

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting February 27, 2017 Lincoln

PRESENT: Caldwell, Conyers, Hagenow, Jacobsen, Leon, Pattacini, Scappaticci, Stefanovicz, Thames

ALSO PRESENT: Superintendent of Schools Geary, Deputy Superintendent & Special Services Radikas, Director of Finance & Management Clancy

ABSENT:

A. OPENING

A.1. & 2. Meeting Called to Order

Chairperson Pattacini called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. 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 6, 2017. Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Leon seconded the motion.

9/0 – Voted in favor.

B. COMMITTEE REPORTS

B.1. Buildings & Sites Committee

Mr. Caldwell reported that the last meeting was held on February 6 with the following attendees: Lindsey Boutilier, Ranon Caldwell, Karen Clancy, Peter Conyers, Matthew Geary, Kerri Kearney, Neal Leon, Randall Luther (TSKP Studio), Jason Scappaticci, and Peter Staye.

Buildings and Grounds has been offered the permanent use of the existing fire house located next to the Cheney building at 19 School Street. The building is in fair to poor condition and approximately \$254,000 worth of repairs needed were identified in 2013. Overall, the building can be used for little more than storage. Currently, it is the field office of Downes Construction, and by agreement with them, the lawn mowing and snow removal equipment needed for Bennet is stored in the Fire House. A 14' x 22' storage building in the Vine Street Parking lot had been in the project but was deleted due to budget pressure. The Fire House is considered part of the historic district, so any work to it would need to be in keeping with the original design/construction and approved in advance. The Committee recognized that the building will become an eyesore upon completion of the Cheney project, and if accepted as a school building, would be in competition for scarce funds to maintain and operate it, let alone address the needed repairs. It was the unanimous opinion of the Committee not to accept the building for MPS use.

Peter Staye reviewed incentive programs offered by the CT Energy Efficiency Fund and discussed where opportunities exist to undertake energy conservation projects. As the town does not allow the payment of capital improvements in lease fashion, the use of utility consumption reduction financing is not possible. After considering the closure of Washington and Robertson, the current or pending renovations to Highland, Cheney/Bennet, Waddell and Verplanck, and the rudimentary level of systems in Bowers, Buckley, Keeney and Martin, opportunities are limited to MHS, Illing and MRA. Mr. Leon asked for a report of energy savings achieved from the projects completed in the summer of 2016, when sufficient data is available. Mr. Conyers inquired about lighting controls at Highland Park. Mr. Staye will have information regarding those controls for the next meeting.

The state has made up to \$1,080,000 available to the district (by application) for eligible improvements to buildings, grounds and technology with the Alliance Capital Funding Grant. Application deadlines are March 31, 2017 and May 30, 2017, with funds available after the State Bonding Commission acts. Regardless of when funds are received, they must be spent by June 30, 2018, which is a

very limited period of time. Priorities will be selected from the 3 year capital improvement plan wherever it is possible to undertake that work this summer.

Randall Luther, from TSKP Studio reviewed the current state of the plans to renovate Verplanck. Schematic Design of the project is essentially complete. The design includes a prominent canopy over the front, a central amphitheater and a 10 room addition including space for STEM and Art. Further design work is on hold pending the opening of bids for the Waddell project as the Verplanck project cost estimate is significantly over budget.

The Vehicle Replacement Plan that was the basis of the Buildings & Grounds vehicle replacement budget was reviewed. Mr. Staye indicated that the schedule replaces trade vehicles (electrician's, HVAC technicians, etc.) on a 15 year schedule, and grounds vehicles, including those used to plow snow, on a 10 year schedule. Mr. Leon noted that the plan has not been fully funded for several years.

The faculty and staff of the high school have formed a committee to develop recommendations for appropriate ways to memorialize Mr. Barry Mitchell, including perhaps the naming of portions of the facility in his honor. The Building and Sites Committee was unanimous in its support of the idea and look forward to acting as the vehicle for helping that process through completion.

