

## **MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION**

### **Regular Meeting**

**August 24, 2015**

Lincoln

**PRESENT:** Cruz, Hagenow, Pattacini, Pazda, Scappaticci, Stafford, Thames

**ALSO PRESENT:** Superintendent of Schools Geary, Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Management Brooks, Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services Matfess, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Radikas

**ABSENT:** Crockett, Leon

#### **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.3. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting**

**APPROVED – Minutes Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of July 13, 2015. Secretary Scappaticci moved and Ms. Cruz seconded the motion.**

**7/0 – Voted in favor.**

#### **B. CONSENT CALENDAR**

**Mr. Geary** presented eight items on the Consent Calendar for Board approval.

##### **B.1. Personnel Action**

Details had already been provided to the Board members with their agenda.

##### **B.2. Transfer of Funds**

- Transfer from Illing Middle School Administrative Computer Supplies & Materials account to Illing Middle School Administrative Contracted Services account in the amount of \$8,000
- Transfer from Waddell Elementary School Classroom Instruction Replacement Furniture account to Waddell Elementary School Math Instructional Supplies & Materials account in the amount of \$3,000
- Transfer from Waddell Elementary School Administrative Professional Development account to Waddell Elementary School Administrative Instructional Supplies & Materials account in the amount of \$900
- Transfer from: Salaries (\$298,199.36), Professional Fees (\$119,001.08), Contracted Services (\$5,928.35) and Other (\$16,850.66) To: Employee Benefits (\$19,862.97), Other Purchased Services (\$201,633.69), Supplies (\$110,606.96) and Property/Equipment (\$107,875.83) for a total transfer of \$439,979.45

**B.3. Increase in appropriation for FY 14/15 USDA Head Start breakfast and lunch grant by \$18,195 from \$91,805 to \$110,000**

**B.4. Establish an appropriation for FY 15/16 for the Preschool Development Grant in the amount of \$255,400**

**B.5. Establish an appropriation for FY 15/16 for the Enfield Head Start, State Department of Education Services grant in the amount of \$2,904**

**B.6. Establish an appropriation for FY15/16 for the Manchester Head Start, State Department of Education Link grant, in the amount of \$32,363**

**B.7. Establish an appropriation for FY 15/16 for the Enfield Head Start, State Department of Education Link grant, in the amount of \$39,148**

**B.8. Establish an appropriation for FY 15/16 for the Enfield Head Start, State Department of Education Enhancement grant, in the amount of \$92,891**

**The Chairman called for a motion.**

**Secretary Scappaticci moved and Ms. Cruz seconded the recommendation to adopt the Consent Calendar as outlined in Section B of tonight's agenda.**

**7/0 - Voted in favor.**

**C. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

None.

**D. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Ms. Jean Labutis, 27A Esquire Drive, is a Manchester taxpayer with no children. She is a certified teacher, licensed social worker, attorney, and volunteer at both Washington and Buckley schools over the last 20 years. She worked with a teacher to devise a method of teaching math that resulted in rising scores for the students. She is always punctual, never calls out sick, and the teachers she helps are grateful to her, as are the students she helps. For many years she knit the children mittens in their favorite color each year. Ms. Labatis acknowledges there is a yearly "thank you volunteers" breakfast from the school, which full of carbs and sweets, of which she cannot partake. What she is wondering this evening is, why aren't volunteers appropriately thanked and recognized by the principal, Board of Education, Superintendent, Board of Directors, and Town Manager.

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, notes Labor Day is approaching in two weeks. Mr. Stringfellow feels that labor history and unions should be taught. He is a member of the Postal Workers Union. He suggested an article in his postal worker's magazine. Mr. Stringfellow recommended several articles on various historical subjects in several magazines. He also recommended an article in the *Journal Inquirer* about replacing the CBAC with something else and he notes that all students can learn in different ways.

## **E. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART I**

### **E.1. Update on Bennet/Cheney Project**

**Mr. Geary** introduced Chris Till, from the Town Facilities Department, Peter Staye, Board of Ed Facilities Director, and Randall Luther, chief architect. Mr. Till reviewed the Bennet/Cheney project, which is the first of 3 project approved in the November 2014 referendum, will provide swing space for future renovations and eventually house all the 5th graders in town, as well as address racial balance. He introduced Randall Luther, the principal architect from Tai Soo Kim.

Mr. Luther gave a Powerpoint presentation outlining the project and timeline. Construction is on schedule to start in the Winter of 2016, with occupancy in the Summer of 2017 expected. The entire presentation is available on our website.

