

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting

May 22, 2017

Lincoln

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

ALSO PRESENT: Superintendent of Schools Geary, Deputy Superintendent Curriculum & 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 moment of silence was then held for the families of the three current and former MHS students that were killed in a car accident over the weekend.

A.3. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

APPROVED – Minutes Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of May 8, 2017. Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Leon seconded the motion.

9/0 – Voted in favor.

B. COMMITTEE REPORTS

B.1. Curriculum & Instruction Committee

Mr. Scappaticci reviewed the last meeting was held on May 8th. In attendance were Mr. Conyers, Ms. Jacobsen, Mr. Scappaticci, Ms. Stefanovicz, Dr. Radikas,

Ms. Sheehan-Burns, Ms. Ghetia, Ms. Hayes, Simon DeSantis, Mike Kolze, Susan Larson, Marney Reardon, Kelly Sheridan, Rosemary Stoner and Latasha Easterling-Turnquest.

The proposed Latin textbook utilizing the "reading method" was reviewed. The Committee supported the adoption of *The Cambridge Latin Courses* textbooks.

Potential elective credit for eighth graders were considered that support vertical alignment between Illing and MHS. Some potential electives mentioned were creative writing, personal finance, robotics, computer programming and game design. Planning stage will follow between Illing and MHS.

The Subcommittee of K-12 Sexual Assault and Abuse Prevention provided an update on Manchester's response to Connecticut General Statute Sec. 17a-101q. Teacher, student and parent components will be put in place for the 2017-2018 school year. Manchester's physical education teachers, nursing staff and family resource coordinators will partner with the Youth Service Bureau. An opt-out option will be available for students.

The Directors of Humanities and STEAM discussed the work underway with teachers across the district to create an engaging summer calendar of literacy, math and science activities for students currently in grades K-5. In addition, a guide for parents to support summer reading was shared, including partnerships with Barnes & Noble, Mary Cheney Library and Whiton Memorial Library.

B.2. Personnel & Finance Committee

Ms. Hagenow reviewed the Special Meeting of the Personnel & Finance Committee was held on May 3, 2017. In attendance were Ms. Hagenow, Mr. Leon, Mr. Thames, Mr. Conyers, Mr. Geary, Ms. Clancy, and the Director of Operations for CREC Transportation Office Mason Thrall.

In response to the discussion on the transportation bid results at the April 24th Personnel & Finance Committee meeting, Board members requested that First Student attend a special meeting to respond to Board members questions. First Student declined the request. Mr. Thrall was then asked to attend based on his involvement in the bid process and to respond to Board members questions regarding the single bid received from First Student. In summary, the options

are limited for the collaborative based on the June 30th expiration of our current contract. Mr. Thrall will request a one-year extension to provide additional time to review and discuss options.

Mr. Geary provided an update to the Committee on the status of the purchase of a van for the Adult Education Program.

The next Personnel & Finance Committee meeting will be held Monday, June 26th at 5:30 pm.

C. CONSENT CALENDAR

Mr. Geary presented six 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. Amended dates for Extended Field Trip Request - Illing Middle School - 2018 Grade 8 Washington D.C. Trip - approximately 200-250 students - March 27, 2018 to March 29, 2018 - 3 school days missed - 1 adult chaperone for every 8 students

C.3. Transfer of Funds

- Transfer from Illing Middle School Science Instructional Supplies and Materials account to Illing Middle School Administration Dues & Fees account in the amount of \$305

C.4. Permission to apply for the FY 17-19 Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) 611 grant

C.5. Permission to apply for the FY 17-19 Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) 619 grant

C.6. Permission to apply for the State Department of Education's Program Enhancement Projects for Adult Education (PEP) FY 17/18

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

Mr. Geary noted the current Student Representatives were not present this evening. Shania Stanton will be recognized for her service at a meeting in June. The new representative for next year, Patrick Doherty, was present this evening just to observe.

