

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting February 23, 2015 Lincoln Center

PRESENT: Crockett, Cruz, Hagenow, Leon, Pattacini, Pazda, Scappaticci, Thames

ALSO PRESENT: Superintendent of Schools Geary, Assistant to the Superintendent for Finance & Management Brooks, Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services Matfess, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Radikas

ABSENT: Stafford

A. OPENING

A.1.& 2. Meeting Called to Order

Chairperson Pattacini called the meeting back to order at 6:58 p.m., having previously been in executive session regarding contract negotiations. All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Mr. Pattacini.

A.3. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

APPROVED – Minutes Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of February 11, 2015. Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the motion.

8/0 – Voted in favor.

B. CONSENT CALENDAR

Mr. Geary presented seven items on the Consent Calendar for Board approval.

B.1. Personnel Information

Details had already been provided to the Board members with their agenda.

B.2. Establish an appropriation for FY 14/15 to be funded by the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving in the amount of \$713,520

B.3. Establish an appropriation for FY 14/16 for the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, Inc. Grant in the amount of \$275,000

B.4. Increase the appropriation for the FY 14/15 for the Manchester Head Start State Day Care Program anticipated revenue by \$80,000, bringing the total appropriation to \$690,000

B.5. Increase the appropriation for the FY 14/15 for the Washington Media Arts Magnet After School Program by \$60,000, bringing the total appropriation to \$491,800

B.6. Ratification of Tutor Contract – Manchester Tutor Association, Local 6545 AFT, AFL-CIO, July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2017

B.7. Resolution from the Board of Regents for Higher Education, on behalf of Manchester Community College at Great Path and Manchester Board of Education – Adult and Continuing Education

The Chairman called for a motion.

Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the recommendation to adopt the Consent Calendar as outlined in Section B of tonight's agenda.

Discussion:

Mr. Pattacini asked the administration to comment on Items B.2. and B.3., which are two fairly significant grants, one from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving in the amount of \$713,520, and the other from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation in the amount of \$275,000.

Mr. Geary noted that Item 2 from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is money to support family and community engagement. The funds will be used to finance a variety of activities, all designed to promote family and community engagement, which leads to strength in learning. Item 3 is from Nellie Mae, a one year grant to support student-centered learning at Manchester High School.

Ms. Pazda commented, regarding the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, that at the Board retreat they talked about how all children need to be prepared to be lifelong learners and contributing members of society and to enter Manchester Public Schools and be ready to learn and experience high quality literacy and instruction and have access to extended learning activities. We cannot do this alone and the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving grant is incredibly helpful as it has allowed us to open the

Staff and Family and Community Engagement Center to develop and strengthen our relationship and trust among schools, families, and community partners and to hire a Director, Dr. Ratchford, to oversee this very important work. Ms. Pazda thanked the steering and planning committees who worked on this grant, and the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving for having faith that we will carry this out and engage the entire community in supporting student success. She is very excited to hear more about this in the future.

Mr. Thames attended the kickoff presentation a couple weeks ago and was impressed with this project. He commended Mr. Geary and his team on the proposal. This approach will engage children and families. The fact that we have four Family Resource Centers is a great asset. He encourages parents to come and attend, as the success of this depends on parents coming out and being involved and engaged and enabling the district to be able to serve their needs. This is truly a partnership for parents and children. Mr. Thames thanked Linda Kelly, President and CEO of the HFPG, and Sarah Sneed, and many others, including the Board members for their work on this grant. He noted that this is the first time in 90 years a grant has been given from HFPG to a town other than Hartford.

Mr. Pattacini also thanked the administration. He underscored that this is in fact the first grant given by HFPG to a public school district outside the City of Hartford in the State of Connecticut. He looks forward to a successful first year and subsequent years in this multi-year funding.

