

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting

July 13, 2020

Lincoln Center/Virtual Meeting

PRESENT: Gundersen, Heinrich, Hughes, Pattacini, Patterson, Scappaticci, Stefanovicz, Thames

ALSO PRESENT: Superintendent of Schools Geary, Deputy Superintendent Curriculum & Special Services Radikas, Director of Finance & Management Clancy, Director of Human Resources Sone-Moyano.

ABSENT: Meggers

A. OPENING

A.1. & 2. Meeting Called to Order

Chairperson Thames called the meeting back to order at 7:04 p.m. following an executive session that took place at 5:30 p.m. All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Mr. Thames.

A.3. Secretary's Welcome

Mr. Pattacini stated that as Secretary of the Board of Education, he wished to welcome the online viewers to this regular meeting of the Board of Education. 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. Pattacini 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. For the public speak section, speakers are asked to sign up in advance. If a member of the public is not able to virtually attend this meeting, they are welcome to reach out to the Superintendent via email.

Mr. Pattacini thanked the public for their interest in this evening's meeting and the Manchester Public Schools. He is proud of the work happening in Manchester.

A.4. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

APPROVED – Minutes Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of June 22, 2020. Secretary Pattacini moved and Mr. Heinrich seconded the motion.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

B. COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

C. CONSENT CALENDAR

Mr. Geary presented two 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. Establish an appropriation for the Elementary and Secondary School Education Relief (ESSER) funding for the FY 19-21 in the amount of \$1,540,831

The Chairman called for a motion.

Secretary Pattacini moved and Mr. Scappaticci seconded the recommendation to adopt the Consent Calendar as outlined in the evening's agenda.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

D. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

E. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

E.1. Buckley Elementary School Renovation Update

Mr. Geary reviewed that the Buckley School Project is on schedule. He introduced Randall Luther from TSKP Studio to review the current status. Mr. Luther showed drawings of the changes to the Buckley site and building being submitted to the state for approval. He reviewed that the bidding should happen at the end of the year and in the spring or summer of 2021 we will start construction, with the project finishing up in summer 2022.

Mr. Scappaticci asked about a huge area, larger than a crawl space, that runs under the upper floor. Mr. Luther noted that the large area, which is about 6 feet high, is not habitable for classrooms, but works in our favor anyway. This project is required to be Net Zero (or as close as possible) per the referendum, and that area is the perfect place to put the heat pumps and duct work that will be needed to achieve that net zero status.

Mr. Scappaticci asked about the large tree and memorial that is in front of the school. At this time, Mr. Luther believes we will be able to keep that area untouched. However, he pointed out that because the school entrance is being relocated, the area the memorial is in will no longer be public space, being located in the bus loop/staff parking area. It is possible the memorial will be relocated after discussion with the family.

Mr. Pattacini loves the design. He wondered if there was a process for staff and community input. Mr. Luther stated that there has not been a lot of community input due to the current pandemic. He has worked with staff and administration. Mr. Luther stated that this is the time to be getting input. He noted that the superintendent may need to put together some groups to discuss this. Mr. Pattacini likes the open design and the new front, which is sharp and inviting. However, he feels the current front (which is the view that faces the street) looks a bit industrial and empty. He wondered if we could make that

area more interesting to match the rest of the welcoming building. Mr. Luther agreed it was difficult on that side as the library is in that area so there are no windows on that front wall.

Ms. Stefanovicz thought the design was fantastic. She agreed with Mr. Pattacini about the current front needing to be more visually interesting. Ms. Stefanovicz wondered if we had surveyed the staff currently at Verplanck and Waddell to see if there are things they wish they could change in their newly renovated buildings. Mr. Luther thought that was a great idea.

Mr. Gundersen asked about the rear parent parking lot, wondering why that was kept. It was explained by Mr. Luther that the rear lot is accessed from a different neighborhood and primarily used for Parks & Rec parents on the weekends and evenings. It is not a lot that would be used by people trying to access the school in general.

Mr. Geary reminded us that this project goal is a net zero building and many decisions made were to achieve that goal, which is listed in the referendum language.

F.2. Fall Planning Update

Mr. Geary reviewed the schools will open in late August. Currently the Governor has stated that all students will return to school, with a remote learning option offered to families that do not feel comfortable with in-person learning. Mr. Geary's full report is available on the website.

Mr. Pattacini appreciated the thoughtfulness of the report and plan. He feels it is important to deliver effective education for all of our children and it is a daunting task in these times. Mr. Pattacini acknowledged that having students wear masks and maintain social distance will be problematic. He wondered if the state had provided perspective on how flexible we will be and who monitors Manchester in terms of deciding whether we will revert to all remote learning at any point. Mr. Geary anticipates further state guidance to be forthcoming and noted that some decisions may be left to towns to determine, while some decisions will remain dictated by the state. We have to have our draft plans to

the state by July 24th. Mr. Pattacini wants our staff and students to remain safe and would like access to data for real-time decision making.