The Athletic Department would like to retire the use of Seth DeValve's number and permanently display his jersey in the High School. An event with Mr. DeValve participating is scheduled for March 25, 2017. Proceeds from the event, which would include the auction of a Cleveland Browns Jersey and football, would benefit the family of Mr. Barry Mitchell. There was a general discussion of how to make the event more relevant to students. Athletics will approach Mr. DeValve to see if he is also available for a brief ceremony on Friday, March 24, 2017 when school is in session.

In a larger context, Athletics is working on memorializing the records and achievements of its past student athletes in general as that has not been done to date.

Kerri Kearney and Randall Luther reviewed the technology plan and bidding process for the technology to be installed at Cheney as part of the renovation project. The plan includes an interactive/smart LED TV in every classroom, mounted on a rolling cart and connected wirelessly, an Elmo document camera, also portable, and a desk mounted teacher workstation. Infrastructure included in the plan includes 7 switches to support cameras, phones, wireless access points and Ethernet ports throughout the building. Backup power systems are included so that phones will continue to work during a power outage. The wireless Access Points (WAP) are located such that wireless access will be available anywhere in the building. Phones will be IP, with copper telephone lines devoted to the elevator, nurse and main office. This technology is in keeping with that located in the Bennet buildings, though newer models. Student computers are not included as the state will no longer fund that expense. The project budget is \$570,000. The estimated cost of the plan, based on state bids, is \$363,766.59. Bidding is expected to reduce costs. The committee indicated its support for the plan.

The next meeting is currently scheduled to be held at 5:30 on Monday, April 17, 2017, at the Lincoln Center.

C. CONSENT CALENDAR

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

C.1. Personnel Action

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

C.2. Transfer of Funds

- Transfer from System-wide Mathematics Travel and Lodging account (\$3,000) and from System-wide Science Travel and Lodging account (\$3,000) to System-wide Mathematics Professional Development account for a total transfer of \$6,000.

C.3. Extended Field Trip Request - MHS - CT High School Student Leadership Un-Conference - Wyndham Southbury - 10 Students - March 31, 2017 - April 1, 2017 - 2 Teacher Chaperones

The Chairman called for a motion.

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

9/0 - Voted in favor.

D. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

Shania Stanton reviewed the MHS happenings scheduled for March. Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled for March 8th and 9th. The Annual Murder Mystery Dinner will be held on March 3rd, with a snow date of March 4th. On March 10th there is a dance. The student/staff basketball game will be held on March 15th. There is a senior fundraiser on March 22nd and senior packets are going out soon.

E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, reminded us that Black History month ends tomorrow. He recommended a TV movie and book on the topic. Mr. Stringfellow also pointed out the 100th anniversary of the birth of JFK is approaching and he recommended a book. He also noted a stamp was just released recently in his honor. Last, Mr. Stringfellow recommended an article about transgender teens.

F. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART I

F.1. Pupil Personnel Services Update

Mr. Geary introduced Sarah Burke, Interim Director, Pupil Personnel Services. Ms. Burke presented a Powerpoint, which is available on the website for viewing.

Ms. Hagenow wondered if all IEPs were reviewed at the beginning of the school year. Ms. Burke explained that IEPs are reviewed at least annually, but that date varies based on when the IEP was put in place. Ms. Hagenow wondered how parents know what progress their child is making. Ms. Burke reviewed that the parents are given the goals and objectives and get progress updates along with conferences with both special education staff and the classroom teacher. Ms. Hagenow wondered if the IEP goals can change. Ms. Burke confirmed they can and do change.

Regarding the approximate 1000 special education students and 124 paras in the district, Ms. Hagenow wondered how many students per para we have. Ms. Burke reviewed that we do not typically assign paras one on one, and they may be classroom paras or for a specific program.

Ms. Jacobsen wondered how we are measuring children's progress now with the data dashboard. Ms. Burke reviewed that we believe the children are making progress, but we may not see that in standardized growth charts. We are looking for more sensitive measures.