The vote was called.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

C. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Tracy Maio, 57 Horton Road, has one concern. At Waddell they just started a Governance Council and got a sneak peak of the School Climate Survey. It is 74 questions long and she is not sure how accurate the results of the survey will be as parents will not want to take such a long survey. Some questions, like does your child have a friend in school to help him with homework, are not questions she feels able to answer. She is not sure accurate answers will result.

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, noted this is the 89th anniversary of Black History Month. He recommended a book *A Slave in the Whitehouse*. He spoke about Civil Rights books, including *The Triumph and Tragedy of Lyndon Johnson* and *The Fierce Urgency For Now*. Mr. Stringfellow also spoke about the 1815 Battle of Waterloo and an article in a history magazine. He noted that next month is Women's History Month. Mr. Stringfellow noted Nelson Mandela was featured in the Mini Page, remembering he died about a year ago.

D. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART I

D.1. CABE 2014 Communication Award

Mr. Geary reviewed that the high school has a website, MHSREDLINE.com. The folks at the high school, both students and staff, get real-time news onto that site. Mr. Geary introduced Donald Harris from CABE, who is here to present a Communication Award. Mr. Harris noted that he is the Chair of the Bloomfield Board of Education. He reviewed that CABE has been presenting this award since 1975. CABE is the parent organization for Boards of Education. Mr. Harris reviewed that the award is based on criteria, clarity of message, image, consistency, readability, graphics, type, format, presentation, design, layout, and value of expenditure. Mr. Harris presented the **2014 Award of Excellence for Educational Communications** to Manchester Public Schools, specifically the MHS Redline Student News.

Jim Farrell, Assistant Principal at MHS, was present to accept the award, along with Kerri Kearney and Pam Fountain, who are two of the adults involved, and Kaitlyn Maloney and Naroon Nahar, two students. Kaitlyn is Editor in Chief of the print newspaper, which is connected to the website, and she noted they are flattered to receive this award and she is honored to work with so many talented journalists who are essential in highlighting the positive aspects of Manchester High School and getting a positive message out to the town and community.

D.2. English Learners Program Update

Mr. Geary introduced Melli Crespo-Jimenez, the new coordinator of English Language Learner programs and community relations, who is overseeing the upcoming redesign of programming for English learners and their families.

Dr. Crespo has 23 years of teaching experience in the elementary and secondary levels. She has a profound understanding of the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students. She has taught and trained teachers at UCONN, the University of Saint Joseph, and the University of Hartford. She has also collaborated on panel presentations in both English and Spanish at local and international conferences.

Dr. Crespo stated it is a pleasure to be here today. This is her second year in Manchester. She is looking forward to collaborating with teachers, students, and their families. Dr. Crespo gave a brief overview of the program and where we want to take it in the future. Her presentation is available on the website.

Ms. Pazda welcomed Dr. Crespo and asked for an explanation of sheltered English instruction. This is one type of approach to teach the second language learner,

which is a research based approach about preparing the second language learner to be successful in content areas at the same time they are learning the language.

Ms. Pazda asked if classes are taught in English. Dr. Crespo confirmed that ESL classes are taught only in English.

Mr. Pattacini asked about the experience a child goes through after being identified as ESL and how long until they exit the program. Dr. Crespo stated that it varies, but research shows it can take from 4-7 years until a student is ready to be successful in academic areas. There are two different kinds of language learners. Social language takes less time to learn, as that is the language used to talk with friends and in social situations. Some students are successful before four years. It depends on their exposure to the language and the literacy levels the student has in the first language. Dr. Crespo reviewed that we use the state mandated test, Las Links, to assess the students every year. Based on those scores we decide if a student is ready to exit the program.

Mr. Pattacini reviewed there has been an increase from 2008 from about 2% of students being ELL to currently 3.7%. Dr. Crespo noted there are about 373 ELL students in the district with about 25 languages represented. Mr. Pattacini wondered if we are seeing students entering Kindergarten with needing ELL services or if it is across the district. Dr. Crespo stated in elementary schools most ELL learners start in K and 1. She is looking forward to PD in preschool and starting some second language strategies in preschool. Mr. Pattacini agreed that this is a much needed program.

