

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting

August 9, 2021

Lincoln/Virtual

PRESENT: Hughes, Luna, Meggers, Pattacini, Patterson

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

ABSENT: Heinrich, Stefanovicz, Thames

A. OPENING

A.1. & 2. Meeting Called to Order

Acting Chairperson Pattacini called the meeting to order at 7:05 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 July 12, 2021. Acting Secretary Patterson moved and Mr. Hughes seconded the motion.

5/0 – Voted in favor.

B. COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

C. CONSENT CALENDAR

Mr. Geary presented eleven 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

None.

C.3. Permission to apply and appropriation for the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving COVID-19 Learning and Loss Student Disengagement Grant for the FY 21/22 in the amount of \$75,000

C.4. Permission to apply for the Federal Head Start Grant and Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Funding Carryover for the FY 21/23

C.5. Establish an increase in the appropriation to the United Way Implementation Grant for the FY 18/21 in the amount of \$3.80 for a total amount of \$163,003.80

C.6. Establish an appropriation for the Manchester Regional Academy tuition for the FY 21/22 in the amount of \$800,000

C.7. Establish an appropriation for the Manchester Head Start Innovative Enhancement Grant for the FY 21/22 in the amount of \$63,000

C.8. Establish an appropriation for the Enfield Head Start Innovative Enhancement Grant for the FY 21/22 in the amount of \$100,000

C.9. Establish an appropriation for the Manchester Head Start Services Grant for the FY 21/22 in the amount of \$145,127

C.10. Establish an appropriation for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) 611 Grant for the FY 21/23 in the amount of \$1,924,527

C.11. Establish an appropriation for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) 619 Grant for the FY 21/23 in the amount of \$65,923

The Chairman called for a motion.

Acting Secretary Patterson moved and Ms. Luna seconded the recommendation to adopt the Consent Calendar as outlined in the packet.

5/0 - Voted in favor.

D. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

None.

E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, was happy to be attending the meeting in person after one year and five months of having to participate remotely. Mr. Stringfellow noted it was the 11th anniversary of the shooting at Hartford Distributors and next month is the 20th anniversary of 9/11. He suggested an article about cyber issues. Mr. Stringfellow suggested an article in the 8/2 *TIME* magazine along with the movie about Aretha Franklin titled *Respect* starring Jennifer Hudson. He suggested an article about race and the ballot box along with a book titled *How to Raise a Kind Child in a Prejudice World*.

Rosetta Persuad, 330 Dennison Ridge Drive, pointed out that Manchester has low reading and math scores as compared to South Windsor, Glastonbury and West Hartford. She wondered what was being done to improve our scores. She was provided with Mr. Geary's email to discuss this further.

Stephanie Knybel, 185 East Center Street, agreed with Mr. Stringfellow, that it is nice to be back in person for meetings. She feels it is easier to hear and likes seeing everyone in person. Ms. Knybel is embarrassed that in the town of Manchester teachers have to dip into their own money to fund supplies for their classrooms. TV stations are asking for teacher's wish lists. Ms. Knybel feels that with Federal Covid funds along with Board funds we were able to purchase supplies for camp, why can't teacher's wish lists be

shared with the Board and those funds can be used for that as well. Teachers should not have to pay to teach.

Sheralyn Lazu, 22 Oak Grove Street, has concerns about Highland Park School's capacity, especially with Martin closing and the thought of taking on more students through redistricting. She noted they have already taken the library and cafeteria spaces as well as the music and art spaces. She does not understand how HPS can absorb any of the Martin students. Currently second graders are in the basement with only one bathroom, which has caused some issues. Ms. Lazu also questioned why the elementary schools would be dismissed at 3:00 pm this year but buses will not pick up until 3:40. She wonders what this means for students that walk/get picked up vs those on a bus.

Sara Bileya, 10 Livingston Way, is also concerned about the changes at Highland Park and feels that this information (about losing the library and cafeteria) were just sprung on the parents and there was no input from parents about what they thought was best for the students. She feels we need more communication from the district. Ms. Bileya feels we are losing civilization by not allowing students to eat in the cafeteria as they are doing during camp. It also gives teachers nowhere to eat their own lunch as the staff room at HPS is very small. In addition the food mess and allergy issues that accompany eating in the classrooms is concerning. She does not see these changes being temporary and as a parent that will spend a total of 13 years in the school, she wants all of her children to have the same experience and education. Taking away spaces from HPS that are being added to the newly renovated schools (such as the music room etc) concerns her.

