

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting

January 8, 2018

Lincoln

PRESENT: Conyers, Hagenow, Leon, Maio, Pattacini, Stefanovicz, Thames

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

ABSENT: Meggers, Scappaticci

A. **OPENING**

A.1. & 2. **Meeting Called to Order**

Chairperson Pattacini called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m. All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Mr. Pattacini.

Mr. Pattacini explained that at the Board retreat they decided to add a welcoming statement to Board meetings to remind everyone of the role of the Board in supporting students.

A.3. **Secretary's Welcome**

Mr. Thames 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. Thames 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. Thames reviewed the mission of Manchester Public Schools, which is available for view on the website.

Mr. Thames 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. Management is the responsibility of the Superintendent. Students, parents, and families who have individual concerns should reach out to the Superintendent, who can help.

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. Mr. Thames went on to explain that decorum and courtesy are important elements in effective public meetings and he asked that the audience please silence their phones and refrain from talking while others are speaking. He noted that since it is legally mandated that proceedings are accurately recorded, the Board Chair may have to ask for order periodically, should noise begin to interfere with our recording capabilities.

Last, Mr. Thames 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 November 27, 2017. Secretary Thames moved and Mr. Leon seconded the motion.

7/0 – Voted in favor.

B. COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

C. CONSENT CALENDAR

Mr. Geary presented seven 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 System-wide Curriculum & Instruction Contracted Substitutes account to System-wide Curriculum & Instruction Instructional Supplies account in the amount of \$12,800.
- Transfer from System-wide Special Education Consultants account to System-wide Special Education Computer Supplies and Materials account in the amount of \$10,000
- Transfer from Elementary Enrichment Professional Development account to Elementary Enrichment Other Purchased Services account in the amount of \$2,720
- Transfer from Manchester High School Art Instructional Supplies and Materials account to Manchester High School Art Dues and Fees account in the amount of \$100
- Transfer from System-wide Information Services Other Purchased Services account to System-wide Information Services Computer Equipment account in the amount of \$60,000

C.3. Establish an appropriation for FY 17-19 for the Title I - Part A Improving Basic Programs Grant, to be funded by the Connecticut State Department of Education, in the amount of \$1,621,938

C.4. Establish an appropriation for the FY 17-19 for the Title II, Part A - Supporting Effective Instruction Grant, to be funded by the Connecticut State Department of Education, in the amount of \$249,895

C.5. Establish an appropriation for FY 17-18 for the Title IV, Part A - Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant, to be funded by the Connecticut State Department of Education in the amount of \$29,270

C.6. Establish an appropriation for FY 17-18 for the Bilingual Education Grant, to be funded by the Connecticut State Department of Education, in the amount of \$5,139

C.7. Establish an appropriation for the FY 17-19 for the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, Inc. Grant, to be funded by the Nellie Mae Foundation, Inc., in the amount of \$295,000

The Chairman called for a motion.

Secretary Thames moved and Mr. Leon seconded the recommendation to adopt the Consent Calendar as outlined in the agenda.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Pattacini asked the Superintendent to speak about Item #8, the Nellie Mae Grant. Mr. Geary explained that this is a private funder that has been funding student-centered learning at MHS over the last four years. The Foundation has now shifted its focus to equity, as have we. This is a planning grant, which came in a little higher than we applied for. This is a good sign of continued support for our work.

The vote was called.

7/0 - Voted in favor.

Mr. Pattacini thanked the administration and their staff for their continued work in securing grant funds.

D. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

Patrick Doherty noted that as the winter season has come upon us, both the boy's ice hockey team and basketball teams have combined for 11 wins and 0 losses this year. Senior hockey defenseman Garrett Pilney says that "It is very exciting for our teams to be so successful at this stage in the season. I am prepared for whatever the rest of the season has to offer for us."

The MHS athletic department is providing a fan bus to Newington Arena this Saturday night for the hockey team's annual "Military Appreciation Night" against Wethersfield High School. Customized jerseys along with a ceremony will be sure to make the night special for veterans, fans, and the teams themselves.

The basketball team is currently taking on town rival East Catholic at East Catholic High School. Both teams are undefeated thus far.

Tickets for this years Snoball Dance will be on sale for this week and this week ONLY. The dance is scheduled for the night of January 27th at 7:00, at Maneeley's of South Windsor.

