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**MILFORD SCHOOL BOARD Minutes
(SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT No. 40)
October 18, 2010**

- 1. Call to Order** Acting Chairman Paul Dargie called this meeting of the Milford School Board to order at 7:04 p.m. on Monday, October 18, 2010, in Lecture Hall #182 at the Milford High School. Those present, together with interested citizens, were:

School Board Present Paul Dargie, Carolyn Halstead, Len Mannino, and Bob Willette. (Peter Bragdon was not present,)

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** Acting Chairman Dargie noted that Chairman Bragdon could not be present this evening. He then asked if there were any comments from Board members. None being brought forward, he continued to the next agenda item.
- 3. Public Comments** Acting Chairman Dargie noted that there was a large audience present (approximately 45 people), and he asked if there were any introductory comments from members of the audience but suggested that anyone wishing to speak about the proposed policies should wait until the Board took those up for discussion. No comments being brought forward at this time, he continued to the next agenda item.
- 4. Reports and Presentations**

 - a. Superintendent's Report** Superintendent Suprenant noted that the Sixth Graders would be going next week for the annual Nature's Classroom week in Charlton, MA, as part of the Science curriculum.

Superintendent Suprenant noted that this was National School Bus Safety Week, noting that school bus safety tip had been posted on the Website and in the Elementary School and Middle School school buses, adding that they would be distributed to the students as well. He expressed commendations to the school bus industry and to the people who drove those buses.

Superintendent Suprenant announced that Wednesday of this week would be a delayed opening day for professional development reasons, noting that this would be the first of four such days this year.

Superintendent Suprenant reported two boys' soccer games, four girls' soccer matches, and four football games had been taped and broadcast since the previous School Board meeting.

- b. Update on Jacques Memorial Building Project** Business Administrator Chambers said the project was still on schedule and under budget, with the brick exterior currently underway, along with the ceilings being closed up. She reported that final paving was scheduled for Saturday, October 30th.

5. New Business

- a. Enrollment Projections** Acting Chairman Dargie referenced the projections that Chairman Bragdon had developed, as provided in the members' meeting packets, and also the alternative version that he had developed, as presented on a handout that he provided at the meeting. He said the basic process was to look at the cohort survival rate over a 3-year period—noting that there were no cohorts to work with in Kindergarten or First Grade, which made projections difficult. He said he and Chairman Bragdon had discussed the two methods and had agreed to split the differences between the two forecasts, so that the forecast figures would be 146 for Kindergarten and 189 for First Grade. In Grades 2 through 12, he continued, he had separated the Mason enrollments in his forecast, because the Mason students had not been here for three years and the cohort survival method did not work. He then forecast the Milford and Mason enrollments separately then added them together to get a combined forecast. Chairman Bragdon had agreed to use Mr. Dargie's numbers. Mr. Dargie moved that the Board adopt these revised figures as the enrollment projections; Mr. Willette seconded the motion. **Vote:** All members voted in favor, and Acting Chairman Dargie declared the motion to have carried unanimously (4–0).

b . Policy Proposals

(1) Policy #3515 Attendance, Absenteeism, and Truancy (1st Reading)

Acting Chairman Dargie noted that Policy #3515 was up for a first reading. Superintendent Suprenant discussed the supporting documents, including sample language from the NHSBA and also the actual RSA legislation. He explained that the Policy Review Committee had reviewed the proposed policy changes required by the legislation passed last year. He noted there were three important pieces, including the definition of “excused absences” and “unexcused absences,” differentiation between occasional and habitual truancy, and the requirement for a process of school-involved intervention. He noted that parents were now going to be required to provide a reason for their child’s absence, and also that the missing of more than 2½ but less than 3½ hours would be counted as an absence. He then discussed the intervention process, explaining how it would work, noting that the previous policy had allowed twenty half-days of absences but the new policy only allowed ten half-days. Mr. Willette moved to approve Policy #3515 for a first reading; Mr. Dargie seconded the motion to approve. **Vote:** Acting Chairman Dargie called for a vote on the motion. Mr. Dargie, Mr. Willette, and Mr. Mannino voted in favor; Ms. Halstead voted in opposition. Acting Chairman Dargie declared the motion to have carried (3–1).

