

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting November 27, 2017 Lincoln

PRESENT: Conyers, Hagenow, Leon, Maio, Meggers, 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**

Superintendent Matthew Geary called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Mr. Geary. It was explained that the Board just came out of Executive Session where they had discussed union contracts.

A.3. **Election of New Board Chair and Board Secretary**

Ms. Stefanovicz nominated Chris Pattacini as Board Chair. Ms. Hagenow seconded the motion. There were no other nominations.

9/0 - Voted in Favor. Mr. Pattacini took over the meeting as Chair.

Mr. Scappaticci nominated Darryl Thames as Board Secretary.

Mr. Scappaticci noted he met Mr. Thames during campaigning in 2013 and knows him to be devoted to the students of Manchester. He loves the city and is a dedicated father and grandfather.

Mr. Leon seconded the motion nominating Mr. Thames.

Mr. Leon felt Mr. Thames would be a great representative for the Board and it would be a good training ground for him to take over as Chair in the future.

9/0 - Voted in Favor.

Mr. Pattacini thanked the Board for their support of himself and Mr. Thames as leaders.

A.4. Introduction of New Board Members

Ms. Tracy Maio and Mr. Peter Meggers were introduced and welcomed as new Board members.

A.5. Reaffirming of Board of Education Bylaws and Policies

Mr. Pattacini reviewed that each year the Board of Education Bylaws and Policies are reviewed and reaffirmed.

Secretary Thames moved to reaffirm the Board of Education Bylaws and Policies. Mr. Leon seconded the motion.

9/0 - Voted in Favor.

A.6. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

APPROVED – Minutes Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of November 13, 2017. Secretary Thames moved and Mr. Leon seconded the motion.

9/0 – Voted in favor.

B. COMMITTEE REPORTS

B.1. Personnel & Finance Committee

Ms. Hagenow reported the last meeting was held November 13, 2017 with herself, Mr. Leon, Mr. Thames, Mr. Geary and Ms. Clancy in attendance.

Ms. Clancy had reviewed the status of the 2017-2018 budget. The two areas of concern at this time are tuition and transportation. Ms. Clancy noted that approximately 50% of the previously frozen dollars have now been released and the remaining frozen funds will be used to cover deficits in the tuition and transportation lines. The State has approved a budget and Manchester has remained level funded in terms of ECS funding. ECS funding includes the Alliance Grant. There has been little guidance with respect to how to access the Alliance dollars. There was also discussion about deficits in the salary lines. These lines are reflecting negative balances because grant salaries were moved to the Board budget until such time as the State approved a budget. At this point we will begin to move salaries back to grants.

Ms. Clancy reviewed a revised copy of the 2018-2019 Budget Development Calendar. January workshop dates have been revised.

Ms. Clancy provided a copy of a Voluntary Retirement Incentive Plan document for the Committee to review. The incentive is the same as was offered to certified staff last year. The incentive will provide for a cash payment over a two year period to eligible participants who apply for and are accepted into the plan. The incentive will be brought to the full Board for approval this evening.

Ms. Clancy explained to the Committee that the current district-wide copier lease expires at the end of February 2018. It was discussed whether to extend the lease or bid the service in conjunction with the town.

The next Personnel & Finance Committee meeting will be held January 22, 2018.

C. CONSENT CALENDAR

Mr. Geary presented eight 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 Bowers Elementary School Administrative Computer Supplies and Materials account to Bowers Elementary School Telecommunications Equipment account in the amount of \$420
- Transfer from Manchester High School Library Media General Supplies and Materials account to Manchester High School Library media Dues and Fees account in the amount of \$50
- Transfer from Manchester High School Interscholastic Sports Athletic Supplies and Materials account to Manchester High School Interscholastic Sports Other Purchased Services account in the amount of \$1,050

C.3. Establish an appropriation for FY 17-19 for the Title III, Part A, English Language Acquisition and Language Enhancement Grant, to be funded by the Connecticut State Department of Education in the amount of \$51,365

C.4. Permission to apply for the period 3/1/2018-2/28/2019 for the Federal Head Start Grant

C.5. Establish an appropriation for the FY 17-19 for the Immigrant & Youth Education Program Grant, to be funded by the Connecticut State Department of Education in the amount of \$23,009

C.6. Approval of the Manchester Board of Education and Food Service Employees, Local #991 of Council #4, AFSCME, AFL-CIO Tentative Agreement (July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2020)

C.7. Approval of the Manchester Board of Education and Hall Monitors, Local #991 of Council #4, AFSCME, AFL-CIO Tentative Agreement (July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2020)

C.8. Approval to Change the Manchester Head Start Policy Council By-Laws to holding bi-monthly meetings, instead of monthly meetings

The Chairman called for a motion.

Secretary Thames moved and Mr. Leon seconded the recommendation to adopt the Consent Calendar.

9/0 - Voted in favor.

D. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

Patrick Doherty reported the annual Turkey Bowl Powder Puff game netted over 300 canned goods, which were donated to the MACC Shelter. The seniors won 12-6 against the juniors.

December 2nd saw the opening of the MHS Winter Sports season. Many of the athletes volunteered their time at the Little Manchester Road Race two weeks ago.

The Journalism class submitted a news episode for competition.

Mr. Leon wished Mr. Doherty well in his hockey season, noting Manchester joins with other towns for a combined team.

E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, spoke again about Christopher Columbus and giving credit to other European explorers around the world. He suggested a book about Marco Polo titled *From Venice to Xanadu*. In *Veteran's Magazine* there was an article about Native Americans, noting they make up 2% of the population. A memorial was erected and Mr. Stringfellow noted Native Americans have been patriotic despite their poor treatment. Mr. Stringfellow knows race is important and he is glad to see MHS is working on it. He suggested a book about the Obama presidency. He hopes to see an updated presentation on the Race Relations course at MHS, noting race is an issue even at the elementary level.

F. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART I

F.1. Budget Update

Mr. Geary reviewed that the State Budget was finally approved and Manchester's ECS funding is the same as previous. The Alliance Grant was originally \$3.8 million and the Governor reduced that to \$3.5 million. Mr. Geary

noted this number was reduced two times last year, so he is unsure of the final figure at this time. So as not to overspend, next year's grant application will reflect approximately \$3.2 million in necessary items, assuming similar cuts. Mr. Geary's presentation is available for review on the website. The goal was to keep current services in the face of massive reductions, noting he did not want any angst amongst the staff as the school year began.

Mr. Leon wondered if we should delay the workshops for next year's budget, since this year's budget is still being worked on. Mr. Geary feels comfortable with this year's budget at this point and next year's budget is due to the Town by mid-February, so we can't delay workshops too much. Mr. Leon wondered if next year's budget will be similar to this year's, with only necessary increases. Mr. Geary agreed, adding the early retirement incentive and projected costs associated with the closure of Robertson and 5th grade moving to the Cheney Bennet Academy. Mr. Leon thanked the administration for their hard work.

Mr. Conyers wondered what year we are in for the Alliance Grant. Mr. Geary noted the grant was initially a 5 year grant and last year was the 5th year. However the 2 year budget still has Alliance in it, so it looks like we can assume it will be around 2 more years.

Mr. Thames thanked the administration for their diligence in adjusting the budget. He reviewed that last year the Alliance Grant started at \$3.8 million and was then reduced twice. Mr. Geary explained that in addition to the reductions, which came in August and December, the first few years of the Grant we were able to carry over some unused funds. At this point we cannot carry over funds, as private donors got concerned about that. It is a balancing act to be able to spend all the funds, but not overspend if a late cut is made. The new budget will reflect monies to be spent late in the year, if a reduction is not made.

Mr. Thames asked about the MRA tuition and what the cost is per child. Mr. Geary reviewed for out of district students we charge \$65,000 a year, which offsets the cost of current employees at MRA. About a third of staff cost is paid for by tuition at MRA.

Ms. Hagenow wondered if the vacant positions, including the Illing Principal, are still frozen. Mr. Geary noted that some of the vacancies, such as late resignations at MHS and Illing, were absorbed by moving class schedules around and those positions will not be filled.

Mr. Scappaticci noted, under areas of concern, we are about \$700,000 off on tuition and wondered why so far off. Mr. Geary explained that we typically run about \$300,000 over in that line, so we are “really” only over about \$400,000, which equates to about 4 outplaced students. It is a difficult line to predict and Special Education is always requesting more funding and Mr. Geary always cuts their request. He noted if we cannot meet the needs of a student, outplacement costs between \$65,000-\$100,000 per student.

Mr. Pattacini noted the instructional coaches were reduced drastically last May and he wondered how it is going now. Mr. Geary reviewed there is obviously much less coaching happening, with 3 numeracy and 3 literacy coaches instead of 9 and 9. Coaches have less time with teachers and no new curriculum is being rolled out. We are trying to strengthen the current curriculum and look at unit assessments. There is also more demand on principals and teachers, especially with behavior management in class. Reducing the coaches hurts as anticipated. Mr. Geary noted that he always makes huge cuts to the original proposed budget before he presents a budget to the Board of Education, but if he presented the original requests we would need many more workshops in order to make those cuts.

Mr. Pattacini noted we have done a great job in Manchester keeping taxes low, but the community needs to understand the impact that has on our needs. We need to look at our real needs and add resources. He thanked the administration for their hard work on managing the budget amid all the ambiguity this year.

F.2. Smarter Balance/CMT/CAPT Update

Mr. Geary noted we will review the data for the year, but it takes time to see improvement, although he noted we do see growth in some areas.

