

Marlborough School Committee
Marlborough, MA 01752
December 11, 2012

Call to Order - Chairman Vigeant called the Regular Meeting of the Marlborough School Committee to order at 7:38 p.m. at the District Education Center, 17 Washington St., Marlborough, MA. Members present included Dr. Hediger, Ms. Hardy, Ms. Matthews, Ms. Bodin-Hettinger, Ms. Dwyer and Ms. Hennessy.

Interim Superintendent Stephen Dlott, MEA Representative Molly Callahan, Student Representative Laura Zaia and District Communications Liaison Beth Wagner (filling in for the absent Clerk Irish) were also in attendance.

By unanimous vote, **agenda item 4 B – Policy 7.180 Student Athletic/Activity Eligibility Review** – was moved up on the agenda. MHS Principal Craig Hardimon and Athletic Director Jeff Rudzinsky updated the committee on the high school athletic eligibility process, comparing it to the MIAA eligibility guidelines. MIAA guidelines allow students athletes to carry one F and continue to be eligible to participate, losing that eligibility when they get a second F. At Whitcomb, student athletes are allowed no Fs, and Mr. Hardimon requested the high school be permitted to model that practice for freshmen student athletes. He requested to continue the practice of permitting students with one F to remain on the team but not be able to participate, and require them to attend Homework Club and provide the coach with weekly progress reports. Once the F was improved, the student’s participation status would be reinstated. He also presented a scaled-back model for sophomores who have one F; they would stay on the team but not participate and earn the participation right back with mid-term grade improvement. Mr. Rudzinsky noted that football was the only fall sport that is impacted by the mid-term grades as it is the only one with games past the mid-term report cards. He said he notices drastic improvements to the grades of student athletes who go to Homework Club. He agreed with Mr. Hardimon that participation on sports teams is a strong incentive for many students to keep their grades up.

Ms. Dwyer thanked Mr. Hardimon and Mr. Rudzinsky for their discussion this evening and to the Policy Subcommittee for its work on the policy. She said she was unaware that the Marlborough policy differed from that of the MIAA. She noted that as a public school district, we educate everybody who “shows up at the door,” and she recognizes that sports is a good way to build community. She questioned whether the policy caused student athletes to avoid more challenging AP courses, and Mr. Hardimon said he has not noticed that being the case and that many players take multiple AP courses. Mr. Hardimon also noted that student athletes tend to be more organized because they have to manage their time well. Ms. Hennessy agreed that the practice outlined by Mr. Hardimon could lead to fewer Fs, and she suggested consideration of making the Homework Club/Study Table mandatory for all student athletes. Mr. Rudzinsky noted that mandating Study Table would be difficult, but he also noted that a level of leadership emerges when the academically stronger athletes support those who are struggling because they need them on the team. Mr. Hardimon agreed to consider Ms. Hennessy’s suggestion as this process evolves. Ms. Hardy commended the Athletic Department for its “due diligence” in continuously checking eligibility, and that she supports the proposal, noting that punitive consequences aren’t as effective. She also noted the benefits of role modeling. Dr. Hediger thanked Mr. Hardimon and Mr. Rudzinsky for their efforts, calling the process a “real culture shift” that will carry through for years. Ms. Matthews noted that

the policy was never meant to be a “gotcha,” but a way to identify and help students with supports in place. The community can be proud of student athletes with no Fs. Ms. Hennessy asked of co-curricular clubs would fall under the same practice. Mr. Hardimon said he would like to keep it just to student athletes now, with consideration later on expanding it to all co-curricular activities. Ms. Bodin-Hettinger noted that the policy is already in place, and Mr. Hardimon’s and Mr. Rudzinsky’s appearance tonight was a 50-day update as requested by School Committee. Dr. Hediger pointed out that the practice being discussed is an administrative decision, not a School Committee policy decision. Dr. Dlott noted that he appreciated the update as well and thanked everyone for the level of thought that’s gone into this discussion and practice, noting it gives kids “hope” and hope is needed to succeed.

Item 4 A – Superintendent Search Profile. Mr. John Connolly presented the School Committee with his Leadership Profile for the superintendent search. He provided each School Committee member with his report, and gave one to Ms. Wagner for posting on the district’s Web site. Mr. Connolly noted that the process has been a quick turn-around and is in keeping with the schedule established. He noted Marlborough is ahead of some other districts also searching for a new superintendent, a good thing because it positions Marlborough for a better candidate pool. His interviewing candidates will begin within the next two weeks, and he expressed encouragement by the caliber of candidates so far. He explained that the actual application process is completely online and does not allow for the submission of additional documents, thus leveling the playing field for all candidates. Mr. Connolly explained his focus group work on Nov. 26 and 27, noting that he met with 111 people from all walks of Marlborough. He said he thoroughly enjoyed his time with the students, and quoted one of them as saying Marlborough is “multiculturalism in action.” He noted that faculty/staff participation in the focus groups was low, which surprised him. All participants were asked the same three questions: What do you see as Marlborough’s strengths; What do you see as the issues and challenges; and What do you think are the most important/preferred characteristics needed in a new superintendent?