E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, recommended the children's book *Come On In* about World War I. He also recommended the book *We're Gonna Be Alright* about race relations. In *American History* magazine Mr. Stringfellow suggested an article on Ms. Morgan, who refused to give up her seat on a bus prior to Rosa Parks. Mr. Stringfellow also spoke about the Census and food shaming.

F. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART I

F.1. Recognition of Student Representative

Mr. Geary noted that Ms. Stanton is not present this evening and this will be tabled until June.

F.2. Vo-Ag student recognition - Bryan J. Rybka and Sidney Rose Butler

Dr. Radikas introduced two students who participated in the Vo-Ag program at local high schools. Bryan Rybka attended Rockville High School. He owns his own business and has achieved Honors or High Honors all of high school. He plans to attend CCSU next year. Bryan was awarded a Certificate of Achievement from Tony Falcet, who advising and assists kids in the Vo-Ag program. Sidney Butler attended Glastonbury High in the Vo-Ag program. She participated in swim team, was an FFA Chapter member, and was a Big Sister, among her many activities. She will attend Salve Regina University in the fall. Both students expressed their gratitude to the Board for supporting the Vo-Ag program and allowing them this opportunity.

Mr. Pattacini expressed that they were both great representatives of our community and he loved to hear about their volunteer activities giving back to our community.

F.3. CABE Leadership Award

Tabled to next meeting.

F.4. Manchester Adult & Continuing Education Update

Mr. Geary introduced Dr. Diane Kearney, head of Adult Ed. Dr. Kearney gave a presentation on the program and introduced many ELL students, who spoke about the impact the Adult Ed program has had on their lives.

Mr. Scappaticci thanked the students who spoke, noting it is wonderful to hear the difference being made in their lives. He hopes they are happy in Manchester and feel welcomed. Mr. Scappaticci noted Manchester has a rich history of welcoming immigrants, pointing out that the Cheney family recruited workers for the mills overseas and offered them ESL classes as well. Mr. Scappaticci also commended Dr. Kearney for bringing the classes to the students.

Ms. Jacobsen applauded the adults who have the courage to go to school. Her mother came to the United States at age 20 with no English and only her husband for support. She hopes the students continue their studies.

Mr. Thames appreciated the student's presentations. He noted how difficult it must be to come to a new country and not know the language. Even after 2 years of Spanish in high school and 2 more years in college he cannot even speak it well. Mr. Thames commended the students for their hard work and also those that have helped them. He asked Dr. Kearney what 12 sites offer which classes. Dr. Kearney noted that the sites vary and some classes offered include basic skills, first aid, CPR, MS Word, and culinary arts. Dr. Kearney noted we also partner with Bloomfield, Windsor, Meriden and Vernon to ensure classes are full. We currently offer an 11 week cycle for a 0.5 credit class and Dr. Kearney noted students often quite at week 3-4. They are considering offering a shorter cycle for a 0.25 credit course to help students accumulate credits easier.

Mr. Caldwell gave his highest praise to the students. He noted it is hard enough to speak in front of a group of people, but in a second language, even

harder. He encouraged the students to set goals and work towards their dreams.

Mr. Conyers wondered how the program advertises. Dr. Kearney pointed out the catalog and flyers she passed out as well as case managers, counselors and the website, along with minimal ads.

Mr. Pattacini is proud of the work the staff and students have put in and of the students ability to persevere in a new country.

A short recess was called at 8:05 p.m. as the families dispersed. Back in session at 8:11 p.m.

F.5. Update on Budget

Mr. Geary reviewed that at the budget workshop last Wednesday he outlined that the goal is to maintain the current services. The categories for cuts will remain the same.

Mr. Geary reviewed that if we cut more than the suggested \$200,000 from the technology line chromebooks would move to a 4 year replacement cycle, many items such as elmos, security cameras, projectors and smart boards would be unable to be fixed or replaced if needed and it would affect the infrastructure upgrade.

Mr. Geary reviewed we could cut the coordinator of Continuing Education to save about \$20,000. We want to maintain driver's ed, summer programming, and other options for the community.