(2) Policy #5009 Pupil Safety and Violence Prevention–Bullying (1st Reading)

Superintendent Suprenant discussed the proposed policy, noting that it was based on recent legislation, and reporting that the advisory documentation was included in the packet, along with a copy of HB-1523, the actual statute. He then reviewed the proposed policy in detail, noting the cross-references to the advisory statements. Commenting that about 25% of students felt they were bullied at one time or another, he referenced well-known incidents that had occurred in recent history in other communities, saying there was a need for teachers to get to know each and every student and that parents needed to monitor the activities of their children.

Superintendent Suprenant discussed the definition of *bullying* given in the proposed policy, saying this definition was very much in agreement with the State statute, and noting that there were five thresholds, which he described. He then discussed cyber-bullying, noting that it was not clear when the School District would be responsible for monitoring such incidents—but that this would occur when it crossed over into the school and crossed one of those five thresholds. He noted that copies of Dr. Smith’s excellent booklet on the subject would be distributed to parents by various methods. He also noted that regulations prevented school officials from informing parents of the disciplinary actions pertaining to bullies. He concluded by reviewing the current practices of the School District with respect to video monitoring on the school buses.

Mr. Willette moved to approve Policy #5009 for a first reading; Mr. Dargie seconded the motion.

Acting Chairman Dargie asked if there any comments from School Board members. Seeing none, he asked for public comments, noting that it would be inappropriate to have individuals discussed by name.

Ms. Sheila Coombes, acting as interpreter for a deaf member of the audience, expressed confusion as to what defined bullying. Acting Chairman Dargie noted that the term *bullying* was defined in the policy, involving the five elements that had been detailed by Superintendent Suprenant., and he then listed them again. Ms. Combs asked if she understood correctly that it did not matter what the child's grades were; Superintendent Suprenant answered in the affirmative.

Ms. Deirdre Mainguy, identifying herself as a former student of the Milford School District, said she had had recent experience with her child in the Milford school system, and she asked when the policy had started. Superintendent Suprenant said it would go in place in November but the School District was pretty much following the same procedure now. Ms. Mainguy questioned how parents could protect their children from bullying, saying the New Hampshire laws did not cover the entire situation, and she expressed a belief that a resource officer was needed at the schools, saying the faculty was overwhelmed with the bullying going on. She said she had discussed this with Middle School administration.

Acting Chairman Dargie suggested she speak with the Superintendent. Ms. Mainguy again expressed a belief that there was not enough staff to cover everything. She then reviewed the Student Handbook, saying the bullying policy there was vague; saying clear consequences were needed, she referenced a recent case of a weapon being brought into the school. Acting Chairman Dargie stated that there was no gray area on weapons, saying expulsion was mandatory. Superintendent Suprenant noted the broad area of things that might be called *bullying*; saying the flexibility in the consequences would help administrators make appropriate decisions. Ms. Mainguy asked how parents could explain the consequences to their children if the parents did not know what they were, saying bullying was becoming very malicious. Superintendent Suprenant said good communication was needed.

Ms. Mainguy then asked if the school bus video tapes were monitored on a regular basis, saying she felt a lot of students were not reporting things because they felt intimidated. Superintendent Suprenant said the tapes were monitored mostly when an incident was reported. He then stated that parents had to trust the process. Ms. Mainguy expressed concern about the complexity of the use of the Internet, adding that she agreed that all parents had to know what their children were doing and who their friends were.

