

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting February 22, 2016 Lincoln

PRESENT: Hagenow, Jacobsen, Leon, Pattacini, Scappaticci, Stafford, Stefanovicz, 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: Pazda

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 February 9, 2016. Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Leon seconded the motion.

8/0 – Voted in favor.

Secretary Scappaticci moved to amend the agenda by adding a new item: 'Discussion regarding synthetic field' as Item G.1. under Unfinished Business. Mr. Leon seconded the motion.

8/0 - 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 Systemwide Science Dues and Fees account to Systemwide Science Instructional Supplies & Materials account in the amount of \$560
- Transfer from Systemwide Math Dues and Fees account to Systemwide Math Professional Development account in the amount of \$895
- Transfer from Systemwide Music Office Supplies and Materials account to Systemwide Music Dues and Fees account in the amount of \$554
- Transfer from Systemwide ELL Contracted Services account to Systemwide ELL Professional Development account in the amount of \$890
- Transfer from Systemwide Elementary Enrichment Printing and Advertising account to Systemwide Elementary Enrichment Instructional Supplies & Materials account in the amount of \$1,000
- Transfer from MHS Student Activities Contracted Services account to MHS Student Activities General Supplies & Materials account in the amount of \$1,227
- Transfer from Systemwide Science Field Trips account to Systemwide Science Instructional Supplies & Materials account in the amount of \$200

B.3. Permission to apply for the Robotics Education & Competition Foundation Grant in the amount of \$11,300 for FY 15-17

B.4. Permission to apply for the Heisman Scholars - Achieving by Reading Program Grant in the amount of \$220,000 for FY 15-16

B.5. Establish an appropriation for FY 15-17 for the General Improvements to Alliance Districts' School Building Grant Program in the amount of \$1,098,500

B.6. Establish an appropriation for FY 15-16 for the Instructors of the Handicapped (IOH) Pool Repairs at Manchester High School in the amount of \$229,000

B.7. Approval of donation to Manchester High School for "general use and purposes" from the estate of Ms. Virginia Ryan in the amount of \$117,250

B.8. Permission to apply for FY 16-17 for the Low-Performing Schools Bond Funding in the amount of \$500,000

The Chairman called for a motion.

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

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Leon asked Mr. Geary to speak about item #7, the donation. Mr. Geary reviewed that Ms. Ryan, who was a graduate of MHS, left a generous piece of her estate to MHS. Some of the items earmarked by the school are mentoring, scholarship money, and college and career readiness projects.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

C. COMMITTEE REPORTS

C.1. Personnel & Finance Committee

Mr. Leon reviewed the Committee met on January 25, 2016. In attendance were himself, Ms. Hagenow, Ms. Jacobsen, Mr. Thames, Mr. Geary, Mrs. Brooks, and Mr. Staye. Mr. Staye, our facilities director, had provided the Committee with information on loan programs for energy efficiency projects and the ability for municipalities to apply for a no-interest loan through Eversource. He would like to pursue participation in the Eversource No-Interest Loan Program. Mrs. Brooks informed Mr. Staye the Town would have to approve that type of agreement and the Committee was in favor of Mr. Staye pursuing the feasibility of this subject. Mrs. Brooks reviewed the December 31, 2015 Year-to-Date Budget Status Report with the Committee. The next meeting will be held March 14, 2016 at 5:30 p.m. at Bennet Academy.

D. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

D.1. Student Representative

Ms. Shania Stanton reported she is excited about spirit week this week at MHS.

D.2. PTA President Update

Ms. Christine Cardosa, Council President, gave a brief report. This is her first year as President, having been a part of the PTA for 12 years and serving in various positions through the years, both on local and Council PTAs. Her son is a 12th grader at MHS and her daughter is in Pre-K and will attend Waddell in the fall for Kindergarten. January 25th was the PTA Reflections Arts program, and the first place winners have moved on to the state competition. April 23, 2016 will be the Districtwide Science Fair held at Illing Middle School.