**Mr. Scappaticci** pointed out that Tai Soo Kim worked on Ms. Porter's facilities. He wondered why the State Preservation Commission changed their minds about the walls in the boiler building. Mr. Luther reviewed that no official decisions could be handed down until complete drawings were done. The first meeting with them was informal and was held with one person prior to the referendum. Once the referendum passed and the entire plan was drawn out for the whole commission, that is when changes were requested due to an adverse impact and a desire to salvage more of the building.

Mr. Scappaticci asked about the back wall of the boiler building. It is a solid cement panel with no windows. Mr. Scappaticci noted studies show that students work better with daylight and he expressed concern that there would not be sufficient daylight in those classrooms. Mr. Luther reviewed that there will be windows on the sides that are floor to ceiling, so the classrooms will have plenty of natural light. He explained that the boiler building backs to private property, so the solid wall is to ensure privacy for both the students and the property owner.

Mr. Scappaticci also asked about raising the roof of the boiler building. Mr. Luther noted the roof is now at about 7 feet and will be raised to 9 ½ feet.

**Ms. Pazda** likes the new rendering and thinks maintaining the chimney is a great idea. She hopes it inspires students to study architecture one day. Ms. Pazda had heard about a display wall and wonders about that. Mr. Luther noted that the basement houses old boilers that will be demolished. He hopes to display historic photos (or take new photos before the demolition) of these boilers as well as salvage pieces of the boilers to mount on the existing wall for display, which will be in a hallway of that wing.

Ms. Pazda wonders if we lost any instructional space with these changes. Mr. Luther notes we did not. Ms. Pazda also asked about what makes one of the classrooms in each trio a science room. Mr. Luther reviewed there is a sink and demonstration counter in that room.

Last, Ms. Pazda asked if these changes altered the budget. Mr. Luther stated the cost has not changed.

**Ms. Cruz** noted that prior to the referendum, in the meetings with parents, a common concern was the lack of a playscape at the school. She noted that Mr. Luther briefly mentioned an area next to the boiler building for a play space, but she wondered if a plan was in place. Mr. Luther stated there have been some discussions, but nothing has been finalized. That is a separate phase of the project.

Ms. Cruz heard concerns about extending the parking area into the current greenspace field that belongs to Parks & Rec. She wondered if there have been talks with Parks & Rec to relocate that area. Mr. Luther reviewed that the area inside the courtyard will have the inner sidewalks removed to provide a greenspace area. He also reminded the board that the current area is rarely, if ever, used and is outside of the fenced in school area, so safety was a concern.

**Mr. Pattacini** asked about the firehouse that is shown in the drawings. Mr. Luther noted that there are no plans for the firehouse, other than that we need to maintain limited access for fire storage. He noted there have been discussions for possibly relocating that storage to another area on the property and turning that building over to the project, but nothing has been finalized.

Mr. Pattacini noted there is no budget impact to work around the chimney, however he wondered about long-term costs. Mr. Luther reviewed the chimney will be capped and repointed. It is in pretty good shape and he estimates it will be another 30 years before it will need limited repointing again. Capping it will greatly reduce the freeze/thaw cycle that causes problems. Mr. Pattacini wondered about the repointing costs. Mr. Luther was unsure of those specific costs.

Mr. Pattacini noticed a November 2015 Board of Education approval needed on the list. Mr. Luther reviewed that the final drawings that will go to the state need to be approved by the building committee and the Board of Education. They will comply with the educational specifications previously provided by the Board.

## **E.2. Update on Talent Development**

**Mr. Geary** introduced the Director of Performance, Evaluation and Talent Development, Ms. Vonetta Romeo-Rivers. Her position is funded by the Alliance Grant and is designed to serve as a link between Human Resources and Curriculum and Instruction. Ms. Romeo-Rivers gave a presentation that is available on the website.

**Ms. Hagenow** wondered what happens when a teacher starts late in the year. Ms. Romeo-Rivers reviewed that there is a February TEAM start date for those teachers that start late in the year, and they only have to complete one module that first year, going into the 3rd year to complete their requirements.

**Ms. Pazda** felt this was a thorough report and feels we will have truly master teachers and administrators which will translate to an incredibly high quality of instruction for our students.

**Mr. Thames** understands the challenges and approach. He wonders what a reflection paper is. Ms. Romeo-Rivers explained a beginning teacher submits this paper at the end of each module that covers classroom climate, preparation, assessment, instruction, and ethics. There are three guiding questions for each of these modules that detail what the teacher's learning is, what is the impact on the teacher's practice with this new learning, and what is the impact on the students. It is then scored by reviewers in another town.