Mr. Connolly reviewed the report and its findings with the School Committee members, highlighting various areas. He noted that diversity consistently was noted as both a strength and a challenge. He also pointed out one focus group participant’s comment that the new superintendent should “wear well.” He said that although characteristics may have varied in importance from focus group to focus group, the aggregated responses were fairly consistent. Mr. Connolly said the report will be given to every candidate who applies for the position.

Ms. Dwyer requested that data-driven decision-making to improve student achievement, although not a prominent characteristic in the focus groups, be added to/prioritized on the list. Ms. Hennessy concurred, and Mr. Connolly said it would be added. Dr. Hediger noted that the “wear well” comment was an interesting point, and he compared it to something mechanically stiff at first but working more smoothing over time, not too accommodating but flexible enough. Dr. Hediger also said he supported consistency as an important characteristic. Dr. Hediger asked if the School Committee could take some time to digest the report’s information and still stay on schedule, communicating about next steps via e-mail. Ms. Hardy voiced concern for the faculty and staff, who have experienced multiple leadership changes over the past several years. Ms. Dwyer noted that the School Committee has been criticized for its decision-making processes and that the data in the report will help them make a data-driven decision. Ms. Hennessy voiced concern over losing qualified candidates should the process be delayed. Ms. Bodin-Hettinger noted that this was her third superintendent search process as a School Committee member, and that in the past

community input was used but they had no set of characteristics to use as a yardstick. She said the district needs a leader who can not only help create new programs but assess them as well.

Mr. Connolly responded that he had a good general direction of what type of candidate is being sought now, and he recommended staying on the schedule set. He said he is confident that he will have five candidates who match the profile for the School Committee to consider for interviews. He recommended a subcommittee of three members to do the initial round of interviews, primarily to preserve the confidentiality of the process. He targeted this process to begin Jan. 10. Mayor Vigeant appointed Ms. Hennessy, Ms. Bodin-Hettinger and Ms. Hardy as the subcommittee members. The subcommittee will interview the initial five candidates between Jan. 10 and Jan. 17. On the last day of the interviews, the subcommittee will narrow down the choices from five to four, then from four to three. Then they will present to the whole School Committee which candidates they are recommending for the three second-round interviews. Second-round interviews will be the week of Jan. 22. Each candidate will spend a day in the district, and the School Committee will conduct its interviews in the evenings.

Mr. Connolly said all initial-round interview questions from School Committee members need to be submitted to him by Dec. 20. The interview schedule will be developed as to not impose on already-scheduled Negotiations Subcommittee meeting(s) at Ms. Hardy's request. A Saturday interview schedule will be considered.

Item 4 C – School Committee Performance Review. Dr. Hediger discussed the Curriculum & Instruction and Assessments sections of the review, then requested that each School Committee member outline his/her personal areas for improvement as suggested in June for discussion at this meeting.

- Ms. Hardy: Focus on budget process at state level. She discussed attending the state FY14 budget hearing in Worcester; the Finland education model, particularly the SPED training for all teachers; and her concerns about the upcoming PARC testing, which will be online and have a technology impact and needs future discussion. She also added effectively complete negotiations, using a cohesive approach with consistency, diligence and discipline.
- Dr. Hediger: Deeper analysis of data; broader analysis of data (beyond MPS); patience in being able to work with sometimes limited or missing data; speaking less at meetings.
- Ms. Dwyer: Speaking less; and improving board governance and establishing norms, especially defining the new superintendent's role.
- Ms. Hennessy: Using data for budget-driven decisions, particularly when implementing programs that need future support; improving the financial relationship with both School Committee and City Council, having open and transparent conversations and giving City Council a broader understanding of the budgeting process; making more effective use of School Committee Policies; and improving consistency regarding evaluations across the district, having open conversations and listening to feedback.
- Ms. Bodin-Hettinger: Evaluating testing data for program effectiveness and district processes; evaluating budgeting data more in depth; supporting the new superintendent, making it easier for him/her to succeed, promote transitional success; usher in and nurture new evaluation system.

- Ms. Matthews: Putting data in the forefront of all decision-making; eliminating inconsistent policy and rule administration, which should come from the top down and be led by the new superintendent; improve relationship with City Council and providing Council with a clearer understanding of what the School Committee does; speaking more at meetings.
- Mayor Vigeant: Ensuring correct financial reporting to the community as a whole so that all are properly informed.

Item 5 – Communications. Mayor Vigeant noted that Marlborough was denied a new school this round; the request will be resubmitted.

Item 6 – Superintendent Report. Dr. Dlott reported that he was excited about how well the superintendent search process was going. He also noted that administration is making changes to the district’s budget process: Cost centers will be outlined; the moving of money between accounts will come before School Committee; principals will be empowered to run their cost centers, resulting in decisions being made closest to the students and their needs; and the district has a process already started for the FY14 budget.

