

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting

April 26, 2021

Lincoln/Virtual

PRESENT: Gundersen, Heinrich, Hughes, Luna, 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: Meggers, Pattacini

A. OPENING

A.1. & 2. Meeting Called to Order

Chairperson Thames called the meeting to order at 7:04 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 April 8, 2021. Acting Secretary Stevanovicz moved and Mr. Heinrich seconded the motion.

7/0 – Voted in favor.

B. COMMITTEE REPORTS

B.1. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee

Ms. Luna reviewed that the last meeting was held March 31, 2021 with the following Committee Members in attendance: Emily Luna, Darryl Thames, Peter

Meggers. Other meeting attendees were Matt Geary, Diane Kearney, Linda Harris, Renise Washington, Teresa Quintana and Angela Bellas.

Community Members shared questions about translation of materials, summer programming, rental assistance, and additional EBT cards. The Superintendent will inquire about a second round of EBT cards. Information will be provided in Spanish.

There was some concern about the lack of support (particularly rental assistance) provided for undocumented residents. CT Mutual Aid East of the River. Mixed messages from the state because Social Security Numbers are not required to receive rental assistance. There are programs where residents can receive up to \$10,000, but it doesn't look like this includes undocumented citizens.

There was also an inquiry about what is available for kids during spring and summer breaks. The Superintendent will be supporting a robust summer program that will be free to all Manchester Students PK-12. There will be two different 3-week sessions. There will be job opportunities for high school students as well as academic assistance.

There are Covid-19 vaccinations days organized through the town for all residents with additional vaccines set aside for residents of color on Tuesdays at the Senior Center in Manchester.

PowerUp coordinated a memorial service for Jose Soto on Friday, April 2nd. They also sponsored a mobile pantry in the parking lot of Nathan Hale School on the 2nd as well. If anyone knows of any black or brown child who needs a bike, please contact PowerUpManchester@gmail.com.

PowerUp Spring Eggstravaganza will take place in April. You can follow PowerUp on social media to get more information.

Renise Washington gave an overview of the MPS Affinity Spaces that have been created at each school for staff of color. The main purpose of an affinity group

is to promote diversity and inclusion. These groups provide a space for individuals (usually members of historically underrepresented or marginalized groups) to connect, share experiences, exchange resources, and identify successes and challenges that impact their ability to engage with others or with an organization. Research has demonstrated that affinity groups are important for the healthy development and sustainability of organizations. We believe it is important to allow staff to come together out of a common, marginalized experience or identity, convening to support each other and even promoting progressive change in or on behalf of the organization.

There is also a district-level group of white educators and support staff which has representatives from each building and the School Equity Team. This group is for white people looking to stand in solidarity with BIPOC colleagues and build their capacity to support other white people in addressing issues of racial inequity.

Opportunities for affinity spaces for community members will be discussed at the next meeting. Mr. Geary will give an update on ESSER 2/American Recovery grant funds that will be coming to Manchester at the next meeting as well.

B.2. Personnel & Finance Committee

Mr. Hughes reviewed that the last meeting was held on April 8th. In attendance were Mr. Thames, Ms. Patterson, Mr. Hughes and Mr. Meggers. Also at the meeting were Mr. Geary, Ms. Clancy and Mr. Boutilier.

There was discussion of the recognition of Juneteenth (June 19th) as an official MPS holiday to commemorate the emancipation of those who had been enslaved in the United States. A draft MOU will go to the full Board for consideration at the next meeting.

Manchester High School grandstand and press box project was discussed. Mr. Boutilier and Ms. Clancy discussed with town staff the possibility for the replacement and expansion of the high school grandstand and press box to be included in the next Public Works bond that will go to referendum in November. Economic stimulus funding could be another option to fund this project, as the

project could be eligible due to social distancing requirements. It is likely that a resolution will be brought to the full Board at its next meeting.

Ms. Clancy reviewed the FY 2020-2021 Budget Status. A significant available balance is projected through savings in contracted services and transportation as well as smaller balances in other areas. Spending this fiscal year has been unique and has provided the opportunity for the district to adapt to the hybrid learning model during the pandemic. Recommendations for surplus dollars will be brought to the Board of Education and Board of Directors for consideration and possible use for future capital projects through a non-lapsing fund.

The application narrative for \$6.8M in Elementary & Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund II (ESSER II) was reviewed by Mr. Geary as it relates to the funding requirements that address learning loss and the preparation for the reopening of schools.

C. CONSENT CALENDAR

Mr. Geary presented two 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 Manchester High School Social Studies Field Trips account to Manchester High School Student Activities Club account in the amount of \$3,440.
- Transfer from Manchester High School Classroom Instruction Field Trips account in the amount of \$970; transfer from Manchester High School Language Arts Field Trips account in the amount of \$3,000; transfer from Manchester High School Social Studies Field Trips account in the amount of \$6,800; transfer from Manchester High School Guidance Field Trips in the amount of \$10,500; and transfer from Manchester High School Student Activities Field Trips account in the amount of \$3,000 for a total transfer of \$24,270 to Manchester High School Administration General Supplies & Materials account.

Acting Secretary Stefanovicz moved and Ms. Patterson seconded the recommendation to adopt the Consent Calendar as outlined in Item C of today's agenda.

