

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Special Meeting

August 31, 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 to order at 7:03 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 special 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 special meeting of the Board to discuss the reopening of school. The meeting is open for public input, however signing up prior to the meeting is required. If a member of the public did not sign up to speak prior to this meeting, they are welcome to reach out to the Superintendent via email. Mr. Pattacini stated he is

proud of Manchester Public Schools, especially during this pandemic, and he is looking forward to the updates from Superintendent Geary.

A.4. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

APPROVED – Minutes Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of August 10, 2020. Secretary Pattacini moved and Mr. Scappaticci seconded the motion.

7/0 - Voted in favor.

B. COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

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 the following accounts:**
 - **Purchased Professional Services in the amount of \$621,354.04**
 - **Contracted Services in the amount of \$463,017.29**
 - **Supplies/Utilities in the amount of \$501,809.56**
 - **Property /Equipment in the amount of \$256,054.59**
 - **Dues/Fees in the amount of \$59,882.12**

For a Total transfer amount of \$1,902,117.60 to be transferred to the following accounts:

- **Employee Salaries in the amount of \$641,868.93**
- **Employee Benefits in the amount of \$384,605.41**
- **Other Purchased Services in the amount of \$875,643.26**

For Total transfer amount of \$1,902,117.60

- **Transfer From Bennet Academy Administration General Supplies and Materials account to Bennet Academy Library/Media Databases account in the amount of \$500**
- **Transfer from Illing Middle School Interscholastic Sports, Field & Athletic Trips account to Illing Middle School Physical Education Instructional Supplies and Materials account in the amount of \$1,000**
- **Transfer from System-wide World Language Professional Development account to System-wide Language Arts Instructional Supplies and Materials account in the amount of \$3,255**
- **Transfer from System-wide Language Arts Contracted Subs account to System-wide Language Arts Professional Development account in the amount of \$6,000**
- **Transfer from System-wide Social Studies Instructional Supplies account to System-wide Language Arts Professional Development account in the amount of \$11,750**
- **Transfer from System-wide Language Arts Contracted Subs account to System-wide Language Arts Instructional Supplies and Materials account in the amount of \$4,530**

C.3. Establish an appropriation for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) 611 grant for the FY 20-22 in the amount of \$1,836.908

C.4. Establish an appropriation for the IDEA 619 grant for the FY 20-22 in the amount of \$65,420

C.5. Establish an appropriation for the Federal Head Start Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) funding for the FY 19-21 in the amount of \$210,914

C.6. Establish an appropriation for the United Way Community Investment Grant for the FY 20-21 in the amount of \$90,000

C.7. Establish an increase in the appropriation for a Cost of Living and Quality Improvement adjustment for the Enfield Head Start Program for the FY 20-21 in the amount of \$42,887, bringing the total amount to \$900,633

C.8. Establish an increase the appropriation for a Cost of Living and Quality Improvement adjustment for the Manchester Head Start Program for the FY 20-21 in the amount of \$63,514, bringing the total amount to \$1,333,828

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.

7/0 - Voted in favor.

D. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

E. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

E.1. Opening of School Update

Mr. Geary reviewed the plans for the 2020-2021 school year. His full presentation is available on the website. Some highlights include MPS Health and Wellness Protocols, Athletics and Professional Development.

Mr. Geary noted that schedules are being finalized and we have had an influx of parents requesting changes from hybrid to remote or remote to hybrid and at this time he asked buildings to hold all changes for two weeks and finalize schedules. Tomorrow he is moving three teachers from hybrid to remote.

Elementary teacher assignments were sent to parents last week and Illing and Bennet sent their letters today. MHS will be sending their schedules shortly.

Bus monitors are being lined up. Signage in buildings has been set up, including signs about washing hands, wearing masks, social distancing, etc. PPE is either here or on its way, including masks, hand sanitizers, wipes and plexiglass dividers. Tents are arriving later this week.

The State has released a 7 page addendum to the mask policy and Mr. Geary will review it in detail to be sure we are in compliance.

We have a new Health and Wellness Handbook, which was provided for Board Members this evening and is available in English and Spanish. Water fountains are being replaced with bottle fillers. Breakfast and lunch will be served in grab and go style this year. Each building has been outfitted with an isolation room for anyone presenting with symptoms. The ventilation in that room does not mix with the rest of the building's ventilation system. Students and staff are being provided with two cloth masks and offices will have a supply of disposable masks if needed. Buses will also have an extra supply of masks.

High touch areas will be cleaned daily, sometimes multiple times a day. Wednesdays are reserved for deep cleaning of items such as shades, lights, etc. Also supplies, such as sanitizers, will be restocked. There is a new system in place in which a custodian puts a sticker on the door of a room he has completed cleaning. Playgrounds will be cleaned once a day and students will be taught to wash their hands both before and after playing outside.

As far as attendance, there will be no goal of perfect attendance as we rely on parents to keep sick children home. Nurse's office processes are being worked out, with a nurse possibly seeing a child outside of their classroom in order to keep as many children out of the nurse's office as possible, in consideration of those students who need to be in there to take medications.

Both Special Education and PMT information has been updated for safety.

Mr. Geary noted there is a Health & Wellness Town Hall tomorrow, September 1st.

At this time, CIAC recommends, along with the CT Department of Public Health, that students can condition and do skill work one hour a day. In two weeks we will see how that is going. The groups will be ten or less and one adult will be with the returning players. The goal is for new players to begin conditioning in two weeks. Mr. Geary suspects that some sports will be curtailed this year.