Ms. Jessica Hebert said one of the reasons for bullying was a child being targeted when the child did not have lunch money in the account, with the result that the system beeped and revealed this to everyone in the room. She asked if something could be done about this. Acting Chairman Dargie said he had not been aware of that situation; Superintendent Suprenant concurred, but added that most of the lunch rooms had procedures for this and tried to make it the least embarrassing as possible, saying he did not think lunches were denied. Business Administrator Chambers said the computers did beep, stating that this could be looked into for improvement.

Ms. Mainguy said every parent member had an obligation to report if they saw bullying, saying her child had been targeted twice last week but the teachers had not done anything. Acting Chairman Dargie suggested she report that to the Middle School Administration and then, if not satisfied, to the Superintendent. He then pointed out that the parents might not even find out if any punishment had occurred, as it could not be made public because of privacy regulations.

Ms. Michelle Griggs said as a parent she had witnessed both sides of the coin. She expressed concerns about defining "*emotional distress*" and what created a hostile environment. Acting Chairman Dargie concurred that it was somewhat nebulous, but stated that it was up to the discretion of Administration to determine what the level was. He noted the distinction between single incidents and patterns of behavior. Ms. Griggs noted that a lot depended on the emotions of the person receiving the purported abuse. Ms. Griggs asked about the reporting after the investigation, asking if there would be an opportunity for the alleged perpetrator to examine the files. Superintendent Suprenant said there would be a written statement.

Ms. Betsy Kallfelz asked if people in the district would be trained, including coaches and Food Service Department personnel. Superintendent Suprenant said most had been involved in the District training, but he acknowledged that coaches had not been contacted. Acting Chairman Dargie noted that annual training sessions were being called for. Ms. Kallfelz asked if the alleged victims had to report the incident or if staff members or others could do so—and also if they had the obligation to do so. Acting Chairman Dargie read aloud from the applicable portion of the policy text. Superintendent Suprenant said staff members had an obligation to act, keeping it at the lowest level possible.

Ms. Lynn Lippitt commended the School District for addressing this problem. She then expressed concern about situations in which bullying might be occurring but staff members would not understand what it was.

Ms. Diane Quirbach asked for a clear understanding of Section II, Part 2, reading from the text, saying she had read that passage over and over again but had no understanding of what it was saying. She said she felt the law was overreaching, saying her son would not ever think of reporting a bullying instance to a teacher and something would go on for months before he mentioned it at home. She expressed concern about a person with learning difficulties, saying such a person might feel he was being attacked by very simple things, saying she could not understand how this policy would play out in reality. She then discussed a recent incident when she had intervened in what looked like bullying, but the child for whom she had intervened had then claimed they were just having fun. She also questioned how the policy would apply at the end of the year, when the children involved would have gone on to another school before the situation was resolved. She expressed a preference for a general education program, including counseling sessions.

No other comments or questions being brought forward, Acting Chairman Dargie called for a vote on the motion to approve Policy 5009 for a first reading. **Vote:** Mr. Dargie, Mr. Mannino, and Mr. Willette voted in favor; Ms. Halstead voted in opposition. Acting Chairman Dargie declared the motion to have carried (3–1).

(3) Policy # 2315 Student Transportation Management (1st Reading)

Acting Chairman Dargie noted that Policy #2315 would be discussed but not voted on this evening, as an issue had come up. Superintendent Suprenant said this policy had been sent back to committee because of the discussion about using audio recorders. He said the Policy Committee had reviewed the policy and was recommending the policy without any changes, feeling there was an opportunity under the Superintendent's discretion to allow the video to be watched but there was no discretion with respect to the audio recording.

Mr. Mannino recalled his objections to the proposed policy, as expressed at the prior meeting. Acting Chairman Dargie said the practice was that parents could see the video unless there was some overriding reason to the contrary or something going on that would violate the rights of another student, etc.—but that no one could remember any time when a parent was denied permission to view the video.

