

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting

April 8, 2021

Lincoln/virtual

PRESENT: Gundersen, Heinrich, Hughes, Luna, Meggers, Pattacini, Patterson, Stefanovicz, Thames

ALSO PRESENT: Superintendent of Schools Geary, Deputy Superintendent Curriculum & Special Services Radikas, Director of Finance & Management Clancy, Director of Human Resources Sone-Moyano

ABSENT:

A. OPENING

A.1. & 2. Meeting Called to Order

Chairperson Thames called the meeting back to order at 7:04 p.m., noting they had previously been in an executive session from 6:35 - 6:50 p.m. All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Mr. Thames.

A.3. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

APPROVED – Minutes Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of March 22, 2021. Secretary Pattacini moved and Mr. Heinrich seconded the motion.

8/0 – Voted in favor.

B. COMMITTEE REPORTS

B.1. Buildings & Sites Committee

Mr. Pattacini reviewed that the last meeting was held March 22, 2021 with the following Committee Members in attendance: Darryl Thames, Chris Pattacini, Peter Meggers, and Campfield Heinrich. Other meeting attendees were Karen Clancy, Director of Finance & Management & Lindsey Boutilier, Director of Operations & Athletics.

Items discussed included:

MHS Projects

The committee was provided an update on the status of the high school roof project and on the interior work taking place. This work includes new signage, painting of hallways and the auditorium.

Solar Panel Project

The Board of Education and the Town of Manchester have entered into an agreement with CT Green Bank for a solar municipal program that provides upfront financing through a purchase power agreement. The program allows municipalities to access renewable energy at a discounted rate and achieve energy savings through the installation of solar panels on the roofs of our buildings. There is no cost to the Town or Board. The PV panels are owned, operated and maintained by CT Green Bank partners through a competitive bidding process. School buildings involved in the project are Bennet, Highland Park, Martin, Verplanck, Waddell, Manchester High School and Manchester Regional Academy.

Waddell & Verplanck Solar Panel Status

We met with the electrical contractor to resolve the issue with Verplanck solar panels. It was confirmed that the panels are operating. The contractor provided login information so that we may access and view the data. We are working with the Town and the Waddell electrical contractor to identify and resolve the issue with Waddell solar.

Verplanck Open Items

Millwork was completed and is awaiting acceptance by TSKP. This was the final open punch list item on the project. There is an issue with water leaking into the basement through the foundation during rainstorms. TSKP, Downes, the

Town, the Building Committee and Buildings & Grounds are working to identify the source of the leak.

Energy Efficiency Project

The Board of Education and the Town of Manchester have entered into an agreement through Eversource for an energy audit/project where we will receive energy incentives. Phase 1 will focus on an LED lighting upgrade for fixtures throughout the buildings. This work will take place over the summer and into the Fall.

Buildings & Grounds Office

The Buildings & Grounds office located at 325 Olcott Street is in need of a new roof and exterior painting. We are also looking at the long term plan for this building and are investigating the space needs of Central Office.

Spring/Summer Projects

Mr. Boutilier reviewed projects that will be taking place over April break and throughout the summer. Most projects will be at Illing Middle School and Manchester High School and will be paid from the Alliance construction grant. We are also looking at classroom expansion options at Highland Park School as they are at capacity. Buckley School will be moving into Robertson at the end of this school year during construction. We are looking to move MMA to a temporary location yet to be determined.

Maintenance Vehicles

A number of maintenance vehicles have recently been broken into. Windows were smashed, tools and catalytic converters have been stolen. The incidents have been reported to authorities. The vehicles have been moved to more secure locations.

C. CONSENT CALENDAR

Mr. Geary presented four 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 Plant Maintenance Capital Repairs account to System-wide Plant Maintenance Repairs account in the amount of \$10,000.
- Transfer from Bennet Academy School Administration General Supplies and Materials account to Bennet Academy School Administration Professional Development account in the amount of \$1,000.
- Transfer from Manchester High School Science Field Trips account to Manchester High School Science General Supplies and Materials account in the amount of \$3,000.

