

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting

May 14, 2018

Lincoln

PRESENT: Conyers, Leon, Maio, Meggers, Pattacini, Scappaticci, Stefanovicz

ALSO PRESENT: Superintendent of Schools Geary, Deputy Superintendent Curriculum & Special Services Radikas, Director of Finance & Management Clancy

ABSENT: Hagenow, Thames

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. **Secretary's Welcome**

Acting Secretary Scappaticci extended 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. Scappaticci noted he is proud of this school system and thanked 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 April 23, 2018. Acting Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Leon seconded the motion.

6/0/1 – Voted in favor.

B. COMMITTEE REPORTS

B.1. Personnel & Finance Committee

Mr. Leon reviewed the last meeting was held April 23, 2018 with the following in attendance: Mr. Leon, Ms. Hagenow, Mr. Thames, Mr. Meggers, Mr. Geary, Ms. Clancy, Transportation Coordinator Barbara Walz and representatives from Dattco, Phil Johnson and Jim McMellon.

Bus changes for the upcoming school year were discussed. The Committee agreed to add two additional buses next year to increase bus timelines and reduce overcrowding, as well as to keep the walking distances the same.

Mrs. Clancy had reviewed the 2017-2018 budget status and there were no significant changes from the last status report. The budget freeze remains in effect and approximately \$450,000 remains encumbered to cover the projected budget shortfall.

Last, Mr. Geary gave an update on the 2018-2019 budget that was adopted by the Board of Directors. The Board of Education's budget was reduced by \$1.2 million. There was a discussion relative to possible budget reductions.

C. CONSENT CALENDAR

Mr. Geary presented five 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. Increase the appropriation for FY 17-18 for Manchester Regional Academy (MRA) in the amount of \$538,660, bringing the total appropriation amount to \$1,338,660

C.3. Permission to apply for FY July 1, 2018 - June 30, 2019, in the amount of \$40,000 for the State Department of Education's Program

Enhancement Project - Continuation Application for Adult Education (PEP)

C.4. Permission to apply for FY 18-20, Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDE) 611 grant

C.5. Permission to apply for FY 18-20, Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) 619 grant

The Chairman called for a motion.

Acting Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Leon seconded the recommendation to adopt the Consent Calendar as outlined in Section C of tonight's agenda.

7/0 - Voted in favor.

D. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

The student representatives were not able to be present this evening.

E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, pointed out that Memorial Day is in a couple of weeks and mentioned that about 2 ½ years ago we had the moving Vietnam Wall Memorial in town. He recommended an illustrated history of the Vietnam War. He also spoke about the Philippines and race issues. Mr. Stringfellow feels we can do better as a nation to learn about others and improve race relations. Last, Mr. Stringfellow recommended articles in *Your Teen for Parents* and *Attitude* magazine.

F. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART I

F.1. Update on Building Projects

Mr. Geary noted he is excited about the progress of the buildings. Waddell is getting ready to open and the 5th graders will move to the Bennet campus next year. Construction has begun at Verplanck as well, in areas of the property that are not currently being used by the school.

Randall Luther, from Tai Soo Kim Studio, gave a short presentation outlining the building projects. He noted they expect the Certificate of Occupancy for Waddell to be issued the end of July.

Mr. Luther reviewed all three projected, Cheney/Bennet, Waddell and Verplanck, are all under budget, about \$5million under at this time. Currently, the budget for the playscapes for Waddell and Verplanck, need to be approved. The original estimate for them was \$300,000 but the projection is now at \$291,000. We use state contracts for playscapes instead of bidding them out, as it is more efficient and cost effective.

Mr. Conyers wondered if both the playgrounds are fenced in. Mr. Luther noted the kindergarten playground is fully fenced. The playground for the upper grades is fenced on two sides, which encumpasses part of the parking lot for paved play.

Mr. Scappaticci was interested to hear that Waddell and Verplanck were designed by the same architect and wondered when they were built and by whom. Mr. Luther noted that Waddell was built in 1951 and Verplanck in 1949. He was not sure who the architect was, but he will look into it.

Ms. Stefanovicz wondered what the play surface under the playscape is. Mr. Luther reviewed it is engineered wood fiber mulch. There is gravel under that and it is about one foot of mulch. The other option was poured rubber, which is very expensive.

Mr. Conyers wondered how long the mulch lasts. Mr. Luther noted it requires routine maintenance (raking) and then Mr. Staye noted more mulch is added yearly as needed.