Teachers and other staff are in the midst of six days of Professional Development.

Tomorrow, remote learners will begin picking up their technology items:

- IPADS for PK-1, which were paid for by the Board of Education;
- Chromebooks for Grades 2-8, 500 of which were state funded and 500 from the Lego Foundation through the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving; and
- Laptops for Grades 9-12, provided by the Dalio Foundation.

Many students were able to keep the devices they picked up last year.

Ms. Stefanovicz thanked Mr. Geary for the comprehensive information. She wondered if any thought was given to providing mask lanyards for students, so their masks do not have to be put down during breaks. She also wondered if snow days are a thing of the past now. Mr. Geary noted his wife had just asked about the lanyards and he will look into the cost. As for snow days, he envisions going remote those days, as we are doing Election Day already.

Ms. Stefanovicz missed convocation this year and wondered how staff are feeling as we start the year in such a sterile environment. Mr. Geary noted staff are working hard to make their rooms inviting yet minimalist. Self-care is a topic of conversation and even the Teacher of the Year spoke about it this morning. Mr. Geary pointed out that Friday is not a school day and staff should clear their heads before the year gets underway next week. Overall, he thinks staff are doing well and are excited, though appropriately anxious. Many parents took advantage of the ability to take a quick tour if their student was new to a

building. The first days of school will be reserved for grades K, 5, 7 and 9, to give those students time alone in the building.

Mr. Geary pointed out that through all the planning, the unions have been at the table making decisions alongside the Administration and the vast majority of staff understand we have to be flexible this year.

Mr. Thames will miss how he greeted students at schools last year, high fiving them, but we will try to make the start of school as lively as possible.

F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

F.1. Policy Recommendation

Mr. Geary submitted to the full Board the Temporary Additions and Revisions Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic Policy, # C19 for a second reading and approval in accordance with its policy on policy changes.

Secretary Pattacini moved for the Board to approve Policy # C19, Temporary Additions and Revisions Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic Policy. Mr. Scappaticci seconded the motion.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

G. NEW BUSINESS

G.1. Resolution on Promoting Equity and Antiracism

Secretary Pattacini moved to Approve the Resolution on Promoting Equity and Antiracism which establishes a Board of Education Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee, which is charged with:

- **supporting development of instructional activities, extracurricular opportunities, and field experiences that promote a richer awareness of culture and racial diversity;**

- **reviewing and monitoring policies on diversity, inclusion, and equity;**
- **reviewing curriculum in grades PK-12 through the lens of multicultural and diverse perspectives;**
- **establishing a clear protocol that records and reports incidents of racism occurring within the schools and holds all staff and students accountable for their actions;**
- **reviewing and employing mechanisms (e.g., anonymous tips, trusted adults) to allow students and staff to share sensitive or confidential information that will help in the investigation of acts of bullying, harassment, and racism;**
- **continuing to research and implement best practices and social/emotional programs and resources to ensure that every student feels safe in a supportive environment;**
- **determining where our schools may be falling short in promoting understanding, respect, caring, problem solving, conflict resolution, anti-bullying, etc.**
- **providing training for all staff aimed at maintaining a safe, inclusive, and equitable learning environment for all students, including students of color; and,**
- **supporting the Superintendent's initiatives in creating community conversations in diversity and equity that will lead to systemic improvements.**

Mr. Heinrich seconded the motion.

Mr. Gundersen asked if there was a Director or other administrator to oversee the Equity and Racism activities in schools. Mr. Geary noted that duty was given to Dr. Kearney, who is the Director of Adult Education. Mr. Gundersen wondered, if the group determines curriculum or policy changes are desired, will they submit that to the full Board or to the Policy or Curriculum Committees. Mr. Geary noted there will be a joint effort between multiple committees. This will promote an opportunity for dialogue with community members. The intent was to create a space for this dialogue that is less formal than a board meeting. Mr. Gundersen was worried another committee may be adding another layer of

bureaucracy, impeding progress. Mr. Geary stated it will be a standing meeting and if we find that it is not fulfilling the original intent we will look at that.

Mr. Pattacini asked Mr. Geary to talk about his thoughts on how the committee emerged. Mr. Geary took language from the Brookfield Board of Education. He was looking for a way for the Board to do actionable work and not just issue a statement of commitment. Community members want dialogue. This topic has a lot of community interest. Groups often want to meet with the full Board, but then that becomes a Board meeting. This provides the opportunity for Board members to interact with committee members around this topic and be open and honest, not just talking from a podium for three minutes.

Mr. Thames agreed this is a start and not just words.

Mr. Pattacini supports the motion and is excited. He felt this is a critical aspect of our work and a way to show Board support and take action which shows our priorities.

Ms. Patterson sees this as a proactive approach to a very important issue. She looks forward to the opportunity to connect on a matter of race and equity in town. This is a great thing.

Mr. Thames feels we should support this and can no longer ignore the damaging effects of racism. Racism has been a part of American culture starting with the indigenous people and every group that migrateince. People of color haven't been allowed to integrate with our melting pot. Given all that is going on as a backdrop is damaging to people of color. Some people are angry because of the BLM movement but what they don't see is that just because black lives matter doesn't mean anyone else's lives do not matter.

The vote was called.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

H. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

I. COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Thames is looking forward to the beginning of school and hopes everyone remains flexible. Manchester Strong!

J. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

September 14 - District Improvement Plan; Professional Development Highlights

September 28 - Update on Technology

October 14 - Bennet School Improvement Plan

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 7:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher Pattacini
Board Secretary