Before winter vacation, the MHS concert band, orchestra, and choirs took to the stage to perform their own Christmas music. As a spectator of the event, Patrick could see the hard work of the performers is really paying off and shows improvement across the year.

Joey Pearl finished first in the Rhode Island Classic with a 3000m time of 9:07, **the fourth fastest time in history**. The girls Distance Medley team of Corinne Glenney, Hannah Sullivan, Kate Hedlund, and Jonaye Williams set a new school record last weekend with a time of 13:06 at the Elm City invitational. Hannah Sullivan claims that "It's awesome to see how all of our hard work pays off and how we all worked hard together to break the record as a team!" Good luck to indoor track as their season continues.

Last, Mr. Doherty reported that MHS students participated in the CT Human Rights & Youth Action Summit on December 18th. A number of students presented action research projects around the "Right to Identity" they had worked on in Mr. Skrzypiec's class throughout the semester. They also had the chance to work in small groups with Conard, Hall and Darien High School students to create "Plans of Action" to address big global issues around identity.

E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, recommended the movie *Darkest Hour*, which is about Churchill. He noted the 50th anniversary of the Tet Offensive is this month and suggested an article about the Vietnam War. Mr. Stringfellow suggested the

book *Across That Bridge: A Vision For Change and the Future of America* by John Lewis, who was a follower of Dr. King, whose dream we should be living. Mr. Stringfellow noted that Dr. King died 50 years ago. Mr. Stringfellow recommended CPTV Code Talkers documentary from November and an article in *Smithsonian* magazine about 1968.

Ms. Margaret Crone, 494 East Center Street, asked how the Board decides how to distribute grants. She asked what the Nellie Mae Foundation is and what is meant by inequity. Ms. Crone also wondered what percentage of children under age 12 go home to no adult on half days. She has heard of a “no touch” policy for teachers and wondered if that was true.

Mr. Pattacini explained that public comment is not a question and answer session, however Mr. Geary will quickly answer a few of those questions. Mr. Geary reviewed that Nellie Mae is the largest philanthropic organization in New England and they typically help high school students. Their goal is for 80% of high school students be college or career ready by 2020. As for grant funds, grant applications require plans and proposals that detail how funds can be spent. Mr. Geary noted that on scheduled half days the after school program MELC is open. Regarding the supposed “no touch” policy, that does not exist, however Mr. Geary noted that all adults should be careful and responsible in regards to physical proximity to students, however he expects students are receiving hugs from teachers and that is okay. Adults should use good judgement in regards to physical contact. In regards to physical restraints, which are sometimes needed for safety purposes, there is a clear process to be followed.

F. SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT – PART I

F.1. 2018-19 Budget Proposal

Mr. Geary noted this has been the most difficult budget since he has been here. The state funding information is still coming in and the budget is a work in progress. He noted it is not wise to push back the process, as the budget proposal has to be to the town by mid-February, though we are struggling with uncertainty.

Mr. Geary is asking for a 4.4% increase in the budget. In the 16/17 School Year the Board returned \$320,000 to the town to help mitigate the reduction in state

funding. Last year, the budget was only increased by 0.75%, with no tax increase.

Mr. Geary reviewed the budget for this year has currently been frozen due to a shortage in the tuition line, which covers tuition for magnet schools, vocational schools and private placements. There is a shortfall of approximately \$1,891,503. Since the 14/15 school year the number of students in private placements has varied from 48 to 53 students, with this year being 48. Magnet students in CREC magnets or Voag schools has varied from 522 in 14/15 to 543 in 17/18. The number of students in Hartford Public Magnets, which do not charge tuition, has moved from 486 in 14/15 to 699 in 17/18.

Mr. Geary reviewed that MRA's income from tuition and a change to Medicaid billing will both help with the tuition overage by a combined approximate \$400,000.

Mr. Geary noted another concern that resulted in a budget freeze is the transportation line which is about \$250,000 over budget. That was expected with the last minute change in companies last summer.

Mr. Geary's proposed budget for 18/19 is \$116,650,479, which is an increase of \$4,920,252 (4.4%). The full budget proposal can be found on the website.