Ms. Cardosa reviewed some goals of the PTA Council this year, including improved communication, a newsletter, bimonthly updates to PTA leadership, and putting a link on the website. Their theme is "It takes teamwork". There is also a new committee, SNPTA (Special Needs PTA) which is an outreach

committee for things such as programs, funding, state and federal laws, and other subjects members face. The Outreach Committee will be establishing a mentoring committee, a dad's club, bullying prevention, and digital safety, etc. There is also a Family Engagement Committee which has already or will sponsor events such as family reading, fishing day, dad's day, and a health & wellness fair, among other fun events. Ms. Cardoso ended her update by thanking the members of the Board that had become PTA members this year, along with all parents and other PTA members.

E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, wished everyone a happy new year, as he was unable to come to the last couple of meetings. He pointed out that this is the 90th year of African American/Black History Month. He suggested some documentaries on CPTV along with articles in recent newspapers. On Showtime he liked the movie *Nation of Jones* with Matthew McConaughey. Mr. Stringfellow spoke about a forum on Black Lives Matter, and noted that every life counts. He also noted a lawsuit being brought against the gun manufacturer regarding the Sandy Hook shooting.

F. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART I

F.1. CAFE Communications Award

Mr. Geary introduced Donald Harris, Area Director for CAFE, along with Mr. Jim Farrell, who has been responsible for much of our communication work this year. Mr. Harris presented the award for Excellence in Educational Communications to Mr. Farrell and Mr. Pattacini. Mr. Pattacini thanked CAFE for the recognition and Mr. Farrell for his hard work.

F.2. Family Community Partnership

Mr. Geary introduced Dr. Scott Ratchford, who is in his second year in the Office of Family Community Partnership. Mr. Geary acknowledged Dr. Ratchford and his team, Erin Ortega, Latasha Turnquest, and Luis Moyano who were present this evening. Dr. Ratchford presented a Powerpoint, which is available on the website for viewing. The presentation outlined the recent CAFE walk-

throughs and surveys regarding how welcoming we are and are perceived to be by families and staff.

Mr. Leon noted the staff and family data was combined and he would like to see it separated. Dr. Ratchford stated he has that data, along with separation by school, and he will provide that information to the Board. His team is trying to determine how to best understand the data and it is the beginning of a dialogue.

Ms. Jacobsen wondered what percentage of staff and families actually completed the surveys. Mr. Geary stated approximately $\frac{1}{3}$ of the staff and 20% of the families participated.

Ms. Jacobsen asked about the difference between communication and information. Dr. Ratchford explained that information is what we provide to families and communication is how that information is communicated, ie via print newsletters, letters sent home, online, social media, etc. Ms. Jacobsen would like to see more participation in surveys. Dr. Ratchford noted they are working on ways to garner more participation.

Ms. Stefanovicz applauded the district investment that this represents. She participated in a walk-through at Bowers and felt it was very welcoming there.

Mr. Thames wondered if the survey was only digital. Dr. Ratchford noted it was available in paper form as well as a Spanish version.

Mr. Thames wondered how the results will be incorporated into the program. Dr. Ratchford has met with principals who have building based teams working on school improvement plans, along with dialogue with parent groups. In late Spring they will bring the Cafe people back to build more goals and analyze and form action steps.

Mr. Thames wondered if the children were surveyed. Dr. Ratchford noted Grade 3 through high school were given the climate survey. Mr. Thames noted the cookout earlier in the year at Squire Village was an example of how warm and

engaging our community is. Dr. Ratchford spoke about a couple of other events, including one at Washington School between Keeney and Washington families, and more events are in the works. A video of past events is available on the website.