Ms. Jacobsen asked for an explanation of the difference between an ISP and an IEP. Ms. Burke explained an IEP is an individual education plan for students that qualify in a public school. An ISP is an individual service plan which is used when a child attends a non-public or parochial school. The supports are different because it is a private school. We send staff to service the child in that case, but the support is not the same as in a public school.

Ms. Jacobsen asked about IDEA funds. They support a small piece of the total budget.

Ms. Jacobsen wondered about Ms. Burke's thoughts about what needs the program might have for improvements. Ms. Burke noted the special education program is fortunate to have wonderful resources, both financial and in the people working in the program. They are looking at the program closely to see how to best utilize those resources and are collaborating with the regular education peers to monitor changes. We are seeing social and behavioral concerns earlier so we can be ready with supports.

Mr. Scappaticci asked about the excess costs and reimbursement by the state. Ms. Burke explained there is a formula and the reimbursement varies and has been anywhere from 70 to 75%. The formula is set by the State Department of Education based on our per pupil expenditures. The formula is the same throughout Connecticut, but the actual numbers vary based on each district's per pupil numbers.

Mr. Scappaticci noted when a child is in a private school we pay for staff (or send our own) to service the child, but he wondered if there are any monitors to ensure the school is spending the money appropriately. He is concerned we do not have oversight on other schools. Ms. Burke agreed we have limited oversight.

Mr. Leon wondered if a student is only in our district for a short time, if the costs are pro-rated. Ms. Burke noted that if a child is outplaced (such as CCMC) we pay a daily rate. If the student is at a magnet and moves from Manchester we could go back and ask for the cost to be prorated, but we don't always catch a move. The magnet tuition is paid at the start of the year but the special education services are billed as needed. However many parents do not inform us of a move since their child's school placement doesn't change. Ms. Clancy noted we are now asking parents to re-verify their residency yearly to help catch some of the moves.

Ms. Stefanowicz thought this was an excellent presentation. She noted we have about 16% of our student population in special education and wondered if that was average across districts and years. Ms. Burke doesn't have data for other years at hand, but noted the national average is 12%.

Ms. Jacobsen asked about supports and services designed to provide the "least restrictive environment". Ms. Burke explained that under federal law we have to get as close to full inclusion as possible and that varies with each child.

Mr. Pattacini shared the frustration of other Board members on the way state funding works. He thanked Ms. Burke for her presentation.

F.2. Update on District Staffing

Mr. Geary presented charts, available on the website, regarding staffing.

Mr. Thames appreciated the detailed information. He asked for an explanation for the increase in administrators. Mr. Geary explained that in order to reduce suspensions and expulsions several vice principals and/or deans were added to elementary schools, Illing and MHS. Although our suspensions and expulsions have decreased over the last few years, we still have work to do regarding the

disproportionate number of boys, black students, and latino students receiving these sanctions. We also need to continue with our restorative practices. Mr. Thames noted there is a struggle between maintaining control and helping the other kids. He appreciates the strategic approach.

Ms. Hagenow asked how a school is chosen to be a Title I school. Dr. Radikas explained it is based on how many students receive free or reduced lunch, along with an academic component. Some schools are deemed a Title school one year and not the next, for example if one year they have 50% F/R lunch and the next year a few kids move and their number drops to 49%. That does not mean their needs change significantly.

Ms. Jacobsen asked for clarification on which staff are unaffiliated. Mr. Geary noted there are a wide range of staff that are not in a bargaining unit, including behavior techs, security, and residency personnel.

Ms. Jacobsen asked about Adult Ed staff vs Continuing Ed staff. Mr. Geary will get her an answer on this.

Ms. Jacobsen asked about food services staff for parochial schools. Mr. Geary explained we provide that service to the parochial schools.

Ms. Jacobsen asked what "system-wide" staff means. Mr. Geary explained it is all staff that work at various locations, such as the itinerant music/art and music teachers that service more than one school, supervisors of maintenance and special education, some OT and PT and speech personnel, etc.

Ms. Jacobsen noted that Mr. Geary previously stated that for each million dollars the budget has to be reduced 10 to 25 staff members would have to be eliminated. She wondered if that is only school staff or is staff at Central Office being considered as well. Mr. Geary noted all staff will be considered.