C.3. Establish an appropriation for the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving Grant for the FY 20-22 in the amount of \$262,500

C.4. Permission to apply for the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Secondary Special Populations Recruitment and Retention Grant for FY 20-22 in the amount of \$22,167

DISCUSSION: [Please note this discussion was moved from A3, when it was asked under the incorrect motion.]

Mr. Pattacini asked Mr. Geary to speak about the C.3. grant and remind the community and the Board what work this is related to. Mr. Geary noted the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving has long been a funder of family and community partnership and engagement with the community. It has always been the intention to phase this funding out, though HFPG has been generous during the pandemic. This grant represents an 18 month grant (\$175K/year) and supports many areas, including re-launching our web page and social media footprint among other items. We always appreciate the support of the foundation.

The Chairman called for a motion after acknowledging and expressing appreciation for the philanthropy of the HFPG.

Secretary Pattacini moved and Mr. Gundersen seconded the recommendation to adopt the Consent Calendar.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

D. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

Tiffany Henry noted that with light at the end of all tunnels, senior sendoff festivities have a green light! Senior hikes are planned out, an opportunity for seniors to strengthen their bonds while getting a good exercise at local hiking trails. The Senior Picnic has been announced with dates in late May. Senior Prom will be held in the MHS courtyard, a cool new spin to the prom culture! Thoughts of revamping graduation for a Covid-safe, yet traditional, sendoff is in the air. Ideas of having smaller families and groups at a time or social distancing on the football field are two main ideas being considered. SEAT is about to set up a bulletin board for Arab American History month. They are also about to work on creating protocols to deal with confrontation and how to properly prepare as well as approach someone for a conversation about racism and equity.

Alexandra Hamza noted that SEAT is also going to begin working on a hype video in order to let the public in on what exactly it is they do. Spring sports officially started on March 29th and many of the sports have competitions next week. Ms. Hamza was excited to announce that Junior Prom is set for May 21st with a rain date of May 22nd. Many students will return to school full time after April vacation. A lot of people have conflicting views on this but the general public is happy about it. Lastly, yearbooks are currently on sale and available for all students and staff members.

E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

F. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART I

F.1. Highland Park School Improvement Plan

Mr. Geary introduced Mr. Hassan Robinson, Principal of Highland Park, along with a number of staff members along with a PTA representative. Their entire presentation may be viewed on the website.

Ms. Patterson, a former HPS parents, complimented the group on their presentation, noting she and her children miss HPS.

Mr. Pattacini is impressed that the data shows growth, which he attributes to hard work. He appreciated the staff sharing their own personal journey and experiences with race, which takes this work to the next level. Mr. Pattacini has long thought the way to make change in society is to help the children understand and grow and to do that we need adults to understand and grow. This has set us up well to close the achievement gap.

In regards to the increase in student population recently at HPS, Mr. Pattacini wondered what the class sizes are looking like. Mr. Geary has some thoughts on how to create additional classroom space at HPS and he will share that with the Board and community in the next month or so.

Mr. Thames feels HPS has done a great job integrating diversity, equity and race into the School Improvement Plan conversation. He enjoyed being a reader so that students can see characters in books that reflect themselves.

F.2. Covid-19 Return to School Update

Mr. Geary noted that Ms. Miner has had focus groups with families at MHS. As the student representatives shared, Senior activities are on the calendar.

The Senior Picnic will be at High Meadows March 21st, outside and with social distancing and masks being used.

The Graduation Parade, which was new last year, will be June 3rd in the evening (rain date 6/4) with staging starting at 5:15 and the parade starting at 6:00 p.m.

Graduation is set for a Saturday this year, June 5th, at two separate times at MHS. The plan is to hold this outside, but there is a rain plan for indoor activities in 4-5 smaller ceremonies on the same date.

The Senior Prom was specifically scheduled after graduation, so there is lower risk of students being exposed/quarantined before graduation. The Prom will be Friday June 11th.