7/0 - Voted in favor.

D. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

Alexandra Hamza reported:

Manchester High School is back full time and while some students have had to be quarantined it has been going well. Everyone is still adjusting to the new schedule and remote learning is still ongoing. Senior events now have definite dates. This year MHS is planning a "Senior Week" beginning with the Senior Picnic and culminating with the Senior Prom. Students have been issued a digital library card that can be used to check out ebooks and audiobooks from the Public Library through the summer.

Leila Affini reported:

Yearbooks are still on sale for \$50 for all students. Sports, including baseball, softball, and track and field, are underway and are in full swing. Finally, students are preparing for AP tests approaching in May and are making use of time after school sessions (1:15-2:45).

E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

F. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART I

F.1. Verplanck School Improvement Plan

Mr. Geary introduced Mr. Nicolas Jones, Principal of Verplanck, along with a number of staff members. Their entire presentation may be viewed on the website.

Mr. Gundersen appreciated that the students are referred to as scholars which sets a high standard of respect and dignity. He is also impressed that Verplanck has 34% staff of color compared to the district average of 11%. He wondered

what Mr. Jones thought his secret to success was in that area. Mr. Jones feels that networking is the grass roots effort providing the opportunity to bring people of color to Manchester. Mr. Jones previously worked in both Hartford and East Hartford. Mr. Thames stated that he could feel Mr. Jones' passion and noted that both his own son and grandson attended Verplanck. He appreciates the intentional effort to recruit a diverse group.

F.2. Covid-19 Return to School Update

Mr. Geary noted that students returned to buildings full time last week. Since then there have been ten cases of Covid-19 in the district requiring quarantines (half in elementary and half in high school). Overall, with about 6200 students and 1500 staff, that is not bad. We are still watching the community and in-person spread.

Summer Camp information went out this weekend electronically and will be mailed to parents this week. There will be two sessions of Curiosity Camp offered and we already have had about 500 students sign up for K-4 and 150 for the 5-8 program. There will also be employment opportunities for high school students.

The town is hosting three pop-up vaccine clinics this week (one was today) Tuesday and Wednesday from 2:00-6:30pm at the East Side Neighborhood Center on Spruce Street.

High School students eligible for the vaccine (age 16 and up) will be able to attend an on-side clinic next Monday, May 3rd. The second dose follows 28 days later.

Mr. Geary is excited about the summer programming and end of year events.

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

H. NEW BUSINESS

H.1. Healthy Food Certification

Mr. Geary reviewed that this is a yearly approval for Healthy Food Certification. The first motion is stating that we will follow the standards set by the state. If approved, the second motion allows for exceptions to the standards for events held outside of the regular school day.

Acting Secretary Stefanovicz moved for the Board of Education to approve that pursuant to CGS Section 10-215f, the Manchester Board of Education certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction, and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to, school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, culinary programs and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or non-school organizations and groups. Ms. Luna seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION:

Ms. Luna wondered if there is a list of these healthy food options. **Mr. Aldi** noted that this year, due to the pandemic, we are not offering these ala carte items. Once we are back to normal he will provide a list to the Board.

Mr. Thames wondered what is a "reimbursable meal". **Mr. Aldi** reviewed that each meal served (at no cost to students) receives both a federal reimbursement (approximately \$3.41) and a state subsidy (approximately 29-31c).

The vote was called.

7/0 - Voted in favor.

Acting Secretary Stefanovicz moved that the Manchester Board of Education will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards and beverages not listed in Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the food and beverage items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An "event" is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events, but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The "regular school day" is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. "Location" means where the event is being held. Mr. Heinrich seconded the motion.

7/0 - Voted in favor.

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

Mr. Geary read several questions from FaceBook:

- Will there be remote learning next year? Mr. Geary believes there will be some form of remote learning next year and we are awaiting guidance from the State Department of Education.
- School photos. There are no in-school photos being done this year, but there have been optional outside opportunities. Information on another sitting will be forthcoming to parents.
- If a student tests positive will peers need to quarantine if they have been vaccinated. Mr. Geary reviewed that a fully vaccinated person (staff or student) is not required to quarantine with exposure unless they show symptoms. Fully vaccinated means two weeks past the second dose of the vaccine.

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, noted Earth Day was April 22nd and recommended a 3-part docu-series on Greta Thunberg on PBS. He noted the April 28

TIME magazine had an article on climate. Mr. Stringfellow recommended an article in *Scientific America* on how to help adolescents flourish. He recommended the books *Iconic Women of Color* and *One Billion Americans*. Last, Mr. Stringfellow noted Farmington High School students have formed an Asian American Club.

J. COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Thames noted the Repurpose School Committee is working on what to do with the four decommissioned schools (Nathan Hale, Robertson, Washington and Martin). There will be a press conference tomorrow (4/27) at 6:00 p.m. outside Nathan Hale School. The public is invited to attend.

K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

Monday, May 10 - Adult Education Update

Monday, May 24 - Illing School Improvement Plan

Monday, June 14 - Waddell School Improvement Plan

L. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Thames called for a motion to adjourn.

Acting Secretary Stefanovicz moved and Mr. Gundersen seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

7/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment 8:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Melanie Stefanovicz
Acting Board Secretary