Ms. Jacobsen asked how confident we are with some of the grant funding we generally receive, such as the Hartford Foundation, federal funds such as IDEA, Head Start and Title. Mr. Geary reviewed that obviously we are concerned about the Alliance Funds. He noted the Hartford Foundation funding is decreasing over

the 3-4 years, as expected. He is somewhat concerned with the federal funding being in place, but it is hard to know at this point.

Mr. Leon asked for the next presentation to include student enrollment numbers so we can see a staff to student ratio. Also, he feels it is important to fully explain to the Board of Directors the FTE (full time equivalent) issue and that not every FTE staff person means a 37.5 hour week (ie a FTE food service worker may mean 20 hours; an FTE noon aide 15 hours etc). He also wants to talk about grant money and state and federal funding. Mr. Leon noted that we should point out that the budget amount of \$110 million results in Manchester taxpayers paying approximately \$66 million.

Mr. Pattacini asked for clarification on which administrators were added at the Central Office level. Mr. Geary listed the Director of Humanities; Director of STEAM; Director of Technology; 4 Special Education Supervisors; Director of Talent; and the Family & Community Partnership Director. Some of these positions are grant funded. Mr. Geary noted that the administrators in this district work very hard, working nights and weekends. He noted that we have a comparable number of administrators to local districts similar to us, including East Hartford (47), Bristol (43.2) and Meriden (47.5).

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

G.1. Policy Recommendations

The Policy Committee submits to the full Board recommended revisions for a second reading and approval in accordance with its policy on policy changes.

- a. Policy 6115 - Religious Observance & School Prayer**
- b. Policy 1401 - School Volunteers**
- c. Policy 6151 - Class Size**

There were no question from the Board so the Chairman asked for a motion.

Secretary Scappaticci moved for the Board to adopt Policy 6115 - Religious Observance & School Prayer; Policy 1401 - School

Volunteers; and Policy 6151 - Class Size. Mr. Leon seconded the motion.

9/0 - Voted in favor.

H. NEW BUSINESS

H.1. Policy Recommendation

Mr. Geary reviewed the changes to Policy 4000 - Employment Checks, which is being revised due to new legislation that requires us to check with previous districts to ask if a potential employee was the subject of a report of abuse/neglect/sexual misconduct/discipline or asked to resign or had their license revoked. This policy is in line with state law. Any language pertaining to volunteers was removed as it is now covered under Policy 1401.

Mr. Leon wondered if the parochial schools we supply staffing funds for uses the same checks. Mr. Geary will verify that.

Mr. Conyers wondered if it ever occurs that a new employee would begin work prior to their check being completed. Mr. Geary noted that a preliminary check is always done first and then a full check. It is possible for an employee to start work prior to the full check being returned.

Mr. Pattacini noted that this policy will be on the next agenda for adoption.

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

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, thought it was a good presentation by Ms. Burke on the important services we provide. Mr. Stringfellow recommended an article in *Attitude* magazine regarding children of color with ADD or ADHD. He recommended the book *Waking Up White* regarding bias. Mr. Stringfellow noted that racism and sexism is still here. He enjoyed Mr. Geary's presentation and wishes that Board of Directors would come to our meetings instead of making negative comments on public education. He feels all children should continue to receive a decent education.

J. COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Jacobsen noted that Parent See and Parent Pep are starting in March and there are still opening to participate. She feels it is a great learning experience and if anyone is interested they should contact Angela Flanagan at Manchester Pride.

Ms. Jacobsen also noted that Crazy Sock day is March 21st and the money raised (\$1 to participate) will benefit Down Syndrome Awareness.

Mr. Scappaticci is excited about the Spring Musical - *GodSpell* - presented on March 17, 18 and 19. Tickets are on sale now.

K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

None.

L. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Pattacini called for a motion to adjourn.

Secretary Scappaticci moved and Ms. Jacobsen seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

9/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment 9:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Scappaticci
Board Secretary