Regarding the TOMMIF account, Mr. Geary reached out to the general manager and the leadership will meet soon with an update to the full Board to follow.

Mr. Geary spoke with the Town and they do intend to use the promised \$500,000 that we froze this year.

Regarding behaviors in the district, Mr. Geary suggested adding two K-5 behavior intervention classrooms, along with social workers and school counselors for those rooms.

Mr. Geary noted there are many unknowns, including state funding, magnet tuition costs, excess SPED costs, how the consolidation of Two Rivers High School will impact us, as well as future federal funding of the IDEA and Title Grants.

Mr. Leon asked if we are obligated to turn over the \$500,000 that we froze from this year's budget to the town. As we are not obligated, Mr. Leon feels we should use some or all of that money to make up for some of the cuts needed. If we do turn it over to the town, he feels they should come up with an itemized list of what they need it for.

Mr. Conyers clarified that security camera maintenance would be impacted if we took more than \$200,000 from the technology line.

Ms. Jacobsen asked how Mr. Geary intends to fund the desired behavioral support classrooms. Mr. Geary hopes that the Board will approve the early retirement incentive for this. The estimated cost is \$400,000 and he feels we may save as much as \$200,000 in the early retirement incentive.

Mr. Thames asked about the meeting Thursday with the town. Mr. Geary reviewed that will be a meeting of the majority and minority leaders of both boards to discuss the TOMMIF account. Then the full Boards will meet to discuss it.

Ms. Stefanovicz noted that we were asked to help the town by freezing \$500,000 of our budget in anticipation of state funding cuts. The Town did not need this money this year, but they want to use it for next year. She is not comfortable with that, as that is not what it was earmarked for.

Mr. Pattacini wondered if Mr. Geary had a sense of what magnet tuitions would be next year. Mr. Geary stated that is unknown at this time.

Mr. Pattacini felt it would be valuable to understand what items we cut in order to freeze the \$500,000 this year. We had assumed the new budget would cover those items, but now we are having to cut that budget too.

A reminder that the next Budget Workshop will be held Wednesday at Bennet Library at 6:00 p.m.

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

H. NEW BUSINESS

H.1. Transportation Contract

Ms. Clancy gave a brief update that she is looking for Board approval for a 5 year contract with First Student. We are in a collaborative with Ellington, Somers and Vernon. First Student was unwilling to negotiate the contract nor to give us a one year extension on our current contract. We did add language enabling us to terminate the contract with 180 day notice for no reason. The issue with this company is their performance, not the cost. We had asked for a meeting with the management of First Student and they declined.

Mr. Leon wondered, if we gave 180 notice would there be a penalty. Ms. Clancy stated it would be a clean break with no penalty. Mr. Leon feels First Student is unprofessional, didn't show up at the meeting to discuss issues, and has raised their rates 10% without showing reasons. He hopes other communities look hard before doing business with them.

Ms. Hagenow wondered if all the towns have to give 180 notice to opt out or if we can do that alone. Ms. Clancy noted it would have to be all the towns, however she feels they all have similar issues with the company and she doesn't think it would be difficult to convince them to give notice.

Mr. Caldwell stated he is not satisfied with First Student. He has heard from both concerned parents as well as workers in the company because of their treatment of employees. He does not feel comfortable supporting a company with that reputation.

Ms. Stefanovicz wondered about the backout clause. Ms. Clancy noted there is no reason required, just 180 day notice. She also pointed out the fees in the contract for poor performance, late pick-ups, K student left without a parent, etc.

Mr. Scappaticci wondered why we are in a collaborative with Somers, Ellington and Vernon instead of East Hartford. Ms. Clancy agreed that did not make sense, but it has been in place since 2012, before her time.

Mr. Geary noted that there are limited bus companies that can support larger collaboratives and next time we will bid alone.

