further nonpublic business remaining before the Board, Mr. Bragdon moved to exit from the nonpublic session; Mr. Dargie seconded the motion. **Vote:** All members voted in favor, with the Board returning to public session at 10:41 p.m.

10. Adjournment

All scheduled items having been addressed, Mr. Bragdon moved to adjourn; Mr. Dargie seconded the motion. **Vote:** All members voted in favor, with this meeting adjourning at 10:42 p.m.

Chairman of the School Board

Date of Signing