

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting December 10, 2018 MHS Rm 293

PRESENT: Conyers, Hagenow, Hughes, Maio, Pattacini, Scappaticci, 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

A. OPENING

A.1. & 2. Meeting Called to Order

Chairperson Thames called the meeting back to order at 7:03 p.m., explaining the meeting had previously been called to order in an Executive Session at 6:35 p.m. All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Mr. Thames.

A.3. Secretary's Welcome

Mr. Pattacini stated that as Secretary of the Board of Education, he wished to extend a warm welcome to everyone present and to the television viewers. He, along with the Board and the Superintendent, were pleased to be joined in celebrating the achievement, reviewing information, and discussing areas for growth, along with making policy decisions related to the effective operation of the Manchester Public Schools. Mr. Pattacini explained that this is a regular meeting of the Board and all items that will be discussed or voted on this evening have been posted, as required by state law.

Mr. Pattacini explained that as the Manchester Board of Education, they are here to set goals, listen to reports of the Superintendent, approve budgets, contracts, and personnel appointments, and to create policy for the district. They are not here to make management decisions or solve the problems of individuals. Members of the public with individual concerns may contact the Superintendent directly. It was explained that meetings of the Board are open to the public, but are not meetings with individual members of the public. Therefore, comments from the audience will be confined to the time designated for the public to address the Board.

Last, Mr. Pattacini noted he is proud of this school system and appreciates the public for their interest in this evening's meeting and the Manchester Public Schools.

A.4. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

APPROVED – Minutes Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of November 26, 2018. Secretary Pattacini moved and Ms. Hagenow seconded the motion.

8/0 – Voted in favor.

A.5. Citizen of the Year Check Presentation by Manchester Elks

Mr. Chris Terry, Esteem Leading Knight, noted the Elks has a small committee that finds an individual that goes above and beyond to make Manchester a better place. They use fundraising to provide a check for the recipient's choice of charity that will make Manchester a better place. Ms. Molley Devanney was present to help present Eric Larson with a check for \$3,100, which he is donating to the Manchester Broadcast Journalism Department. Mr. Larson thanked the Elks, an organization that is humble, selfless and gives back to our community time and again, just as the Board members who serve on the BOE do each week. Mr. Larson explained that the Broadcast students take a trip each year to a convention that hosts a student television network and this year 26 students are going to Seattle, Washington to take part in this event and this check will help make that trip possible.

B. COMMITTEE REPORTS

B.1. Policy Committee

Ms. Hagenow reviewed the last meeting of the Committee was held November 19, 2018 with Mr. Conyers, Ms. Hagenow, Ms. Maio, Mr. Thames, Mr. Geary and Darren Schwartz present. The Committee reviewed multiple high leverage policies. They recommended revisions to Policy 5127, Extended Learning Opportunities, and to Policy 6120, Mission of Manchester Board of Education. The Committee also reviewed the draft of the Board of Education Self-Assessment and will send feedback to the Superintendent on this policy by December 10th, in advance of the BOE Professional Learning session. The Committee reviewed proposed changes from legal counsel to the Board of Education bylaws and the Superintendent will work those changes into the bylaws and bring a draft to the full board for review at the Professional Learning session on December 17th. Last, the Committee reviewed two versions of the proposed calendars and the Superintendent will make changes and bring the 19-20 calendar for adoption to the full Board on December 10th.

C. CONSENT CALENDAR

Mr. Geary presented four 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 Library Repair of Equipment account to Manchester High School Computer Supplies account in the amount of \$1,000.
- Transfer from Manchester High School Classroom Instruction Instructional Supplies account to Manchester High School Administration Dues/Fees account in the amount of \$380
- Transfer from Enrichment Program Instructional Supplies account to Enrichment Program Other Purchased Services account in the amount of \$4,680

- Transfer from System-wide Language Arts Contracted Substitutes account to System-wide Language Arts Instructional Supplies and Materials account in the amount of \$10,000

C.3. Establish an appropriation for FY 18-19 for the Garrett Lee Smith Suicide Prevention Grant in the amount of \$15,000

C.4. Establish an appropriation for FY 18-19 for the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Secondary Basic Grant in the amount of \$114,341

The Chairman called for a motion.