Item 7 – Acceptance of Minutes

- June 12, 2012: Edited version appeared in School Committee red folders. Dr. Hediger’s edits were read into record. Minutes were approved as edited.
- June 14, 2012: Dr. Hediger’s edits were read into record. Minutes were approved as edited.
- June 26, 2012: No edits were offered. Minutes were approved.
- July 12, 2012: Dr. Hediger’s edits were read into record. Minutes were approved as edited.
- Sept. 11, 2012: Ms. Dwyer moved to table. Tabled.
- Oct. 2, 2012: Ms. Hennessy’s and Dr. Hediger’s edits were read to record. Minutes were approved as edited.
- Nov. 27, 2012: Ms. Dwyer indicated that the copy of the minutes at each School Committee’s seat reflected the edits received to date. Dr. Hediger’s edits were read to record. Minutes were approved as edited.

Item 8 – Public Participation. None

Item 9 A – Ratification of MEA Contract. Ms. Bodin-Hettinger moved that the item be tabled until a special meeting can be scheduled and posted. The item was tabled with no further discussion.

Item 9 B – FY 13 Budget. Interim Business Manager Susan Bottan provided School Committee with the FY 2013 November Financial Report, which included updates on the General Fund, offset revenue, total faculty and staff numbers and FTEs, encumbrances and expenditures updates, accounts to watch, and future financial reports expectations. Ms. Hennessy acknowledged the administration, Ms. Bottan, and Mayor Vigeant for their focus on detail and transparency in preparing and presenting the supplemental budget to the City Council’s Finance Subcommittee. She said she appreciated the thoughtfulness with which it was done and the willingness of everyone to work together. Ms. Bodin-Hettinger added that she thought the presentation to the subcommittee was “perfect,” calling it clear, concise presentation and a change from the historical lack of transparency. Mayor Vigeant outlined the process by which transfers

will be reported to School Committee monthly. Ms. Hardy thanked the City Council Finance Committee for supporting the supplemental appropriations request and voiced excitement over the new budget process being implemented. Ms. Dwyer asked who is in charge of identifying grants for the district; Dr. Dlott noted that currently it is a team effort and that he will report back to the School Committee in further detail. Ms. Hennessy asked that the FTEs currently being funded by grants become part of the budget process in the future so the district doesn't lose the positions when the grants expire. Dr. Hediger posed what the School Committee Finance Subcommittee and administration could do to become more clear about the budget process for the city – maybe provide a tutorial about how the school budget's entire package gets put together?

Item 9 C – FY 14 Budget. Ms. Bottan presented an overview of the budget planning process for FY 2014, including guidelines, context and timeline. In January, review drafts of the budget will be discussed with the Administrative Council. On Feb. 12, a superintendent-recommended preliminary budget will be presented to School Committee, and hearings will be held. In March the School Committee will vote on a budget and send it to City Council for approval. Ms. Hennessy voiced approval of the timeline, as did Ms. Dwyer who suggested Dr. Dlott and Ms. Bottan meet with individual School Committee members for perspectives on evaluating specific areas of the budget. Dr. Hediger thanked the administration for its work. Ms. Hennessy requested that technology integration be included in the budget discussions. Dr. Dlott noted that the Administrative Team meets each Monday morning and technology almost always is discussed. He said the key will be a roadmap of how to best integrate the curriculum in the classroom with the teacher's instruction. It will represent an expense over time. Ms. Hennessy said bring-your-own-device and other options need to be discussed, and better student achievement can result from looking at all solutions. Ms. Hardy requested that when reviewing the budget, track how the Strategic Plan is lining up - what has been accomplished, what can be accomplished this year, etc. Ms. Matthews moved that the committee accept the proposed timeline for the FY 2014 budget, which it did.

Item 9 D – Policy 8.012 Health and Wellness Policy Update.

Item 9 E – Acceptance of Donations and Gifts

- \$122.27 from Ohioyle Prints Inc. to MHS to promote school spirit accepted with gratitude.
- \$793.65 from Target Take Charge of Education to MHS to support school activities accepted with gratitude.
- \$1,000 from Hannaford Helps Schools Program to MHS to support school activities accepted with gratitude.
- \$34,441 from MA DESE to the district Special Education for program improvement accepted with gratitude.

Item 10 – Reports of School Committee Sub-Committees

- Ms. Bodin-Hettinger reported that the Policy Subcommittee met but took no action.
- Ms. Hardy reported that the Negotiations Subcommittee is very active with Unit B, Office Support, and Paraprofessionals negotiations.

Item 11 – Members’ Forum

- Ms. Dwyer thanked the Marlborough Public Library for its improvements to the children’s section and to the city for its support of the improvements. She also thanked the Finance Committee for its presentation to the city and the Negotiations Committee for the hundreds of hours it’s given the negotiations processes.
- Ms. Hennessy requested an update on security video cameras from the Policy Subcommittee for the January meeting. Dr. Hediger noted that clarification is needed regarding who owns the data (including images) collected in public spaces.
- Ms. Hennessy also requested an update on the NEASC process for January as well as a review of the middle school athletic program in the near future.
- Dr. Hediger noted there has been talk of “hope” in hiring a new superintendent, however he posed a better four-letter word would be “grit.”

At 10:33 p.m., Ms. Dwyer moved that the meeting be adjourned, which was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret Dwyer
School Committee Committee