Mr. Thames asked about outreach to attract diverse candidates. Mr. Romeo-Rivers noted they work with historically black colleges and universities and that teaching is not among the top majors in these schools. They are working on other avenues. Mr. Thames was surprised to hear there was so little interest in teaching.

**Ms. Pazda** wondered if we have reached out to community colleges. Ms. Romeo-Rivers noted Mr. Geary had made that suggestion two weeks ago and the guidance department provided a list of high school graduates going to MCC and we are developing a program to invite those students to be noon aides for 3 hours a day. Hopefully this will nurture their desire to work with children. So far 15 students have expressed an interest in this and there are 10 available positions.

**Mr. Pattacini** wondered what the module experience is like for a new teacher. Ms. Romeo-Rivers reviewed that a mentor is assigned to a beginning teacher for two years. They work together to develop the new teacher's skills for a minimum of 10 hours each module and complete one module per semester.

Mr. Pattacini is delighted to see why we needed this department. He asked about the developing - effective- and highly effective headings and why it is done like this. Ms. Romeo-Rivers reviewed that the State Department of

Education recognizes the results look like this and will hold focus groups to discuss the tabulation of scoring. Mr. Pattacini asked about identifying and providing help for developing and effective teachers. Ms. Romeo-Rivers noted that effective is good, that is the goal. She notes that developing teachers are provided support long before the ratings come out. Mr. Geary added that this evaluation system is flawed and we focus on the instruction, preparation and planning, and classroom climate and professionalism. The evaluation also looks at testing.

### **E.3. Update on Opening of School**

**Mr. Geary** reported that students in grades K-7, along with grade 9 start school Thursday, August 27th, with grades 8 and 10-12 starting Friday the 28th. He noted the buildings are almost ready to go. We have hired 17 of the 18 needed STEM teachers, with a last interview being held tomorrow. There are a few more positions to fill from late resignations. Convocation was held this morning, which was uplifting and inspiring.

**Mr. Pattacini** thanked the staff for a great convocation.

**Ms. Pazda** also attended convocation, along with Mr. Thames, and noted that the audience was engaged for all four hours. She is proud of the work that has been undertaken. Some of the highlights of the morning included meeting new personnel, recognizing those with 25 years of service, and meeting the teachers of the year, including the presentation by the District Teacher of the Year, Lisa Griffin, which focused on celebrating each day to make learning fun. Ms. Pazda was impressed with the model school showcase, Imagine College, Keeney Genius Hour, and the 1st grade Google docs penpals from Highland Park and Waddell.

Ms. Pazda also is looking forward to hearing from the grant winners about the activities they are working on with the \$100,000 in grant money that was awarded. Ms. Pazda noted the focus on all students graduating as life-long learners and contributing members of society. The keynote speaker was Michelle Brooks, Assistant Superintendent of Boston Public Schools. Ms. Pazda is proud



to be a part of Manchester Public Schools Board of Education and looks forward to a great year.

**F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None.

**G. NEW BUSINESS**

None.

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

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, felt the report on the Bennet/Cheney project was thorough and is moving in the right direction. He enjoyed the report by Ms. Romeo-Rivers and feels he has a good sense of the high quality of teachers. He notes that people of color can also volunteer, be mentors, counselors, and principals. Mr. Stringfellow suggested an article on college bound vs. trades. He noted education is the sum of all its parts. Last, he recommended an article from Springfield regarding parent engagement.

**I. COMMUNICATIONS**

**Ms. Lori Fogg**, Student Representative talked about Freshman 1st day and 183 nights for seniors, where they will have raffles and obtain their chromebooks.

**Mr. Geary** reminded the community about the Back to School Barbecue being held Thursday, August 27th at Squire Village, which is hosted by the Board of Education, Office of Neighbors and Families, and the Manchester Police Department and funded by the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving.

**J. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS**

**Ms. Hagenow** would like an update by Peter Staye, Facilities Director, regarding existing problems in our facilities.

**Ms. Pazda** noted the Consent Calendar included grants for preschool development and she would like an update on our preschool.

**Mr. Pattacini** would like to hear more about the Imagine College program at the high school.

**K. ADJOURNMENT**

**Mr. Pattacini called for a motion to adjourn.**

**Secretary Scappaticci moved and Ms. Pazda seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.**

**7/0 - Voted in favor.**

**Adjournment 9:14 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Scappaticci  
Board Secretary