Mr. Geary reviewed that the TOMMIF Fund, which is our self-insured medical fund, has about \$22 million. An analysis done this past year showed the fund should have about \$17 million. This surplus can only be used for health insurance costs. The town has proposed a medical insurance "holiday" for employees and the town and Board for December 2018. This would mean employees would not have to have their deduction from their paycheck and the Board would see a savings of about \$750,000. However, Mr. Geary explained that even though this savings would result in an actual budget increase of \$115,900,479 (3.7%) he did not want to lower the line item under medical insurance costs as this is a one time savings and if the line item is reduced so drastically then next year it will look like a huge increase.

Mr. Thames asked for a clarification of the holiday and Mr. Geary explained that for one paycheck next December the payroll deduction for medical insurance costs would not happen from employees paychecks and the town and Board would not contribute to the TOMMIFF fund. That would result in the Board saving about \$750,000.

Ms. Stefanovicz underscored that the bottom line is that the actual increase to the budget would be 3.7% and Mr. Geary agreed.

Mr. Leon wondered if we might lose less children to magnets in grade 6, as they will now enter Bennet in grade 5. Mr. Geary stated that is a definite possibility, though it may cause a space issue, it will be a good issue to deal with.

Mr. Geary explained that due to the closure of Robertson and the move of 5th grade to Bennet 5 teaching positions will be eliminated. However, 4 special education teachers will be added to Bennet and 2 special education teachers will be added to MHS. One reading specialist is slated for Highland Park, as they currently share a specialist with Buckley. The budget also restores unfilled positions that were frozen last year.

Mr. Geary explained that the approved amount last year for the Alliance Grant was \$3,821,324 until the Governor cut \$250,000. The actual amount received was \$3,571,324. Other grant funding is the Priority School Districts Funds of \$415,188; Extended School Hours Funds of \$125,223; School Accountability/Summer School Grant of \$148,647; and Nellie Mae Equity Root Causes of \$295,000.

It was reviewed that the Title I funds are \$1,621,938 and the IDEA funding is \$1,686,390, both of which are down \$75,000. MRA tuition income is about \$1,250,000 and the Hartford Foundation grant income is \$576,000.

Mr. Pattacini noted that the first Budget Workshop will be held this Wednesday at MHS, Room 293 from 6-8 p.m. He encouraged Board members to submit any questions to the administration as soon as possible so answers can be prepared.

Ms. Maio noted the state funding cuts have impacted the magnet schools and they can raise tuitions to counter that, which causes a higher costs to towns. Mr. Geary noted most magnets have raised tuition about \$150 or more this year, with Two Rivers raising tuition about \$350 per student.

Mr. Leon would like to see an outline of what we pay for private tuition placements.

Ms. Hagenow requested to see a list of items covered by "Other Purchased Services" for the budget workshop.

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

H. NEW BUSINESS

None.

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

J. COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Conyers reviewed a Buckley student, Nadia Malewski, recently published a book called *Rachel's Journal*. She is 9 years old.

K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

Mr. Pattacini noted the agenda lists all planned agendas for the next year. Mr. Geary pointed out that the next meeting the anticipated Teacher Evaluation update will be moved. Mr. Pattacini reviewed this list is a moving target, but gives an idea of planned agendas. The list is below.

- Monday, January 22, 2018 -P&F Committee - Teacher Evaluation Update, Update on Teacher Attendance and Climate
- Monday, February 12, 2018 -Policy Committee - 2018-19 Budget Questions, Update on NEASC
- Monday, February 26, 2018 -C&I Committee - Keeney School Improvement Plan, Opportunities for College Credit at MHS
- Monday, March 12, 2018 -B&S Committee - Fall / Winter Data Update

- Monday, March 26, 2018 -P&F Committee - HP School Improvement Plan
- Monday, April 23, 2018 -Policy Committee - Academics Update
- Monday, April 30, 2018 -C&I Committee - Illing School Improvement Plan
- Monday, May 14, 2018 -B&S Committee - Update on Building Projects
- Tuesday, May 29, 2018 -P&F Committee - Manchester High School Improvement Plan
- Monday, June 11, 2018 -Policy Committee - Adult Education Update
- Monday, June 25, 2018 -C&I Committee - Spring Data Update
- Monday, July 9, 2018 -No subcommittee - Close of School Update
- Monday, August 27, 2018 -No subcommittee - Opening of School Update

L. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Pattacini called for a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Leon moved and Ms. Hagenow seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

7/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment 8:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Darryl Thames, Snr.
Board Secretary