Dr. Radikas presented the data, which is available on the website. In the Smarter Balance assessment, four of 11 schools showed an upwards trend (Keeney, Martin, Robertson and Waddell) and three of those schools are Title schools. A 0.8% increase for Special Education students was noted as typically we do not see any increase in that band. Across the district grade 4 black students improved 7.6% and ELL grade 4 students improved 9.2%. Dr. Radikas gave credit to Dr. Crespo, the Bilingual Coordinator, for moving tutors where the need is based on data. It was noted that all testing will be done on computers this year.

Ms. Stefanovicz asked for clarification of the charts.

Mr. Conyers talked about the stated goals year to year. Dr. Radikas pointed out that the test is given to grades 3-8 and grade 11 and the number of students shifts each year. We are making incremental changes and the assessment is changing again. Mr. Geary noted it is hard to present cohort data because there are so many students moving in and out.

Mr. Leon wondered, if we test a group in grade 3 do we know if they were with us in grades K, 1 and 2 or if they are new to us. That would let us know if we are making any progress on the students that are with us previous years.

Dr. Radikas noted the likelihood of a grade 3 non-reader being able to catch up is low and she pointed out that attendance impacts scores greatly, even tardiness.

Mr. Pattacini pointed out our numbers dropped, but the State also show a drop in numbers. He questions the value of running a test like that. Dr. Radikas highlighted that 3 of 4 schools showing an upward trend are Title Schools. She noted Middletown, which is a very similar town to us, showed very similar results. They also have a transient population. We should be sharing ideas on chronic absenteeism and behavior issues. Mr. Pattacini noted we added a person to help address chronic absenteeism and wondered how that is going. Mr. Geary noted one person is working on this currently, only being able to connect with the families of the top several attendance issues at each elementary school. We need to raise awareness of parents. School social workers cannot take on

attendance issues with having to support so many behaviors at this time. Dr. Radikas pointed out that even if a student is not chronically absent, but is chronically tardy they are missing out on something every day.

Mr. Pattacini asked about the triad schools and how they were matched. Dr. Radikas noted that those schools participating in APTT were matched (Bowers, Washington, Verplanck) and those schools moving were matched (Buckley, Waddell, and Robertson). We are trying to build bonds between both teachers and families.

In Math, **Dr. Radikas** pointed out that 4 of 11 schools showed an upwards trend, and three of those school are title schools (Keeney, Martin, Waddell, Washington and Illing).

Mr. Leon noted a dip in the ELA scores at Buckley. Dr. Radikas needs to investigate that.

Dr. Radikas noted the Science CMT is given in grade 5 and 8. While we maintained scores in 15-16, 17 saw a dip. We are moving towards next generation science standards and we do not "teach to the CMT". Next year there will be no CMT given and instead a new pilot test will begin, though no scores or data will be reported. The new inquiry based assessments require a lot of reading and multi-step directions.

Dr. Radikas noted the grade 10 CAPT scores stayed stable.

Ms. Hagenow asked about the 37 5th grade kids at Martin for CMT/CAPT. Mr. Geary noted that the number of students in grade 5 varies by school, with 18-20 per section and some schools have 2 sections, while some have 4.

Mr. Pattacini thanked Dr. Radikas for the update. Dr. Radikas noted that we want all of our students to be successful adults, which includes being kind to each other and making and keeping friends.

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

H. NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Geary recalled that last year we instituted a late Voluntary Early Retirement Incentive Plan. With the closure of schools coming up, we can reduce about 4-6 positions and if we are able to encourage retirements of those making top level (\$82-86K), we can fill new spots with salaries closer to the \$52K range. The Teacher's Contract requires notice by 12/31 for retirement. Last year those teachers that gave timely notice felt slighted by the late VERIP offer. There were 7 teachers that took advantage of VERIP last year.

Mr. Thames asked about the payout. Mr. Geary reviewed a \$10,000 cash payout is made either June 30 or July 1 the first year (depending on the needs of the budget year) and the following year an additional \$10,000 payment is made.

Secretary Thames moved that the Board of Education approve the Voluntary Early Retirement Incentive Plan with a retirement date of June 30, 2018 for eligible certified staff. Mr. Leon seconded the motion.

9/0 - Voted in Favor.

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

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, approved all the items in the Consent Calendar. He welcomed the two new Board members and Mr. Thames as the new Secretary. Mr. Stringfellow thought Mr. Geary's budget presentation was good and covered economic, civic and academic aspects. Mr. Stringfellow feels that everyone's voice should be heard, even those without children. He recommended an article in *TIME* magazine. Mr. Stringfellow noted that we have recently enrolled 14 students displaced from Puerto Rico and wondered if they will get extra time for testing. He suggested an article on ADHD in *Attitude* magazine and asked for a presentation from MARC, Inc.

J. COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Pattacini reminded us that the next Board meeting to be held December 11th will be a retreat, so there will be no actual Board meeting in December. He wished everyone a happy holidays.

K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

Mr. Conyers would like to see a focus on chronic absenteeism.

L. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Pattacini called for a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Scappaticci moved and **Mr. Thames** seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

9/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment 8:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Darryl Thames, Sr.
Board Secretary