Mr. Geary addressed the concerns about Highland Park briefly. He noted that when HPS was renovated the typical class size was 24 and so state reimbursement is based on that number. Currently we are aiming for class sizes around 16. In order to get as close as possible to the required 320 students for reimbursement, more classroom space was needed and the site cannot accommodate any portable classrooms. Mr. Geary noted the vast majority of the Martin students will move to Keeney. He also noted that once we are past the need to social distance, class sizes will move back up, probably not to 24, but closer to 22 and hopefully that will mean getting back at least some of the spaces that they are losing now. There are no easy answers and without a vaccine available for students under 12 we need lower class sizes.

F. Superintendent's Report

F.1. Update on Buildings and Grounds

Mr. Geary reviewed the Buildings and Grounds department has 66 custodians, 20 maintainers, 3 supervisors and 1 secretary. The total B&G budget, including utilities, supplies etc. is \$10,833,675 with a staffing budget of \$5,871,780.

The grounds staff works 6:00 am - 2:30 pm Monday through Friday. Hours were adjusted over the summer to be at buildings before summer school. In the winter grounds staff may arrive earlier for snow removal. Overtime is scheduled for late summer and spring to refresh building exteriors. During the school year, grounds staff rotate buildings to keep grounds maintained. If there is a custodial shortage, grounds staff assists inside buildings as well.

Grounds staff is responsible for maintaining greater than 10 feet from the buildings while custodian staff is responsible for the first 10 feet from the building. Grounds staff does lawn care, including weed whacking, trees and shrub maintenance, mulching and other fall and spring cleanup. Outdoor painting and building maintenance, along with light repairs of stonework is also done by grounds staff. Playground maintenance, packing and moving schools and snow removal round out their duties.

Under the new configuration, Supervisors are at their buildings daily. They monitor the status of the grounds at each site. The focus for the 2020-2021 school year has been building interiors due to Covid-19. MHS is managed by the town.

The supervisor assignments currently include:

- Dave Grande - Illing, Bowers, Buckley, MRA, Pre-School and Waddell
- Jamie Rivera - Highland Park, Bennet, Martin, Keeney and Verplanck
- Larry Cedrone - 555 Main, MHS, MMA and Central Office

There is currently a vacancy for the position of Maintenance Supervisor, who will be responsible for all maintenance personnel.

F.2. Update on Opening of School

Mr. Geary announced that we were planning to offer a remote option this year even though we were not required to do so. However, at the last legislative

session it was decided that remote learning would not be an option. We had approximately 200 families in grades K-6 that wanted remote learning. Mr. Geary will reach out to clarify the restrictions, but at this time remote learning is off the table. It was also noted that remote snow days are also disallowed. Masks will be required indoors regardless of vaccination status. These executive orders apply until September 30th. We will update with the Governor's new guidelines as they happen.

Contact tracing continued through the summer school with 10 cases. All cases involved unvaccinated people and exposure was outside of camp. There was no camp spread. If an exposed person is vaccinated and has no symptoms they are not required to quarantine. If they are required to quarantine (because of no vaccination or with symptoms) the quarantine is 14 days, or 10 days with no symptoms, or 7 days with no symptoms and a negative test.

The CDC has made an exception for PK-12 stating that close contact excludes students within 3 feet if both students are masked. The State Department of Public Health has not adopted that exception yet.

We do plan to offer an additional vaccine clinic and the details are being worked out. There is an opportunity to consider weekly testing and the logistics and value are being determined.

Mr. Geary noted that visitors will be allowed back into the buildings this year, masked. We will keep virtual meetings (for PPTs etc) as desired, but for those that prefer in-person meetings those will be available.

Students in Pre-K through grade 6 will continue to eat lunch at their desks with desk shields. Alternative seating and collaborative work can once again be utilized. We will continue increasing the ventilation, including keeping one window open at all times. Directional hallways will continue at Illing and MHS. Large gatherings will continue to be held outside only. Students may share supplies once again this year.

Mr. Geary stated that the information from the state keeps changing and he is trying to not inundate parents with new information too often. He will give another update at the next Board meeting.

Ms. Luna wondered if the vaccine clinic will be held on-site or through a local health location. Mr. Geary is still working out the details. He noted the state has done a great job making clinics available.

Ms. Luna wondered about fall sports. Mr. Geary stated that fall sports will run a full season this year. Indoors and in locker rooms masks will be required and other precautions could be added.