Mr. Pattacini thanked Mr. Luther, Mr. Staye and the town staff for their work on these projects that are coming in on time and under budget. To the Board members, Mr. Pattacini noted that later in the agenda is the approval of the playground specs.

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

G.1. Policy Recommendations

Mr. Pattacini reviewed the 3 recommended policy revisions and one policy recommended for deletion were outlined at the last Board meeting and no questions or updates have been made. Mr. Geary reviewed the policies briefly.

a. Policy 6164 - Drug and Alcohol Use by Students

Acting Secretary Scappaticci moved for the Board to adopt Policy 6164 - Drug and Alcohol Use by Students. Mr. Leon seconded the motion.

7/0 - Voted in favor.

b. Policy 5141.1 - Revised Student Accident Policy

Acting Secretary Scappaticci moved for the Board to adopt Policy 5141.1 - Revised Student Accident Policy. Mr. Leon seconded the motion.

7/0 - Voted in favor.

c. Policy 5118.1 - Homeless Students

Acting Secretary Scappaticci moved for the Board to adopt Policy 5118.1 - Homeless Students. Mr. Leon seconded the motion.

7/0 - Voted in favor.

d. Policy 3500 - Non-Instructional Operations (for deletion)

Acting Secretary Scappaticci moved for the Board to delete Policy 3500 - Non-Instructional Operations. Mr. Leon seconded the motion.

7/0 - Voted in favor.

Mr. Pattacini thanked the administration and Policy Committee for their work on these policies.

G.2. 2018-2019 Board of Education Budget

Mr. Geary reviewed the proposed budget reduction list. As he has heard no significant objections to the list, he is looking for action this evening.

Mr. Conyers wondered if action is taking this evening, would that mean the scheduled budget workshops will be cancelled. They will be cancelled.

Mr. Leon wondered what date we need to ratify the budget. Mr. Geary and Ms. Clancy noted that 6/30/18 is the last date, however it was noted that not having the budget approved impacts hiring as well as other decisions, so the sooner it is approved the better. Mr. Leon would like to apply more pressure on the Board of Directors.

Mr. Scappaticci noted he is upset about some of the proposed reductions, as is administration. He wondered if, even if we approve the budget, we can still request more funds from the Board of Directors and add items back in. Mr. Geary agreed we can.

Ms. Maio noted that voting down the budget will not help and will only hinder Central Office from operating efficiently. Approving the budget should not hinder us from continuing to pressure the Board of Directors to add more funding to the budget.

Acting Secretary Scappaticci moved that the Board approve the 2018-2019 Manchester Board of Education Budget in the amount of \$113,406,180. Ms. Maio seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Leon wondered which policies approving this budget proposal will violate. Mr. Geary noted several policies will be close to need to be waived, including capital repairs, computer equipment, capital projects and maintenance and

custodial supplies. Mr. Leon asked if we would need to take action on those policies to waive them prior to approving the budget.

Mr. Leon felt the administration did a great job in not cutting programming, but cuts behind the scenes still have an impact.

Discussion was suspended while Mrs. Clancy did the math to determine which policies would need to be waived. Discussion on this subject resumed after H.2.

Ms. Clancy determined that we fall short by about \$40k on Capital Repairs, about \$310k on Capital Projects, and about \$30k on Computer Equipment.

Mr. Geary noted that Capital Projects was reduced based on the reduction of the MRA roof, which will be funded through the town side, so that is not really short.

Ms. Stefanovicz is not okay with \$1.2million in cuts, however she feels there is nothing else we can cut. She will support the Superintendents outlined reductions, but is very disappointed to be placed in this situation.

Mr. Leon noted we will adopt this budget because there is no choice, but he will vote against it on principal. Every year we cut things we need and get criticized when buildings are run down and we cannot repair them. New buildings have sophisticated systems that need maintenance and in 10 year we will be in the same situation we are now, being criticized for not protecting and maintaining our buildings. It is sad that the Board of Directors does not understand that schools bring families to town.

Mr. Scappaticci recalled that one of the first meetings he attended as a Board member was the one where \$22 million in deferred maintenance was reviewed. It was frustrating as Board members heard angry complaints from the public. He will request the Board of Directors add funding to this budget, but in the meantime he will grudgingly support this budget.