Mr. Pattacini looked at the core belief slide and the three areas that are lower are capacity (staff) and also that the school is first. Mr. Pattacini wondered how we go after that and are we trying to go after that directly or do other things that will affect change here. Dr. Ratchford stated he is talking with school leaders to unpack what these beliefs mean and what the idea of capacity is all about. We all come with strengths and we have to learn to recognize what those are and build on them. One program underway includes math nights, which offer parents an opportunity to learn about the methods of common core math and offering ideas for what parents might do at home. Mr. Pattacini wondered if the survey will be an annual thing. Dr. Ratchford stated this work is ongoing.

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

G.1. Synthetic Field

Mr. Pattacini reviewed that the last few days have produced news stories questioning the use of synthetic turf fields. The Board of Directors will be discussing this item and Mr. Geary will be attending that meeting to provide the Board's view.

Mr. Geary reviewed the timeline regarding the field. In November 2014 the referendum provided funding for this project. Bids were done in early 2015 for an architectural engineering firm to design the project. The design was finalized this fall and approved by the Board last month. About a week ago the US Environmental Protection Agency announced they would launch a study around crumb rubber filled turf fields. Nothing has changed in terms of the studies reviewed by the committee, this is now in the news.

At the meeting last month the question of safety arose and Mrs. Brooks read the response of the project manager was read from the minutes of that meeting,

including the fact that there have been 75 third party reviewed papers done that show no adverse effect regarding the materials used.

Mr. Geary reviewed that thirty schools and towns in Connecticut have crumb rubber fields and he read the list.

Mr. Leon wondered what is expected from the Board this evening. Mr. Pattacini reviewed that Mr. Geary needs to represent the view of the Board when he meets with the town. If the Board has changed their mind about the field, the vote could be rescinded. If there are concerns, they need to be identified. We could also request a joint meeting with the Board of Directed if desired.

Mr. Leon stated there has been no new evidence regarding the fields since the vote. Recently Hamden became the 31st town to install the field. If we were to rescind the vote we have lost money and it doesn't make sense. Mr. Leon pointed out that our children go to away games and practices at many places that use these fields, so if we really thought that the field was dangerous, then to allow the children access to those fields would be hypocritical. Even state tournaments are held on these fields. His opinion has not changed. He is more concerned with the ill effects from lead paint or asbestos.

Mr. Scappaticci agreed with Mr. Leon. There is no evidence that the fields are dangerous and our own CT Department of Public Health expressed skepticism about the concerns. Organic fields require fertilizer, which is a carcinogen. There are risks no matter what.

Ms. Stefanovicz was previously 100% on board, but she does feel if the experts deem more investigation is warranted, that gives her pause. She would like to find out about the field that South Windsor currently switched to, which is an acrylic covered sand. She wondered what the cost and time impact would be. Ms. Stefanovicz also pointed out that Hamden recently used several precautionary measures during installation, including installing during cooler months and not using the field for three months after installation among other

measures. She wondered about taking air samples before, during and after installation as well.

Mr. Geary estimated the cost of the South Windsor plan would be about \$100-150,000 more. We could investigate the installation in cooler weather and not using the field for three months after.

Ms. Jacobsen stated we always need to keep the children's safety and best interests first and be mindful of how we move forward.

Mr. Pattacini supports the project and feels the Board always places student safety first and this pause to reflect on a previous decision reflects that. He felt this was a productive discussion.

H . NEW BUSINESS

None.

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

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, congratulated the Board on the CBE award. He felt Dr. Ratchford's presentation was excellent. He asked about families without children or who speak different languages and noted he has spoken to Dr. Ratchford about his concerns. Mr. Stringfellow recommended the book *Pearls of our Growing & Equality*. In *Better Manchester* there was an article on our village charm and he felt it was positive coverage. In *TIME's* February 22nd edition, Mr. Stringfellow recommended an article about President Obama and his daughter, who is starting college in the fall. He feels the President is an advocate for education. He also recommended an article in *Education Next*.

J. COMMUNICATIONS

None.

K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

Ms. Stefanovicz would like to discuss Board of Education liaisons to individuals schools.

L. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Pattacini called for a motion to adjourn.

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

8/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment 8:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Scappaticci
Board Secretary