Mr. Pattacini wondered if we are tracking vaccine status. Mr. Geary stated we are not tracking that and do not intend to require vaccines, however during contact tracing vaccine status is asked for quarantining purposes. Mr. Geary stated vaccines are a personal choice.

Ms. Patterson wondered if any of the positive cases have been a result of people coming into the building. Mr. Geary stated that maybe 2 out of the hundreds of cases this year might be related to inter-school spread. Overall people have been cooperative. The Department of Public Health notifies us of any positive tests so contact tracing can occur quickly. There was no camp spread this summer and Mr. Geary hopes people feel safe coming into the buildings.

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

G.1. Ratification of the AFSCME Council 4 Local 818-49 Manchester Building and Grounds Supervisors Contract

Acting Secretary Patterson moved for the Board of Education to approve the AFSCME Council 4 Local 818-49 Manchester Building and Grounds Supervisors Contract, covering the period of July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2025. Ms. Luna seconded the motion.

5/0 - Voted in favor.

H. NEW BUSINESS

H.1. Manchester High School Partial Roof Replacement

Acting Secretary Patterson moved for the Manchester Board of Education to approve and adopt the attached Educational Specifications dated July 15, 2021 for a partial roof replacement at Manchester High School.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Geary reviewed that the initial roof project called for a full replacement. It has since been determined that there was a narrowed scope of need so the paperwork had to be redone and reapproved.

The vote was called.

5/0 - Voted in favor.

Acting Secretary Patterson moved for the Manchester Board of Education to authorize the Superintendent to submit an SCG049 Grant Application and Summary of Educational Specifications for a School Building Project to the State Department of Education for a construction grant in accordance with CGS §10-283 and Chapter 173 of the Connecticut General Statutes. Ms. Luna seconded the motion.

5/0 - Voted in favor.

H.2. Acceptance of Cheney Bennet Academy Project #077-0234 RNV/EA as Complete

Acting Secretary Patterson moved for the Board of Education to accept the Cheney Bennet Academy Project #077-0234 RNV/EA as complete. The Scope of Work included expansion and alteration of the Building. Total cost of the project was \$20,196,849. Reimbursement from the State Bureau of School Facilities to the Town of Manchester for this project is estimated at \$12,102,945. Ms. Luna seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Geary reviewed that the Bennet, Waddell and Verplanck projects are complete and we need to close out the projects for the state once all punch list items were completed and all vendors were paid. All the projects came in on time and on or under budget.

The vote was called.

5/0 - Voted in favor.

**H.3. Acceptance of Waddell Elementary School Project #077-0233
RNV/EA as Complete**

Acting Secretary Patterson moved for the Board of Education to accept the Waddell Elementary School Project #077-0233 RNV/EA as complete. The Scope of Work included expansion and alteration of the Building. Total cost of the project was \$24,537,034. Reimbursement from the State Bureau of School Facilities to the Town of Manchester for this project is estimated at \$16,098,246. Mr. Hughes seconded the motion.

5/0 - Voted in favor.

**H.4. Acceptance of Verplanck Elementary School Project #077-0235
RNV/EA as Complete**

Acting Secretary Patterson moved for the Board of Education to Accept the Verplanck Elementary School Project #077-0235 RNV/EA as complete. The Scope of Work included expansion and alteration of the Building. Total cost of the project was \$28,931,314. Reimbursement from the State Bureau of School Facilities to the Town of Manchester for this project is estimated at \$17,199,676. Mr. Hughes seconded the motion.

5/0 - Voted in favor.

Mr. Pattacini thanked Mr. Geary, the Building Committee, the Board of Directors, staff and administration for their work on all these renovations,

especially the taxpayers. It was great that the work was done on time and on budget.

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

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, was in favor of the ratification of the contract and mentioned he is a member of the Postal Workers Union. He supported the building reimbursements. Mr. Stringfellow spoke about the hesitancy in some in the minority community around vaccines. He mentioned that our own Kate Diaz is now the State Union President for Teachers. Last, Mr. Stringfellow mentioned an article in *TIME* magazine about ransomware attacks and webcam safety.

J. COMMUNICATIONS

None.

K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

Monday, August 30, 2021 - Update on Opening of School

Monday, September 13, 2021 - District Improvement Plan Update/Professional Development Highlights

Monday, September 27, 2021 - Update on Technology

L. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Pattacini called for a motion to adjourn.

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

5/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment 8:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tracy Patterson
Acting Board Secretary