Business Administrator Chambers noted that Section 2 had also gone back to the committee. She read aloud from the text, noting the new changes, and saying that requiring that Kindergarten and First Grade students be met by an adult in order to get off the school bus was a practice that the School District had been following for some time,. Ms. Halstead questioned how one would know it was a parent; Ms. Chambers said the school bus drivers generally knew their charges.

Acting Chairman Dargie noted that the Board would not be approving the first reading at this time, as previously noted.

6. Old Business

- a. Default Budget Policy Review** Acting Chairman Dargie said he felt it was important that Mr. Bragdon be present to discuss the default budget policy, so he wished to postpone that discussion. Mr. Willette said he had intended to ask for deferral, as he had just become aware of something that pertained.

7. Housekeeping Items

- a. Approval of Minutes** Acting Chairman Dargie addressed the 10-04-10 meeting minutes, noting that he had sent out a new version with minor changes to the members of the Board; he then moved that the Board use the version that he had forwarded as a starting point. Mr. Willette seconded the motion.
- Mr. Willette referenced Page 6, saying his son was a substitute teacher, not a coach.
 - Mr. Mannino referenced page 2, pertaining to the report concerning Granite Town Media, saying Joe's name was Kasper.

Ms. Halstead said what she was quoted as saying in that same section was not what she said but that she could not recall what she had said.

No other change requests being brought forward, Acting Chairman Dargie called for a vote on the motion to approve the 10-04-10 minutes as amended. **Vote:** All members voted in favor, and Acting Chairman Dargie declared the motion to have carried unanimously (4-0).

- b. Approval of Manifests** Acting Chairman Dargie addressed the manifests awaiting approval, listed as including Vouchers Nos. 9, 10, 11, 1053, 1054, 1055, 1056, 1057, 1058, 1059, 1060, 1061, 1062, and 1063. Mr. Dargie moved that the Board approve the manifests as listed; Ms. Halstead seconded the motion. **Vote:** All members voted in favor, and Acting Chairman Dargie declared the motion to have carried unanimously (5-0).

- 8. Public Comment** Acting Chairman Dargie asked if there were any closing comments from members of the audience.

Ms. Diedre Mainguy said the office was not addressing problems; she asked if there were any way to get a resource officer back in the Middle School. Superintendent Suprenant said there were internal difficulties in the Police Department, but the Chief had said the School District could expect one by late winter or early spring.

9. **Non-Public Session**

Acting Chairman Dargie stated that the School Board needed to hold a short non-public session with respect to personnel matters, under the provisions of NH RSA 91-A:3 II (c), *Matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person, other than a member of the body or agency itself, unless such person requests an open meeting.* Mr. Dargie so moved; Mr. Willette seconded the motion. **VOTE:** Ms. Halstead and Messrs. Dargie, Mannino, and Willette all voted in favor of the motion, which carried unanimously (4-0). Acting Chairman Dargie then declared the Board to be going into non-public session at 8:36 p.m., and all members of the public left the room at that time, with the Board members moving to the SAU conference room in order to allow the television technicians to pack up the broadcasting equipment.

Superintendent Suprenant discussed a leave of absence request with the Board while in non-public session. Mr. Mannino moved and Mr. Willette seconded a motion that the Board approve the leave of absence request. **VOTE:** All members voted in favor and Acting Chairman Dargie declared that the motion passed (4-0).

Superintendent Suprenant discussed a personnel issue with the Board while in non-public session. Mr. Willette moved and Mr. Mannino seconded the motion that the Board authorize the Superintendent to negotiate a settlement of a personnel issue according to the terms discussed. **VOTE:** All members voted in favor and Acting Chairman Dargie declared that the motion passed (4-0).

Mr. Mannino moved and Mr. Willette seconded that the Board exit non-public session. **VOTE:** All members voted in favor and the meeting returned to public session at 9:30 p.m.

10. **Adjournment**

All scheduled items having been addressed, Mr. Mannino moved and Mr. Willette seconded a motion to adjourn. **VOTE:** All members voted in favor and the meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Chairman of the School Board

Date of Signing