

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting

April 23, 2018

Lincoln

PRESENT: 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: Conyers

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

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

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 March 26, 2017. Secretary Thames moved and Mr. Leon seconded the motion.

8/0 – Voted in favor.

B. COMMITTEE REPORTS

B.1. Policy Committee

Ms. Maio reviewed the last meeting was held March 26, 2018 at Highland Park School with Mr. Conyers, Ms. Maio and Mr. Geary. The Committee reviewed and edited the Drug/Alcohol Policy, Student Accident Policy, and Homeless Students Policy. The Committee approved the deletion of the Non-Instructional Operations Policy and approved new policies on Restraint and Seclusion of Students and IDEA - Alternative Assessments.

The Committee also discussed the school uniform issue and reviewed staff, parent and student survey results.

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. Transfer of Funds

- Transfer from Washington Elementary School Administrative Office Supplies and Materials account to Washington Elementary Utilities Telecommunications Equipment account in the amount of \$288.
- Transfer from Waddell Social Studies Field Trips account to Waddell Social Studies Dues and Fees account in the amount of \$380

C.3. Establish an appropriation for FY 17-18 for the School Accountability - Summer School Grant in the amount of \$148,647

C.4. Establish an appropriation for FY 17-18 for the Alliance District Grant in the amount of \$3,821,324

C.5. Establish an appropriation for the FY 17-18 for the Priority School District Grant in the amount of \$415,188

The Chairman called for a motion.

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

8/0 - Voted in favor.

D. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

Nabila Hoor Un Ein reviewed that 17 students in the Student Travel Club went to France and Spain over spring break. On April 24th the Juniors will take the SATs. On Thursday, April 26th, the Public Safety Academy will present the "What's on your mind" symposium. Mr. MHS will be held Friday the 27th and 20 students will compete to see who takes home the title. The class of 2018 is having a carwash Saturday the 28th. A team from MHS is participating in Rebuilding Together this Saturday, to help beautiful properties for many elderly and disabled citizens.

Mr. Leon thanked Nabila for her report and pointed out that Mr. Scappaticci held the Mr. MHS title in 1999.

E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, noted that the 50th anniversary of the death of MLK and also of Robert Kennedy is approaching. Mr. Stringfellow noted we need to recognize the achievements and contributions of women and recommended a book by Ethyl Paine along with a book on MLK titled *Radical King*. He also recommended an article on Vietnam detailing women's contributions and noted that Winnie Mandela recently passed away.

F. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART I

F.1. Teacher Evaluation Update

Mr. Geary introduced Vonetta Romeo-Rivers, Director of Performance, Evaluation and Talent. She presented a PowerPoint outlining the changes to the Teacher Evaluation program, which is available on the website.

Mr. Leon wondered if the pilot participants are the most experienced teachers. Ms. Romeo-Rivers stated there is a mix of tenured teachers and those with 3-4 years experience.

Ms. Stefanovicz felt the new process is well thought out with lots of opportunity for feedback. She wondered what the material changes were. Ms. Romeo-Rivers pointed out that the changes are outlined in red in the handout. There are 4 domains teachers are evaluated on and among those domains there are 14 attributes. Previously evaluators looked for all 14 attributes in their sessions. Now they no longer need to see all 14 immediately, just one or more from each of the 4 domains.

Ms. Stefanovicz asked for clarity on the members of the PEDAC Committee. Ms. Romeo-Rivers noted that participants on the PEDAC Committee represent several schools and are asked to take back the information to their schools to provide guidance and suggestions.

Mr. Thames asked for clarity on the goal setting process. Ms. Romeo-Rivers reviewed the data is looked at and teachers get to know their students. They meet with grade level partners and department heads in their PLCs. Teachers also talk with their administrators and set SLO (Student Learning Objectives). The goals must be rigorous and ambitious. Goals are set in November and then at the mid-year conference with the administrator in February the goals can be adjusted as needed.

Mr. Thames asked for an example of an SLO and how it is measured. Ms. Romeo-Rivers noted a struggle with measurability. There are rubrics for the teachers and growth is shown along a continuum. In the past teachers might say something along the lines of "70% of the class will ...", now they will select a few representative students from the class for a more detailed goal.

Mr. Pattacini wanted to talk about the level of effort required of administrators before and with the current evaluation process. Ms. Romeo-Rivers noted that most administrators evaluate about 25 teachers, though some have more. New teachers require more evaluations, which is a significant amount of work. With the changes made to the evaluation it makes the process more meaningful. Mr. Geary added that he appreciates that he no longer needs to see all points in all the domains in an observation. Mr. Pattacini noted an evaluation is only as good as the quality time spent and he is encouraged and excited by this collaborative process.