Mr. Pattacini asked about the Latino Family Conference. Dr. Crespo stated last year they hosted a multi-cultural night and this year she would like to approach that activity differently. She wants to make the event not just about the different food but engaging families, maybe having them present some artifact about their culture and explain what it means to them, or having students perform. She notes we want to have fun and to learn at the same time. She will send a flyer along regarding that event.

D.3. Update on Building Projects and Security Upgrades

Mr. Geary introduced Chris Till from the town. Mr. Till reviewed a power point presentation, which is available on the website, updating us on the current capital projects including school security upgrades, the Cheney/Bennet renovation, the MHS athletic facility improvements, the boiler conversions, the underground storage tank removals, and the underground storage tank replacement at MHS.

Mr. Crockett wondered who paid for the consultants to do the study on the underground tanks. Mr. Till stated the money being used is money that has been

appropriated by the Board of Directors for the replacement of underground storage tanks. He believes there may be money on both sides set aside for capital projects being used, but he is not sure. Regarding the ball fields, Mr. Crockett wondered if the steeplechase still going to be involved in the new track. Mr. Till is not sure.

Mr. Leon noted that regarding the security upgrades, the details have been kept confidential up until now, and he wanted to know how much is being disclosed in the RFPs. Mr. Till agreed that was a concern they had going through this project. Due to the dollar amounts being considered, this project has to be publically bid so that information is out there. Mr. Leon felt this is the type of loophole that the state should have considered.

Mr. Leon asked about the parking lot lighting at MHS and wondered if there any way to do that piece of the project sooner than later as it is a safety concern.

Regarding the conversion to natural gas, Mr. Leon agreed that is needed. It makes sense to have diesel as a backup at MHS, but at the other schools he noted we won't have dual fuel so pipes could freeze if there is a long-term electrical issue. Mr. Till recommended developing an RFP for emergency power services on an on-call basis regarding generator provisions to have access to it.

Ms. Hagenow wondered if all the schools have backup boilers. Mr. Till confirmed they do have redundant sources of heating.

Mr. Hagenow asked about the gap in time on the Cheney/Bennet project regarding when construction will start. Mr. Till noted that once the construction documents are complete we have to go to the State Department of Education for a Plan Completion Test where they review the documents thoroughly and are in compliance. That can take 60+ days. There is also a 4-6 week period of bidding the work in about 16-20 different contracts.

Mr. Pattacini wondered if we are confident that we are on track for the Bennet/Cheney project to be done by Summer 2017. Mr. Till noted the biggest unknown currently is the commitment from the State for the grant funding. The original grant for Bennet was acquired through special legislation and this is an extension of that project, so there are a number of other conditions that don't meet the regular state grant criteria. There are a lot of intricacies that are in the works of being addressed currently.

E. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

F. NEW BUSINESS

F.1. High School Graduation Date

Mr. Geary recommended a graduation date of June 16, 2015.

Secretary Scappaticci moved to establish the High School Graduation date as June 16, 2015 at the Xfinity Theater. Mr. Crockett seconded motion.

8/0 – Voted in favor.

F.2. Action on Board of Education Vision

Mr. Pattacini noted that this vision was developed by the Board. He further reviewed that over the last few months the Board of Education has worked on this in three workshop settings, along with Mr. Geary and Dr. Pat Proctor, who has worked with the District on our District Improvement Plan. The purpose of the workshops was to develop a vision that was actionable and something that the Board would support and would align with the work that has been going on within the administration. Mr. Pattacini is excited and grateful for this vision to be outlined. The vision is available on the website.

Ms. Pazda feels this allowed us to come together as a Board and achieve consensus and bring a common vision and set priorities. This set the direction to lead us into the future with Manchester Public Schools. She feels this vision statement provides the guidance for her to do the work she needs to do as a Board member.