Secretary Pattacini moved and Ms. Hagenow seconded the recommendation to adopt the Consent Calendar as outlined in this evening's packet.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

D. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

Krista Myrie reported that on November 28th the Miss MHS Pageant was held, featuring 19 senior girls who showcased their talents along with formal wear, a group dance, and a most creative safari hat competition. Senior Hannah Little was crowned the winner and Senior Arianna Major was runner up.

One hundred and fifty MHS Musicians visited New York City to hear an open rehearsal of Shostakovich Symphony No. 7 performed by New York Philharmonic Orchestra. The students also got the chance to meet principal bassoonist, Judith LeClair, and they did a Q&A session about the Philharmonic Orchestra and what their day in a life looks like when they rehearse.

Dorcas Wilson, a junior, has been recently admitted into the Nutmeg Selection Committee to choose the 2021 Nutmeg Book award nominees for the state of Connecticut. Wilson said she has already read 3 out of the 20 books that have to be finished by next year.

On December 5th, students in the Stem D Academy visited the Goodwin Technology Manufacturing Mobile Lab. They got exposed to high tech systems currently being used in technology and encouragement to pursue a career and manufacturing.

Finally, Ms. Myrie reported that last Thursday, December 6th, seniors took the win at the Turkey Bowl game against juniors with a score of 30-6.

Chairperson Thames asked about the Miss MHS competition. Ms. Myrie explained it was open only to senior girls and a Mr. MHS competition happens later in the year.

E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Cara Bergstrombynder, 128 Bretton Road, encouraged the Board to vote in favor of the updated school calendar, which recognizes Indigenous Peoples' Day. She noted that history is evolving and she supports this change. She feels we should celebrate diversity in our community and noted that many other cities and towns in our state and four other states have already made the change. Ms. Bergstrombynder hopes that this change will occur and remain in the calendar in the future.

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, congratulated Mr. Thames on his appointment as Chair, noting it is good to see diversity and pointing out the recent feature of Mr. Thames in the *Hartford Courant*. Mr. Stringfellow also mentioned that he brought up Mr. Thames name at a recent state Board of Education meeting last week. As for Indigenous Peoples' Day, Mr. Thames recommended an article in *National Geographic* about the topic. We should celebrate all our diversity, and despite slavery, we all contributed to this country's history. Mr. Stringfellow mentioned the 155th anniversary of the Gettysburg Address and President Lincoln, as well as the 77th anniversary of Pearl Harbor, noting articles in *World War II History* magazine. Last, Mr. Stringfellow recommended a children's book about the holocaust as well as a book on racism entitled *White Fragility*.

F. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART I

F.1. Fall Data Update

Mr. Geary shared the update, which is available on the data dashboard on the website.

Ms. Maio asked about grade 7 reading scores, pointing out that class has had a lot of transitions. She also inquired about the grades 6-8 math unit assessments, wondering if these represented only regular math. Mr. Geary noted it was only regular math looked at, not pre-Algebra or Algebra scores. Ms. Maio noted that that means that anyone that is excelling in math is basically excluded from this data, which makes you look at the picture differently. Mr. Geary agreed with the mention of the students undergoing a lot of movement, both students and staff, in recent years. This impacts learning.

Ms. Stefanovicz wondered if we are finding any specific elementary school with low ESI pre-K scores where we should focus more pre-K interventions. Mr. Geary noted we are working with the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving to help get with that information and that many Head Start children eventually attend Verplanck or Washington.

Ms. Stefanovicz also asked about out of school suspension data. Mr. Geary noted that information is not on the data dashboard.

Ms. Stefanovicz wondered about what additional strategies Mr. Geary is planning for math in the middle schools. Mr. Geary noted there will be a budget proposal for both Bennet and Illing coming at a future meeting. He is looking at teaming the teachers, where they would have four regular math classes and a 5th class aimed at intervention. He also is working on ways to engage students in math, with more stem based and engineering based electives to engage kids. Ms. Stefanovicz is excited about the wraparound services.

Mr. Hughes mentioned the math examples in Mr. Geary's presentation, wondering if there is a possibility that a student's low reading comprehension can be hampering their math scores, since the questions involve reading. Mr.

