

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting

May 10, 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 to order at 7:02 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 26, 2021. Secretary Pattacini moved and Ms. Stefanovicz seconded the motion.

8/0 – Voted in favor.

B. COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

C. CONSENT CALENDAR

Mr. Geary presented seven 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 Buildings & Grounds System-wide Maintenance Supplies and Materials account to Buildings & Grounds System-wide Maintenance Repairs account in the amount of \$6,498.

C.3. Permission to apply for the Elementary and Secondary School Education Relief Fund II (ESSER II) for the FY 20-24 in the amount of \$6,829,365

C.4. Permission to apply for the American Rescue Plan's Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) for the FY 20-25

C.5. Permission to apply for the Adult Education ED-244 Grant for the FY 21-22

C.6. Permission to apply for the Adult Education Program Enhancement Project (PEP) Grant for the FY 21-22 in the amount of \$40,000

C.7. Update an appropriation for the Elementary and Secondary School Education Relief (ESSER) funding for the FY 19-23 in the amount of \$1,540,381

The Chairman called for a motion.

Secretary Pattacini moved and Mr. Heinrich seconded the recommendation to adopt the Consent Calendar as outlined in this evening's agenda.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Thames asked the Superintendent to touch on items 3 and 7 in the Consent Calendar.

Mr. Geary reviewed that item 3 was ESSER II Relief funds from the federal government in the amount of about \$6.8 million. This initial request is earmarked for teachers, tutors, a student engagement specialist around absenteeism, summer programming, and upgrades to technology for middle school and staff. This is a tentative application as we have received no feedback from the state.

Regarding item 7, Mr. Geary reviewed there was a Superintendent's call this morning he participated in about ESSER III funding, which has been stated to be \$15.4 million. There has been no other information forthcoming, other than the funds can be spent over the next three years, ending with the 2023-2024 school year. This is a huge infusion of funds and Mr. Geary will be looking for community input in the future.

Mr. Gundersen wondered about the next steps regarding the ESSER II funding of \$6.8 million. Mr. Geary reviewed that we have submitted the application but have not yet received feedback. That is why he has not shared the details with the Board, as they may not ultimately be in the plan. If he does not receive clear feedback from the state soon, Mr. Geary will share the application with the Board.

The vote was called.

9/0 - Voted in favor.

D. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

None.

E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

F. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART I

F.1. Adult Education Update

Mr. Geary introduced Dr. Diane Clare-Kearney, who has a dual role of heading the Department of Race & Equity as well as Adult Ed.

Dr. Clare-Kearney reviewed that they had to rethink Adult Ed in response to two pandemics, not only Covid-19 but the racism pandemic. The students in Adult Ed are often frontline workers, and among the most marginalized and disenfranchised workers in the country. They have been impacted most by both Covid and racial inequities as they struggle to finish school, become citizens, or learn a new language. Dr. Clare-Kearney noted that Adult Ed is required by law. They offer three high school options (ABE/GED, CDP and NEDP), a path to citizenship, English as a Second Language, as well as enrichment through continuing education. Currently there are about 400 students in the Adult Ed program, down from the typical 500+ pre-pandemic. The age range of students varies from 18-89, though the average age is 25. Students come from 40 different countries. ESL has grown 114% over the last five years. Dr. Clare-Kearney shared that 57% of our adult ed students are unemployed.

The presentation by Dr. Clare-Kearney and Linda Blakesley, which also featured two students, may be viewed online.

Mr. Pattacini thanked Dr. Clare-Kearney and her staff for their work. It is hard to imagine the difficulties faced by the Adult Ed students and staff this past year. Adult Ed is always his favorite update each year, due in great part to the heartfelt stories of the students. It is important work. Mr. Pattacini wondered if there were any bright spots around technology, something that could be used in the future. Dr. Clare-Kearney thanked Mr. Pattacini for his support. She noted that technology is hard enough to begin with, and it is not just about access, but about digital literacy. Adding a language barrier makes it near impossible to do online.

Mr. Thames added his appreciation for the job of both students and staff at Adult Ed. Both sides have had to get over the learning curve to communicate remotely, adding age, language barriers, work, family commitments on top of that only make it more difficult. He shouts out to the students featured this

evening for working so hard. It takes bravery, courage and a willingness to keep trying to become the lifelong learners they have become.

Mr. Geary noted the Adult Ed graduation ceremony is slated for June 24th at 5:30 pm for any Board members that wish to attend.