Mr. Leon noted it is the Board's job to be sure this doesn't sit on a shelf in the future. This is a reminder to current and future boards to keep bringing this out to remind us of the work.

Secretary Scappaticci moved for the Board to adopt the Board of Education Vision Statement developed over three retreat sessions and intended to guide the work to transform the Manchester Public Schools. Mr. Leon seconded the motion.

8/0 – Voted in favor.

F.3. Action on Board of Education Priorities, 2015-2017

Mr. Geary noted that as a result of the Board's work on the vision statement, four short-term priorities were outlined and are available on the website.

Secretary Scappaticci moved to adopt the Board of Education Priorities, 2015-2017, developed over three retreat sessions and designed to focus the work of the Manchester Public Schools for the near future. Mr. Crockett seconded the motion.

8/0 – Voted in favor.

G. COMMITTEE REPORTS

G.1. Curriculum & Instruction Committee

Ms Pazda reviewed the last meeting was held February 11th. In attendance were Ms. Hagenow, Ms. Pazda, Mr. Scappaticci, Mr. Stafford and Dr. Radikas. Also present were Mr. Geary, Ms. Krieger, Dr. Oliver, Dr. Ratchford, and Dr. Ruggiero. The Spanish versions of the K-5 parent brochures were reviewed. Dr. Ratchford provided an overview of the K-5 writing anchors being developed. Dr. Ratchford noted that performance tasks have been completed in grades 6-12 and are in the process of being calibrated. New units of study are being drafted for grades 6-8 to better align middle school history to the high school. Dr. Oliver provided an overview of K-6 mid-year benchmark assessments. Data collection will be used to guide instruction. Dr. Oliver provided a Science update regarding Science fairs in February/March in the elementary schools and Bennet, with a town-wide Science Fair K-8 taking place March 21st at Illing. Invention Convention students will be at UConn at May 2nd. District-wide robotics will be expanding from Boers, Bennet, Illing, and MHS to include Robertson, Verplanck, Waddell, and Washington. The next meeting will be held April 6th at 5:30 p.m. at Verplanck.

G.2. Buildings & Sites Committee

Mr. Leon reviewed the last meeting was held February 5th with Mr. Leon, Mr. Crockett, Mr. Stafford, Ms. Pazda, and Mrs. Brooks in attendance. An update on the current projects was provided by Mrs. Brooks. The next meeting has been changed from March 5th to March 4th at 5:30 p.m. at Bowers Elementary School.

H. PUBLIC COMMENTS (Limited to items on tonight's agenda)

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, supports the Consent Calendar, items 4, 6, and 7. He enjoyed the presentation by Dr. Crespo. He was impressed with ELL and he wishes that staff much success. In this morning's *Courant* he pointed out articles on GED and hometown students. A *Wallstreet Journal* article regarding Utube targeting children was suggested, as well as an article on financial literacy in the *Courant*. Mr. Stringfellow noted that New York City and Boston are going through changes and he suggested an article in the *New York Times* about giving up gains in education.

I. COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Hagenow really enjoyed the last meeting at Bower's School. She thought it was amazing to see such enthusiastic and energetic students, parents, and teachers speak. She knows it may be a challenge holding meetings at schools, but she feels it is worth it.

Ms. Pazda concurs with Ms. Hagenow. She was blown away by what we got to see at Bower's. She encourages the audience to come out to these schools when we hold meetings there. Ms. Pazda had the opportunity to attend the Black History Month performance at Verplanck. It was educational, inspirational, and entertaining. Principal Jones shared his story about growing up in the South. Ms. Baker, the music teacher, did an outstanding job with each grade level. The Family Resource Coordinator at Verplanck, Rachel Hyman, orchestrated the event, which also included a storyteller and the MHS Steppers. The students were so engaged throughout the entire performance.

Mr. Pattacini noted our next Board meeting will be on March 9th at Robertson School in the library.

J. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

K. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Pattacini called for a motion to adjourn.

Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Leon seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment 8:29p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Scappaticci
Board Secretary