Mr. Conyers is also unsatisfied with First Student and wonders what happens if we vote against the contract. Ms. Clancy noted that the other three towns already voted yes. If we vote no all four towns would have to go to bid and we have only 30-40 days to find a new company, which would cost more.

Ms. Hagenow wondered if we approve the contract, can we go to bid anticipating giving them the 180 notice quickly.

Mr. Leon pointed out that the 180 out for no cause requires all four towns to agree. We could be locked in for five years. Ms. Clancy noted none of the towns are happy with First Student's performance and she does not think it would be hard to convince them to back out. Mr. Leon noted that the fees and penalties are already in place, but we need someone to track that. Ms. Clancy noted that the new Transportation Coordinator was previously with First Student and she is already working on tracking those issues. Mr. Leon wondered if we could get a waiver from the Board of Directors to go directly to another company and not require bidding, to shorten the timeline. Mr. Geary will look into it.

Mr. Thames wondered what the absolute deadline is to make a decision on the contract. Ms. Clancy noted she has to tell the other districts tomorrow.

Ms. Jacobsen doesn't like being put up against a wall. She also doesn't like the thought of having to convince three other towns to give the 180 day notice if things don't go well. Ms. Jacobsen wondered if we would simply reduce our bill in order to collect fees for poor performance. Ms. Clancy confirmed that is how we would take care of billing.

Mr. Scappaticci noted we need to vote tonight. We would need to reject this bid before looking for another company.

Ms. Hagenow wondered if all four towns received the same pricing. Ms. Clancy noted there is a 14.2% increase, however we pulled out fuel to lower that rate to a 5.7% increase in year 1.

Mr. Pattacini reviewed we have two options, proceed to adoption of this contract for a five year term or reject the bid and risk having no bus contract, or possibly have a higher cost for at least a year until a new long-term contract can be bid.

Secretary Scappaticci moved for the Board of Education to approve the proposal for the Regional Inter-District Collaborative Transportation, granting First Student the award for transportation. Mr Leon seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Caldwell feels backed into a corner and considering the number of parents against this and the dissatisfaction with the company, he will vote no.

Ms. Hagenow does not feel comfortable with this contract. We reached out for help through CREC and asked for an extension and neither helped. She will vote no.

Ms. Stefanovicz moved for a caucus. Mr. Conyers seconded the motion.

9/0 - Voted in favor.

8:57 p.m Board in recess for Caucus. Back in order at 9:08 p.m.

Mr. Scappaticci asked if we get a bid waiver from the Board of Directors, can we look for a company on our own instead of with the collaborative. We can.

Mr. Thames noted we did our due diligence by inviting First Student to discuss our concerns. Price aside, we have a concern for the safety of our children. They did not show up for the meeting and they are not responsive nor interested in addressing our concerns. If they had shown up for the meeting, this would

have a different outcome. It is incumbent upon us to seek alternatives. He will vote no.

The vote was called.

9/0 - Voted against. The contract was rejected.

Mr. Pattacini directed the administration to notify the collaborative and ask the Board of Directors for a bid waiver.

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

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, expressed his support of the Consent Calendar, especially numbers 4, 5 and 6. He thanked the students who spoke about the Vo-Ag programs for their positive information. Mr. Stringfellow was impressed with the information shared by Dr. Kearney. He thought it was unfortunate that the press was not here to report on the good things happening in Manchester. Mr. Stringfellow thought it was good to hear from foreign born students and noted that Manchester is welcoming to immigrants. He suggested an article in the *Boston Globe* on men's employment and noted an immigration issue happening in South Windsor. Last, Mr. Stringfellow hopes things will work out with the budget.

J. COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Caldwell noted that a parent wrote him twice about bullying and he passed the information along to the Superintendent. He was a victim of bullying as a child and he takes the matter seriously.

Mr. Pattacini thanked the administration for their hard work on the bus contract and the extra work that will now be put in to find a new company.

K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

None.

L. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Pattacini called for a motion to adjourn.

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

9/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment 9:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Scappaticci
Board Secretary