F.2. Covid-19 Update

Mr. Geary noted that 140 high school students were vaccinated in our clinic last week, though he believes more students have been vaccinated outside of school as vaccines are becoming more easily attainable.

The FDA just approved the Pfizer vaccine for ages 12-15.

There have been two cases recently (Bentley and Bowers) and the infection rate and community spread continue to drop.

The summer program currently has 950 students (incoming grades K-4) and 440 (incoming grades 5-8) registered. Though the official close of registration was May 7th, they continue to take applications. Currently both Waddell and Verplanck are the buildings for elementary use, especially as they both have A/C and pool/water access. The full day program will run for three week sessions in July and August from 8:00 - 4:00 with MELC providing before and after care for those families who require it. Bennet and MHS will also be utilized for middle and high school.

Mr. Geary noted there is current outreach to families of students who need the academic support but have not yet registered for the program. He also noted the extended school year for students with disabilities, which is a requirement, will have an opportunity to engage in some enrichment activities as well.

Of note, in the off week between sessions MELC and Adult & Continuing Ed will provide programming.

Year-end events are slated to look closer to “normal” this year. The high school graduation will be held outside in two smaller ceremonies. Prom will be held in the courtyard.

The ground-breaking for Buckley Elementary will be Wednesday, June 2nd at 6:00 p.m. Mr. Geary is excited to break ground on this project.

Mr. Thames noted that it is an exciting time and an opportunity to celebrate our students and families for the work that has been involved in getting through the last year. Mr. Thames encouraged Board members to attend as many graduation ceremonies as they can and he encouraged families and students to be proud of their accomplishments.

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

H. NEW BUSINESS

H.1. Revised BOE Calendar 2021-2022 SY

Secretary Pattacini moved for the Board of Education to approve the revised 2021-2022 school calendar, which moves the first student day back one day in observance of Rosh Hashanah. Mr. Gundersen seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Geary clarified that the original motion stated the holiday was Yom Kippur, but it is in fact Rosh Hashanah. The motion was corrected.

The vote was called.

9/0 - Voted in favor.

H.2. 2021-2022 Board of Education Meeting and Workshop Schedule

Secretary Pattacini moved for the Board of Education to approve the 2021-2022 Board of Education Meeting and Workshop Schedule. Mr. Heinrich seconded the motion.

9/0 - Voted in favor.

H.3. Non-Lapsing Fund

Secretary Pattacini moved that the Manchester Board of Education authorize the Superintendent of Schools to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Town of Manchester that will allow for the establishment of a non-lapsing fund up to 2% of the budgeted appropriation for education from the prior fiscal year as permitted under CT General Statute 10-248a, whereby unspent Board of Education general fund appropriations for use in subsequent fiscal years for the purpose of education related to capital expenses. Ms. Stefanovicz seconded the motion.

9/0 - Voted in favor.

H.4. MHS Athletic Field Bleacher & Press Box Project

Secretary Pattacini moved that the Manchester Board of Education authorize the Superintendent of Schools or his designee to submit a request to the Town of Manchester for the Manchester High School Athletic Field Bleacher & Press Box Project to be included in the November 2021 Public Works Bond. Mr. Meggers seconded the motion.

9/0 - Voted in favor.

H.5. Juneteenth Holiday

Secretary Pattacini moved that the Manchester Board of Education declare June 19th, Juneteenth, the day commemorating the ending of slavery in the United States, a permanent official holiday in the Manchester Public Schools. Ms. Luna seconded the motion.

9/0 - Voted in favor.

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

Mr. Geary mentioned a question from FaceBook around student support for students with disabilities who have fallen behind due to the pandemic. Mr. Geary reviewed the summer programming along with additional programming being offered.

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, spoke about the end of World War II 76 years ago. He suggested a book, *The Fall of Berlin 1945* by Bevor. This is the 155th anniversary of Memorial Day. Mr. Stringfellow suggested an article on shots for kids in *USA Today*. The book, *On Juneteenth*, by Dr. Gordon-Reed was recommended from a historical perspective. Mr. Stringfellow recommended a sitcom called *Rutherford Falls*, in which many of the cast are indigenous people. Last, Mr. Stringfellow touched on the mental health crisis around the pandemic, mentioning Covid-19 Psychosis.

J. COMMUNICATIONS

None.

K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

Monday, May 24 - Illing School Improvement Plan

Monday, June 14 - Waddell School Improvement Plan

Monday, June 28 - Close of School Update

L. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Thames called for a motion to adjourn.

Secretary Pattacini moved and Mr. Heinrich seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

9/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment 8:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher Pattacini
Board Secretary