Mr. Geary moved on to the news that the Governor hopes to have students age 16 and up vaccinated between April 19 and May 7. We are working on setting up a vaccine clinic for eligible students at MHS with the Pfizer vaccine. As soon as a date is secured parents will be notified.

The vast majority of staff at elementary schools had their second vaccine last weekend. Mr. Geary felt badly about the need to go remote Monday (today) with short notice, but the number of staff that experienced side effects of the second vaccine dictated that need. Secondary staff will have their second vaccine tomorrow, April 9. There is a possibility that we will be remote Thursday in the upper grades if a similar situation occurs. Two weeks after the second dose of the vaccine staff will no longer need to quarantine if exposed, unless they show symptoms.

April 19 represents a full return to school for those students currently hybrid. The students will maintain a 3 foot social distancing in elementary school regardless of community spread, and in secondary as long as there is low to moderate community spread.

Manchester is currently still "red" at 22.2 new cases per 100,000. The CT positivity rate is 3.84% with a peak earlier of about 5%.

If unvaccinated travel occurs a 10 day quarantine can be avoided with a negative Covid test and rapid tests are available at schools.

We continue to experience the need for quarantine in some spaces and we will continue to watch that and monitor data on variants, community spread and positivity rate. We appreciate the flexibility of students, staff and families.

Mr. Thames asked about the vaccine for the students ages 16 and up. Mr. Geary clarified that we will use the Pfizer vaccine and the plan is to host a clinic on site at MHS for easy access. Mr. Thames wondered about the need for permission slips and Mr. Geary noted they are working through details on how to make the process as simple as possible for everyone. The Governor's office and local health department are involved.

Ms. Luna wondered if we are waiting on the Governor to host the vaccine clinic or is the timing up to the district. Mr. Geary noted districts had two options, to either work with the local Department of Public Health and use our staff or work with a community healthcare provider. We chose to use a community healthcare provider and they will choose for us and contact us soon. Ms. Luna wondered, since 16/17 year olds have been eligible since April 1st for a vaccine, do we know how many students have already been vaccinated? Mr. Geary acknowledged some students may have had their first vaccine and we will collect that data.

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

H. NEW BUSINESS

H.1. Manchester High School Graduation

Secretary Pattacini moved to approve Saturday, June 5, 2021 as the graduation date for Manchester High School. Mr. Heinrich seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Thames wondered if we should state a rain date. It was explained the rain plan will be held the same day, just inside and in several smaller ceremonies.

The vote was called.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

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

Mr. Geary read several questions from FaceBook:

- Why are we having April break? Mr. Geary explained that staff are contracted to work a certain number of days and we cannot skip vacation and add days to that work year.

- Will Friday be remote? Mr. Geary noted he does not plan to make Friday remote.
- What will class sizes be like next year. Mr. Geary noted we desire smaller class sizes to support academic work. In terms of Covid safety requirements, that is unknown at this time.
- Keeney- pellet gun. Mr. Geary explained that a student at Keeney brought a pellet gun to school. At about 11:30 a staff member became aware and confiscated the student's fanny pack. The principal was immediately notified and Mr. Geary and the Manchester Police Department were called. The investigation is ongoing and a letter was sent out to Keeney families. We believe this is an isolated incident and both the identity of the student as well as the consequences will remain confidential.

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, spoke about school security in relation to Keeney. He pointed out an article in the *New York Times* about vaccine facts and the new variants. Mr. Stringfellow noted Autism Awareness Month and recommended a show on PBC called *Xavier and the Secret Museum*. *TIME* magazine had an article on the lost year of the student due to the pandemic.

J. COMMUNICATIONS

None.

K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

Monday, April 26 - Verplanck School Improvement Plan

Monday, May 10 - Adult Education Update

Monday, May 24 - Illing School Improvement Plan

L. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Thames called for a motion to adjourn.

Secretary Pattacini moved and Ms. Patterson seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment 8:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher Pattacini
Board Secretary