F.2. Update on 2018-2019 Budget

Mr. Geary noted that the requested 2018-2019 budget was \$116,434,107. The Town Manager made an initial cut and then the Board of Directors cut even more, leaving an adopted budget of \$113,406,180, only a 1.5% increase. Mr. Geary reviewed a list of potential cuts to the budget to accommodate the lower adopted amount. Budget workshops will be held next month to discuss the budget in depth.

Ms. Maio felt the Board of Education presented a very reasonable budget and the Board of Directors said no. They have kicked the can down the road and this impacts all students. We are increasing the number of students at Waddell and will not be able to budget extra behavioral support. Ms. Maio stated that if they want to support education they need to stop pretending about it.

Mr. Leon thanked Mr. Geary for consistently trying to figure out how to cut corners without impacting the students, but all cuts impact the students. Mr. Leon pointed out that a 1.5% budget increase is about 1-2% lower than surrounding towns increases. He feels Manchester can afford more. Next year the teachers and administrator contracts are up for renewal. The Board of Directors sits on the negotiation committee and sign off on the contracts and

then they turn around and do not fund the budget properly. That is not leadership. A few years ago we showed the community about \$22 million in deferred maintenance in our buildings. This type of budget is how that happens.

Mr. Leon pointed out that one of the things brought up by the Board of Directors was the number of administrators in the district. Mr. Leon noted that we have about 8% administrators compared to those towns around us with 9%. Mr. Leon also pointed out that the price of gas is rising and that will affect the budget. He wants to apologize to the Town of Manchester for not giving them what we need.

Mr. Thames spoke of the parents and children. We asked for their vote, we listened to their questions, and we promised a first class education. We listened to their needs and promised to help. We heard them say they wanted improvements in literacy and we challenged the Superintendent to come up with a way to achieve that. The solution was a supercharged program that now we must slash because of the budget. Mr. Thames noted that it is thought that the number of jail cells is predicated by the number of children reading at proficiency in grade 3. If we value our children we will put the money where it will help.

Ms. Stefanovicz appreciates the nips and tucks to the budget Mr. Geary made to guesstimate where to make cuts. It reminds her of the parent who has worn out, old shoes, but buys their children new ones. To the Board of Directors, Ms. Stefanovicz noted they do not represent us well in the support of education. She is repulsed by the fact that teachers must have Go Fund Me accounts or pay for supplies out of pocket.

Ms. Hagenow noted the kids will suffer with this budget. If we do not fix things they will fall apart.

Mr. Scappaticci noted this is his 7th year on the Board. He was pleased that the Board of Education worked in a bipartisan fashion to recommend this budget. When he first started we were looking at \$22 million in deferred maintenance issues and now we will be forced to defer more items. One of America's greatest achievements is its public education system. It is sad that our Board of Directors does not appreciate or understand how precious that is. Mr. Scappaticci reminds

the Board of Directors, especially the Democrats on the Board, of the HeadStart, the 1965 Higher Education Act, and the 1965 Secondary Education Act. Now we cannot even fund public education in our own town.

Mr. Pattacini sees two items in the list of potential budget cuts as non-operational. Those include 2 retirements not originally known when the original budget was adopted (\$60k) and a savings in electricity of about \$75k. Those two items barely cover the additional transportation costs anticipated with the movement of schools and grades. He feels we need community input. In the town charger it says we can go back to the Board of Directors and ask for more money and they can change the budget. We need the community to tell the Board of Directors to do that. Our flexibility and ability to plan have been limited by these cuts. Also, there is still uncertainty in state funding looming. Mr. Pattacini is disappointed in the Board of Directors. He feels we need to make a formal request for more money and we need community support for that. He also thinks we need to look at the process by which the Board of Directors adopted the budget. Other than the original cut of \$350,000 by the General Manager, the Directors gave us no feedback on why they cut so much more from the budget.

Mr. Geary noted that many of the proposed cuts to the budget will require the Board to waive several funding policies. Mr. Geary reviewed that last year, in good faith, the Board of Education returned \$316,000 to the town in appreciation of the cuts to state funding. This year there was talk of possibly returning \$250,000. Mr. Geary has told the town that will not be happening. Mr. Geary feels we have been diligent in being fiscally responsible and he suspects the Directors will recommend cutting 8 administrators. That would mean cutting assistant principals at many schools, though many of those positions are grant funded so cuts would have no impact on the budget.

Mr. Pattacini pointed out that administrators share the load in dealing with student behaviors and the community wants more behavior support, not less. They also share the load in teacher evaluations.

Mr. Leon reviewed the money we returned to the town last year and that we have been fiscally responsible and transparent in good faith. We have fewer

administrators already than the 10 surrounding towns. Teacher evaluations require administrators. The public needs to understand that the Board of Directors is grasping at straws that do not exist.