Geary noted that is a potential problem, but the teacher can read the problem to a child that has difficulty understanding it.

Mr. Pattacini was impressed with the level of detail, the frequency, and the transparency of the data being presented. He appreciates that we measure success and make mid-year changes to the budget to address areas of need. Mr. Geary noted he does not love all the data here, but feels good about the fact that we have it and can respond to it. Mr. Geary noted that prior to Dr. Radikas coming on board, the curriculum was unclear to teachers and he credited Dr. Radikas with spearheading the changes that have been made in the past few years.

Mr. Thames noted that all systems need checks and balances and it is great to see that happening in our system with adjustments being made as needed. As for the suspension data, he wondered what typical offenses are that result in in-school suspensions. Mr. Geary noted that in grades K-4 suspensions are typically for safety issues to give the administration time to plan around the behavior. Many times the issue is a student leaving the classroom or being unsafe in the class. In grades 5-12 suspensions are more about consequences to disruptive behavior or disrespectful or defiant behavior. We are working on restorative practice.

Mr. Thames noted that when he worked in Danbury they had a mentor program, and that the greater number of concerned adults a student had in their life, the greater the chance that student would be successful. He wonders if we should consider developing a program to build deeper relationships with our young folks.

F.2. SMARTR2 Update

Mr. Geary reviewed there are three different proposals to consider in Phase 2 of the plan to renovate all schools. The first proposal is to renovate all 4 remaining elementary schools like new. The second option renovates and expands 2 schools and repurposes the other 2 buildings. The last plan renovates like new 3 schools and repurposes Martin. Mr. Geary noted the third plan is the favored plan of the Board, but all plans are being considered. Many community meetings have taken place to explain these plans to the public, both at school and

community locations. There is a possibility of an April referendum. Mr. Geary wanted to hear from Board members the feedback they have heard from community members regarding this topic.

Ms. Maio has heard that people want to know more about repurposing the buildings. They seem okay with the plan, but do not want empty buildings like Nathan Hale, and soon to be Washington and Robertson.

Mr. Conyers echoed the same comments. He noted people also want to hear why one plan is favored over the others, noting it is important to clarify this to the public.

Mr. Pattacini agreed, suggesting some money needs to be added into the referendum to help repurpose some of the buildings at some level. Nathan Hale is a frequent discussion, noting it was closed and not repurposed yet. People want to see the full package. Suggestions for Nathan Hale were a community center, for Martin a pre-K and a question about what will happen with Washington next year.

Ms. Hagenow thinks the community has a lot of ideas and she thought there was going to be a subcommittee of the SMARTR Committee to address those ideas. She has also heard concern from parents about relocation and bussing issues.

Ms. Stefanovicz was surprised that she did not hear more about the dollar value. What she heard was that people don't want to leave the problems for the next generation. People have also asked why the Board feels larger schools are better. Ms. Stefanovicz has been encouraged to see the engagement of the community in these discussions.

Mr. Thames has heard many of the same comments and there is a prevalent concern over empty buildings. Mr. Thames noted that when Nathan Hale closed it also closed the polling station previously located there. He feels it is critically important to consider the communities desires about not wanting blighted buildings in their neighborhoods. He also hears questions about how a larger building impacts class sizes. Last, Mr. Thames has heard from Verplanck parents

about some of them being relocated to Keeney and not moving back to Verplanck next year.

Mr. Geary addressed the issue of class sizes, noting the Board is committed to 18-22 students per class. He notes we simply cannot accommodate small schools located in walking distance of students. Parents have many choices, including magnets and private schools, and those are usually larger and further from home. Mr. Geary noted that when we move a student out of their home district it is scary, but the state does require racial balance. Having said that, Mr. Geary noted that if possible, if it is requested by a parent, a student could stay in their home school if that is desired. He is being extremely flexible. Mr. Geary noted that in early January SMARTR2 will have a favored plan and we are aiming for a potential April referendum on the issue.

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There were no questions on the suggested revisions.