Mr. Geary reviewed that parents are being asked to choose in-person or remote learning for their student and maintain that decision for the first half of the school year, although special circumstances can change that. Remote learning will look different this year than last and more live sessions with required attendance will be achieved. There will be more of a schedule this year.

Mr. Geary reviewed he had gotten a lot of feedback from parents wondering why they needed to make a decision so soon. He understands some people are still unsure about whether they want to send their children back to school but we need some idea of how many students will be in person versus remote learners so we can plan.

Mr. Geary reviewed that we will not be checking all student's temperatures and he hopes families will keep their children home if they are unwell. Some parents suggested the need for bus monitors to help maintain social distance and mask compliance, but Mr. Geary stated it is unlikely we would be able to staff all buses as it is difficult to find bus monitors to work.

Mr. Geary noted he is looking into tents to use during inclement weather for outdoor mask breaks.

There is currently no definitive plan regarding sports or afterschool activities. For those families that choose remote learning but do not have internet access we do have some hotspots available. If sports programs run, students who are doing remote learning are still eligible to participate in sports.

Currently the responses indicate about 67% of students will be participating in person and 32% remotely. Of those students who will be in buildings, those that qualify for bussing show that about half will provide their own transportation and half will take the bus. Mr. Pattacini wondered if parents were told the expectations of in-person learning and remote learning in their survey request. Mr. Geary stated he painted an accurate picture for families to make informed

decisions. He stated that even though only about half the eligible students will be riding buses, he will keep the number of buses the same so hopefully many will run at half capacity.

Mr. Pattacini wondered about a hybrid model and why that has not been offered as an option to towns. Mr. Geary had originally started planning in his mind that a hybrid would be the best option, with a childcare component. However, the Governor has stated that the only options currently are full time in person or remote learning. There is currently no plan to waive the 180 day/900 hour school requirement, so we cannot currently reduce the number of days of instruction.

Mr. Pattacini wondered about the impact of the pandemic to our budget. Mr. Geary reviewed there is \$1.5 million in Cares money that we will apply for to help with needed supplies for the coming year. We are currently looking into how much of this money needs to go to parochial schools in town. We also may have staffing issues if there are medical reasons staff may not return. We are hoping to pre-purchase some needed supplies with current year-end funds, though we are still waiting on some billing to come in so those funds are not currently available.

Mr. Hughes liked the flexibility of remote learning in the spring, allowing families to sleep in and make up their own hours. Mr. Geary noted that this fall learning will look different, with set hours, though he did note they may start a little later in the morning than live school. Attendance in the spring was sporadic so attendance will be required in the fall with more live teaching and more structure.

Mr. Geary suggested we have an extra Board meeting August 10th to discuss the status at that time, prior to the start of the school year. He will get back to the Board with a confirmation that the meeting can be scheduled.

F.3. U.S.D.A. Community Eligibility Provision Program

Mr. Geary reviewed the eligibility for a town-wide free breakfast/lunch program. At the current time the state would reimburse Manchester for 84% of the meals,

and that number may rise a bit. With the typical unpaid lunch amounts, it seems feasible to make the whole district free with this community eligibility. Mr. Aldi, Director of Food & Nutrition Services, noted the certification is good for four years.

F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

G. NEW BUSINESS

G.1. Superintendent's Evaluation

Mr. Thames read parts of the Superintendent's evaluation, in which Mr. Geary scored efficient or highly efficient across the board.

Secretary Pattacini moved that the Board of Education adopt the written evaluation of the Superintendent of Schools for the 2019-2020 School Year. Mr. Scappaticci seconded the motion.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

Mr. Pattacini thanked Mr. Geary for ensuring every child in Manchester receives a quality education and for his transparent communication with parents.

G.2. Superintendent's Contract

Secretary Pattacini moved for the Board to authorize the Board Chair to enter into a contract for the Superintendent from July 1, 2020-June 30, 2023. Mr. Scappaticci seconded the motion.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

G.3. U.S.D.A. Eligibility Provision

Secretary Pattacini moved to allow Mr. Nick Aldi, Director of Food & Nutrition Services, to apply for district-wide USDA's Eligibility Provision for all Manchester Public Schools. Mr. Scapaticci seconded the motion.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

H. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Sarah Siameh, 171 Wetherell Street, has three students at Keeney and expressed her disappointment that there are no teachers of color at the school. She acknowledged there are several staff members of color at Keeney, who are great, but her children have had no teachers of color all through elementary school and she is concerned about a teaching staff who does not represent the student body and may have implicit bias because of that. Ms. Siameh felt it would be beneficial to institute a racial and ethnic socialization curriculum to students.

Mr. Thames acknowledged the deficit of diversity at Keeney and noted they are aware of the situation and are discussing it and are actively looking to resolve the deficiencies across the board.

I. COMMUNICATIONS

None.

J. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

August 10 - Possible meeting -

August 31 - Opening of School Update

September 14 - District Improvement Plan; Professional Development Highlights

K. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Thames called for a motion to adjourn.

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

8/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment 8:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher Pattacini
Board Secretary