Ms. Maio noted that this year's budget (17/18) saw the lowest increase in years (0.75%) **and we gave money back**. Last year we only added contractual obligations and the Board of Directors still said no. They consistently have underfunded education over the last several years. Last year the community told them not to cut education and they still did.

Mr. Pattacini stated it is incumbent upon the Board of Education to advocate for a way to support our students.

F.3. Update on School Uniforms

Mr. Geary noted that he reviewed survey results as well as notes from 2011 and 2012 when the uniform pilot was started. Teachers and parents support uniforms in grades 5-8. In grades K-4 the support was indifferent at best. Students hate uniforms. Options for uniforms include grades K-8, 5-8 or no uniforms at all. Mr. Geary defers to the Board of Education for guidance on how to proceed on the uniform issue.

Mr. Leon pointed out he is opposed to uniforms, especially in middle school only. Children should have a voice too and we should listen to their voice.

Ms. Hagenow thought uniforms would have an impact on behavior and learning, but she hasn't seen any conclusive evidence of that and at this point would vote to eliminate uniforms.

Ms. Maio noted that the survey results showed that adults felt uniforms reduce peer pressure, but students did not feel that way (shoes, backpacks, etc). She wondered if any problems are found on dress-down days at the middle school. Mr. Geary sees no correlation between uniforms and achievement or behavior. He did point out that if uniforms are stopped there will still be a dress code. Ms. Maio also pointed out that there may be sensory issues with uniforms with some special needs students and she sees no evidence to compel her to want uniforms.

Mr. Scappaticci actually likes uniforms, however if there is no evidence that they impact behavior or achievement, maybe we should not spend our energy on this topic.

Ms. Stefanovicz doesn't have an opinion either way about uniforms, though she leans towards no uniforms. She is, however, intrigued by the number of parents in favor of uniforms and would like them to be heard.

Mr. Pattacini noted he had cast the deciding vote to continue the uniform program several years ago because he felt it would help with school climate and allow staff members to be clear on dress code standards. He senses that is no longer the case and he does not see the value in continuing them. He also noted that the uniform represents certain cultures, but not all. He anticipates that at the next meeting the Board will adopt a decision about uniforms and he encourages the community to express their thoughts.

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Mr. Geary reviewed the recommended changes to policies.

G.1. Policy Recommendations

a. Policy 6164 - Drug and Alcohol Use by Students

The key change here is to remove tobacco use by athletes as part of the policy.

Ms. Stefanovicz asked about tobacco use on campus. Mr. Geary noted that for students caught with tobacco on the property the punishment may be a fine or a Saturday detention. With other drugs a student might be suspended and be required to attend counseling. This policy removes tobacco as part of the section on student athletes so as to make the consequences of tobacco the same for athlete and non-athlete students.

b. Policy 5141.1 - Revised Students Accident Policy

The key change here is to change names of specific positions (which have changed over the years) to list the Office of Finance and Management.

c. Policy 5118.1 - Homeless Students

The changes to this policy reflect state statute changes. Homeless students cannot be prohibited from accessing their records (ie due to fines or other issues). It also addresses the rights of incarcerated parents.

Mr. Pattacini noted these policy changes will come back for approval on the next agenda.

H. NEW BUSINESS

None.

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

Ms. Stephanie Knybel, 138 Bobby Lane, appreciates the hard work Mr. Geary spent working on the budget. She did express concern over why we didn't know about the increase in transportation costs for next year. Ms. Knybel also expressed concern that there are no crossing guards at Main and Center, especially with 5th graders walking to Bennet next year. Ms. Knybel also did not appreciate the "dig" about cutting athletic directors at the college level, noting our Mayor is the Athletic Director at Southern. She pointed out that the mayor was not the sole vote on cutting the budget, it was a majority vote.

Mr. Geary noted that our bus company is new and was hired at the last minute. They can achieve the routes next year without an increase in buses, however that would mean putting 70-80 students on a bus and he is not comfortable with that idea. As for crossing guards at Main & Center, we do not currently have students crossing there.

J. COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Leon acknowledged Ms. Knybel's remarks and called out the mayor directly instead of beating around the bush. The mayor is supposed to be the leader of our town and represent our town. Our town told him they want education made a priority and he didn't listen. The mayor does not communicate with the Board of Education and Mr. Leon feels he is doing a poor job leading our town.

Ms. Stefanovicz mentioned security issues and recent news of school shootings and offered a prayer of protection for our children.

K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

Mr. Scappaticci noted an error in the date of the 5/30 Board Retreat...that is a Wednesday not a Monday.

L. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Pattacini called for a motion to adjourn.

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

8/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment 9:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Darryl Thames, Snr.
Board Secretary