G.1. Policy Recommendations

Secretary Pattacini moved that the Board of Education adopt the recommended revisions to Policy 5127 - Extended Learning Opportunities. Ms. Hagenow seconded the motion.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

Secretary Pattacini moved that the Board of Education adopt the recommended revisions to Policy 6120 - Mission of the Manchester Board of Education. Ms. Hagenow seconded the motion.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

H. NEW BUSINESS

H.1. Revised 2019-2020 School Calendar

Mr. Geary reviewed the changes to the 19-20 school calendar being proposed. He noted a PD day was added to August, removing the one typically held in January. Columbus Day is being renamed Indigenous Peoples' Day. Three Kings Day falls on a week day next year, so it will be observed January 6th. Next year Eid Al Fitr is on May 23 and 24, which is a weekend, so it will be observed along with Memorial Day on the 25th, in order to keep it on the calendar. Mr. Geary reviewed that four half day PDs were added to address equity training. One last change is that if we have 3 snow days prior to January 31st, then on February 18th we will have school, instead of an extended long weekend.

Mr. Scappaticci pointed out a typo on the second page of the calendar. He also shared his views, as an Italian American, about the Columbus Day change. Mr. Scappaticci pointed out that Columbus Day was originally created to include Italian Americans in US History. Originally, the day was fought against by the Know Nothings and the KKK. The South never celebrated the day until FDR made it a Federal holiday, and in fact the South Italian Americans were persecuted. Mr. Scappaticci noted that although Italian Americans are Caucasian, they were not considered "white" back then and were the 2nd most lynched group in history.

Mr. Scappaticci noted that we do not get to determine our history, but we do get to choose who we celebrate. He feels that Columbus is not the best person to celebrate. He noted that many Southern War monuments are also coming down as they also are often not people that deserve celebration. Even the Democratic Party has stopped hosting Jefferson Jackson dinners as they do not want to celebrate that legacy. While Mr. Scappaticci is proud of his Italian heritage, he recognizes that Columbus is not the best representation of that heritage.

Mr. Conyers noted that as we study history and our understanding of history changes, we change. He suggests teaching the children about history as a whole and why this change is being made.

Mr. Pattacini agreed with the changes, noting that the district based these changes on community feedback. We welcome all nationalities and religions. He is encouraged by the changes to the calendar over the last few years, with the inclusion of Muslim holidays and now 3 Kings Day. We are an inclusive community and school district that teaches tolerance.

Secretary Pattacini moved for the Board of Education to adopt the revised 2019-2020 School Calendar as presented by the administration. Ms. Hagenow seconded the motion.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

H.2. Termination of Employment

Mr. Geary noted this is about a procedural motion in a situation where a staff member is no longer working for us, but never resigned. That person's employment needs to be terminated.

Secretary Pattacini moved that the contract of employment of Joel Roy be terminated, effective immediately, for the reasons set forth in the Superintendent's letter to Mr. Roy dated November 9, 2018, and that the Superintendent is directed to advise Mr. Roy, in writing, of this action. Ms. Hagenow seconded the motion.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

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

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, supports the Consent Calendar. Mr. Stringfellow congratulated Mr. Larson on his being named Citizen of the Year. Mr. Stringfellow enjoyed the presentation by Mr. Geary regarding SMARTR, noting he has been to some of those meetings. He wants all students to learn and thinks we are moving in the right direction in regards to diversity. Mr. Stringfellow recommended the book, *The Everything Parent's Guide to Parents of Children with Special Needs*. Mr. Stringfellow thinks we have a good school system and it is good to recognize the Muslim population. As for Indigenous Peoples' Day, he noted they were the first people here and have fought in every war. We are on the right path, history is for all of us.

Mr. Stringfellow pointed out he is not going away and he knows what he is talking about. He is a proud, college educated American.

Mr. Inaam Khan, 649 Middle Turnpike West, graduated from MHS 8 years ago. He thanked the Board for their excellent presentation and welcoming feeling they are sending out to the community. It is a great feeling.

J. COMMUNICATIONS

None.

K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

January 7 - Budget Presentation

January 9 - Budget Workshop

January 22 - Update on Equity Informed School Climate Assessment

January 23 - Budget Workshop

L. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Thames called for a motion to adjourn.

Secretary Pattacini moved and Ms. Hagenow seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment 8:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher Pattacini
Board Secretary