

Milan School District Public Hearing
Tuesday February 6, 2007
Milan Village School Library

Present: School Board Members Kevin Evans, Jacky Quintal, Patricia Shute,
Administration: Superintendent Paul Bousquet, Business Administrator Pauline Plourde, Special Services Co-Director Steve Gordon, Milan Village School Principal Dave Backler
Public: Glen Gagne, Eric Gagne, Mary McLain and 9 additional members of the public and Berlin Sun Reporter Gail Scott.

Patricia Shute called the meeting to order at 7:20 PM

Bousquet introduced himself, Kevin Evans as a School Board replacement for Andy Mullins, Patricia Shute, Jacky Quintal, Dave Backler and Steve Gordon.

Pauline Plourde introduced herself, and began the PowerPoint presentation.

General overview of questions and comments during the presentation:

Public: What is the number of paraprofessionals? Backler explained that there are 5, 4 with students, 1 with student support center. Question from the public about the Student Support Center. Backler explained the use of the Center as behavioral as well as academic. Quintal stated that the Center may not be in existence next year, if there is no need.

Plourde explained that one of the paraprofessionals is used in the preschool which is grant funded.

Public asked why the salary increased above the cost of living increase? Plourde explained that the increase was to better align the beginning salaries with area schools.

Plourde explained the out of district placement which has increased 568%. Public question asking for the percentage of the student population currently being identified and what is the population of students?

Gordon responded that he estimated that the special education percentage was about 14% of 125. Public asked for raw number of students and what is a 3 year average? Gordon responded that it is fairly consistent. Backler stated that 14% is average. Gordon responded that what they have no control over is who is moving into the district. Public asked for number of students in grades K to 6 that is sent out of district. Gordon stated 1 student to Dalton.

Question asked about who is paying for the student sent to Berlin who is not special education – is it the parents or is it the school district. Bousquet responded that school is paying after determining what is in the best interest of the child.

Plourde gave total of 44 students receiving special education of the entire population

Decrease tuition at middle school at the high school – due to fewer students, even though the tuition rate has gone up.

Fuel oil prices projected at 2.75 per gallon.

Article 3 – Operating budget

Bousquet explained how the budget was created. Bousquet explained that the budget was held at the same level and he gave examples of how money was allocated within the schools, without making the budget increase. Bousquet stated that if the teachers or administrators had any increases, they had to justify it. . . and none were presented.

Operating budget:

Plourde reviewed the operating budget, including salaries, SAU costs, benefits, tuition, etc. Plourde explained the increase of the budget is primarily 91% of tuition

Plourde answered question on preschool continuing to be grant funded.

Plourde explained the anticipated revenues for the district. Plourde explained the catastrophic aide revenue: after district reaches cap, then the state contributes 80% over 3.5 times the state average.

Warrants:

Article 4: Tuition Expendable Trust Fund: \$50,000. Plourde explained the fund was created 3 years ago, and now it will need to be funded. The purpose of the fund is for regular ed and special ed tuitions.

Article 5 roof CRF fund \$10,000.

Article 6 underground tank \$10,000.

Question from public: Why did they combine tuition to Berlin with the MVS budget? It used to be separated. Plourde responded that if it is a separate warrant article, you can not spend that money on a different warrant article.

Question/Statement from public – this has become the elite component for special education.

Plourde responded that it is our responsibility as a district is to educate all students, not just special ed vs regular ed.

Statement from public: 1st dollar is for special education. Confusing and not clear

Plourde stated that in the town report, she can and will separate out for high school, middle school, and elementary school.

Discussion on special education costs associated with students from Dummer.

Warrant Article 9:

SAU Withdrawal Study. Quintal explained that the committee voted not to withdraw.

Article 10 AREA Agreement with Berlin. The Agreement is now at a 5 year minimum.

Question from the public: Why is there now a year stated – it used to be year by year. Quintal responded that it is a law and the language in the agreement for students, special education, building aid, clarified to match the law. Bousquet explained that after 3 years you can initiate a study to withdraw, whereas if it was 10 years, study couldn't be initiated until 8 years. Bousquet stated the last time AREA agreement was in 1975.

Building Update:

Plourde stated that work continues to mitigate damages - roof leaks, boiler repairs. Previous mediation in the summer was useless. Mediation will take place again on 2/15/07 with a court date set for March 20th. Plourde stated that it behooves the Board to mediate with them.

Question from the public: is the well active yet? No.

Questions from the public continued: When the boiler was installed, who hired the contractor? It was an electrical company who installed it, and believes it was the first boiler that was ever installed.

Backler stated the boiler went out recently because it backfired and the filter needed to be changed. It started right back up. Plourde stated that precautions are in place now to protect the building.

Plourde explained the remaining backup information and welcomed any additional questions at the SAU.

Question from public: What are the insurance costs the district will be paying per individual? Plourde looked up the information and presented it later in the meeting - Single: \$5114, 2-person: \$10,240. Family: \$13,809; District pays 80%.

Question from public: How much is the grant that funds the preschool. Plourde explained that they use a variety of grants to fund the program.

Question from public: Do we have the total amount of grants for the preschool for next year? Plourde responded that they do not have an exact amount right now, but believes \$45,000.

Question from public: Resource room spoke earlier – is that a requirement? Backler responded that it gives resources so kids who may be out of district placement may continue with support here. We are able to service students, as well as provide gifted and talented needs there,

Question from public: Gifted and talented is not a program? Is this the room where a student who gets in trouble on the playground, to “de-escalate”? Backler stated that any discipline problem comes to him.

Gordon stated that this program is serving 30 – 40 students throughout the school. This program has enabled a student to remain in this building without being an out of district placement and saving the district \$28,000 in tuition costs. Not only special education program – for regular ed for kids to get back in a frame of mind without being disruptive to other children and continue with learning.

Question/statement from public: Nothing for gifted and talented? It is a shame. This budget should reflect the needs of all the students. Shute stated that there hasn't been a gifted and talented program. Quintal stated that three times we have attempted to establish a gifted and talented program with no success.

Statement from public: The focus should be on the top of the line of functioning. It's corrosive to the country. Children from Milan, who go on, do very well. Long term planning, but the school needs to address the top.

Backler responded by saying we are here at a budget meeting, and we are talking bottom line. It is a huge cost. Feels strongly that if you are looking at methodology - differentiated program, adopt a salmon program, there are so many projects going on in this school that are challenging students. We are adding a lot of extra programs to the students. This is just a budget meeting. If you come into the school, you will see excellence going on. I am really proud to be in this school.

Statement from the public: Get more – Be bold. This is really in a sense a defensive stance. This is not a bold budget for children who can excel.

Quintal stated that with differentiated learning, it is where that child can go further.

Bousquet stated that when he walks in the classroom, there are good things going on in Milan. Maybe we will get bold and instead of having Backler getting grants for the programs and put the programs in the budget. It is a fixed budget.

Gordon stated that he was getting the impression that the public was linking special ed students who can't function. There are very bright, talented students who are in special education, but may need some intervention that they can not get in the regular class. Most of the special ed students are of average or better than average students.

Public asked about walkabout time? Backler stated that it is an incentive program, if there are no referrals; it is an incentive for 30 minutes of 'walkabout' time, once a week where they may research a project, go to support center, etc.

Shute reiterated that with differentiated learning and we are tailoring the education to the children's needs.

Shute adjourned meeting at 8:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kimberly A. Hockmeyer