Mr. Pattacini will support the motion, but he believes we need to change the process. The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and

expecting a different result. He would like to see the administration work with Personnel & Finance to approach the budget in a different way. He thinks the Board should consider looking at supplemental funding as a part of the process. We should not use students as political weapons. A No vote on this budget, although he appreciates the point, will only damage the school district because the administration would then be on hold for decision making.

Acting Secretary Scappaticci moved to amend the motion by adding "in addition, suspend Board Policy 3510 - Facilities Maintenance and Policy 3511 - Educational Technology Maintenance". Ms. Maio seconded the amendment.

6/1 - Voted in favor of amending the motion.

The amended motion was called to vote:

6/1 - Voted in favor of the amended motion.

Mr. Pattacini thanked the administration and Personnel & Finance Committee for their work.

H. NEW BUSINESS

H.1. Playgrounds

Acting Secretary Scappaticci moved that the Board of Education approve the plans and specification for Playground Equipment for the Waddell Elementary School, dated May 7, 2018, prepared by TSKP Studio, and the cost estimate, dated February 6, 2018, from M.E. O'Brian, for submission to the Department of Administrative Services, Office of School Construction Grants, for Review of Final Plans.

7/0 - Voted in Favor.

H.2. School Uniforms

Mr. Pattacini reviewed that the Board heard an update from the administration about school uniforms and they are looking for direction from the Board. At the last meeting several Board members spoke against uniforms. The administration received one email in support of discontinuing uniforms.

Mr. Meggers heard from several parents, all in favor of disbanding uniforms. He feels uniforms inhibit a student's ability to express themselves. He also feels parents may feel financially strained with the cost of uniforms.

Ms. Maio has heard from parents not in favor of uniforms. The students are clearly not in favor of uniforms. There is no academic reason or strong studies that show an effect on academic progress. Middle school is a tough time for students and to have to adhere to a uniform that inhibits expression is difficult. She also appreciated the point made by the chair at the last meeting that uniforms do not represent all cultures practiced by our students.

Mr. Conyers wondered if this subject will require a policy change or just a vote. Mr. Geary reviewed that when the uniform initiative was begun it was done by a vote of the Board and so a vote is all that will be needed to end or continue it.

Mr. Conyers has heard from both sides regarding this issue. He will vote to rescind uniforms.

Ms. Stefanovicz has also heard from both sides with 4 against and 5 in favor of uniforms. In her personal opinion, she would vote no uniforms. However, as she has heard from more families in favor of uniforms she will vote for uniforms to continue.

Mr. Leon noted that six years ago administration put uniforms in place based on behavior, which was a huge issue. Parents came to speak for and against uniforms at that time. Tonight there is nobody here to speak for or against the issue. He also pointed out the students are not in favor of uniforms.

Mr. Conyers has heard from both sides on the issue. He wondered if it is possible to do another survey or some other way for the public to weigh in on

this issue. Mr. Pattacini noted that the administration regularly conducts climate surveys and that may be something they can add to the next one.

Acting Secretary Scappaticci moved for the Board to discontinue the practice of requiring school uniforms at Illing Middle School and Bennet Academy. Mr. Leon seconded the motion.

6/1 - Voted in favor of discontinuing uniforms.

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

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, supports the Consent Calendar, especial the IDEA grant. It is vital to support all students. He also enjoyed the presentation on the building projects by Mr. Luther. Mr. Stringfellow feels it is important to maintain the school buildings. Mr. Stringfellow, who is a non-parent by choice, wonders about the challenges of clothing without uniforms, such as ripped jeans, offensive tee-shirts, etc. He feels appearance counts and wonders about the repercussions of dress code violations (detention or being sent home). Mr. Stringfellow recommended a book on student safety, *Not So Fast*, about driving. He also recommended an article on the opiate epidemic in *Your Teen for Parents*.

Darlene Johns, 83 Doanes Street, is middle of the road regarding uniforms. She pointed out that special needs children often have trouble with uniforms (sensory issues) and some students have trouble fitting into uniforms, including her tall, skinny child. She also expressed that cost is a factor as well.

J. COMMUNICATIONS

None.

K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

Monday, May 21, 2018 - BOE Retreat

Tuesday, May 29, 2018 - Manchester High School Improvement Plan

Monday, June 11, 2018 - Adult Education Update

Monday, June 25, 2018 - Spring Data Update

Monday, July 9, 2018 - Close of School Update

Monday, August 27, 2018 - Opening of School Update

L. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Pattacini called for a motion to adjourn.

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

7/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment 8:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Scappaticci
Acting Board Secretary