

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting

March 8, 2021

Lincoln/Virtual

PRESENT: Gundersen, Heinrich, Hughes, Luna, Pattacini, Patterson, 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 7:03 p.m., explaining they were previously in an Executive Session which began at 6:08 p.m. All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Mr. Thames.

A.3. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

APPROVED – Minutes Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of February 22, 2021. Secretary Pattacini moved and Ms. Luna seconded the motion.

8/0 – Voted in favor.

B. COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

C. CONSENT CALENDAR

Mr. Geary presented four 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 Plant Operations Other Purchased Services account in the amount of \$1,225. Transfer to System-wide Plant Operations Professional Development account in the amount of \$320 and transfer to System-wide Plant Operations Dues and Fees account in the amount of \$905 for a total transfer of \$1,225.

C.3. Establish an appropriation for The Connecticut Recovery Oriented Support System (CROSS) Grant for the FY 20-22 in the amount of \$5,000

C.4. Establish an appropriation for an increase to the General Improvements to Alliance Districts' School Buildings Grant Program for the FY 20-22 in the amount of \$848 to a total final grant award of \$1,080,000

The Chairman called for a motion.

Secretary Pattacini moved and Mr. Heinrich seconded the recommendation to adopt the Consent Calendar.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Pattacini asked Mr. Geary to elaborate on item C3. Mr. Geary reported that for the last 5-6 years the district has employed Pam Hall at MHS (who is paid through the Alliance Grant) to support students in the Substance Abuse Recovery Program. Prior to this there were consequences for students caught with substances, but no supports in place. This grant supports those efforts.

The vote was called.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

D. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

Tiffany Henry reported that the Senior Class Board is starting to finalize the final Senior send off, special events to reminisce and close of a very hectic ending to the high school experience.

She reported that this week staff and teachers are getting covid vaccinations and it is exciting to see progress of the pandemic in Manchester.

Ms. Henry noted the Student Equity Advisory Team is currently working on gathering pictures and quotes from important figures from all generations of women in honor of Women's History Month. They are also using the announcements as a way to further spread the message.

Leila Affini mentioned that Spring sports are starting soon, and they are beginning to have informational meetings.

Ms. Affini also reported The Young Women's Leadership Group created a newsletter which was sent out to all students with their reflections on Black History month and highlights of black figures. One of the figures happened to be an artist at MHS who is a junior named Jeannai Plummer.

Alexandra Hamza pointed out that Ms. Hall (the Substance Abuse Counselor mentioned earlier in the meeting) runs the FACTS Group, which stands for Fighting Against Common Teen Substances.

E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

F. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART I

F.1. Manchester High School Improvement Plan

Mr. Thames introduced the team from MHS, which included Katelyn Miner, Principal; Amanda Navarra, Instructional Coach; and Owen Carroll and Roy Roberts, Assistant Principals. Their very comprehensive presentation is available for viewing on the website.

Mr. Pattacini thanked the team for their in-depth presentation, noting it was appreciated. To Mr. Roberts, he asked what strategic scheduling for Freshmen looks like. Mr. Roberts reviewed that in Spring MHS and Iling administrators and support staff meet to discuss 504s, IEPs, behaviors, families and other facets of the incoming 9th graders. They try to also match students with teachers whose personalities will gel. The MHS staff separate the Freshmen into five teams and try to keep them diverse and similar in experiences to each other. Mr. Roberts wants kids to look at MHS as their home away from home. Mr. Pattacini felt this approach underscores the connections being made between each student and staff members, which is even more important with $\frac{1}{3}$ of the students not physically in the building.

To Ms. Navarra, Mr. Pattacini asked what cornerstone tasks are. Ms. Navarra described how a team of teachers identifies tasks in curriculum and then narrow down to the cornerstone tasks, which are used across the board (ie. critical thinking, problem solving) and do not just apply to one subject. Ms. Miner added it was narrowing key elements to tell to the community and colleges what we hold students accountable for.

Mr. Pattacini asked about what the student experience looked like with 25th credit planning. Ms. Navarra spoke about the student profile development, which is worked on over four years. This culminates in their Senior Story, which is a presentation of their learning. This is worked on in mentoring sessions, teachers will often suggest items that might work well in the profile. It is how students share their strengths and which adults they are connected to. Mr. Pattacini noted that when he was in school it was all about the grades, bottom line. There were things, such as community service, that one did because it was expected, but he didn't have a sense of self-awareness of his own strengths beyond the grade. For students now it is not just about the numbers on the transcripts anymore.

Mr. Thames told Mr. Roberts he appreciated the efforts to start Freshmen off strong and support them from the get go. He noted that he often feels that the way one starts dictates the way they will end.

To Mr. Carroll, Mr. Thames asked how we help parents navigate the FASFA and how the pandemic impacted the process of helping kids get to college. Mr.

Carroll noted this is difficult, especially with remote students. Counselors are relentless in chasing kids down and following up with them. This year has been hard on mental health. There is a list of seniors whose goal includes a 2 or 4 year college experience and they keep tabs on those students to be sure applications are submitted and the FASFA completed. There is a parent information night related to FASFA. The team will also reach out to parents if they notice they have not completed their FASFA yet.

F.2. Update on Return to School

Mr. Geary noted that staff vaccinations are underway. Thus far, challenges to bringing students back into buildings full time has been staff shortages due to quarantines, and social distancing requirements. Over 250 staff members were vaccinated last week, 200 more are scheduled to be vaccinated tomorrow and there are 1400 doses of vaccine available for staff this weekend. Unless a vaccinated staff member shows symptoms of COVID they will not have to quarantine if exposed.

Students in grades 5-12 are set to return to schools full time after vacation on April 19. The CDC has stated that in areas with low community spread social distancing may be reduced to 3 feet instead of 6 feet. Other safety protocols such as masks and desk shields will continue to be implemented.

Elementary students will attend school 9:10 am - 3:00 p.m.
Middle school students will attend 8:15 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
MHS students hours will be 7:30 a.m. - 1:15 p.m.

This represents approximately 40 minutes less than “normal” school hours. Wednesdays will be a 90 minute late start for all schools. This will allow teachers time for collaboration and professional development.

Of course, Mr. Geary pointed out that this plan is all contingent on community spread remaining low. This will allow students approximately 8 weeks in buildings full time before the end of the year. Students currently remote (which is about $\frac{1}{3}$ of students) will remain remote the rest of the year.

Mr. Geary is excited to get kids back in school. He envisions close of school events, 4th grade celebrations and end of year events at Bennet and Illing. At

MHS there will be end of year activities though graduation will look different. It will not go back to a "normal" graduation of past years, nor the extremely individual graduations that happened last year. More information will be forthcoming regarding graduation plans in April.

Winter sports are ongoing and Spring sports will take place at MHS and Illing. We are planning a busy summer with two summer school sessions. The goal will be to engage kids and their interest in learning, while giving the sessions a camp-like atmosphere to address the whole child.

Mr. Thames wondered which brand of vaccine staff were and will be given. Mr. Geary stated those vaccinated at the XFINITY Center are Pfizer brand and the closed clinics used Moderna. Second doses for Pfizer are due in 3 weeks and for Moderna it is a 4 week wait for the second dose. J&J vaccines were not available. Mr. Thames looks forward to allowing students a somewhat normal experience. He already feels more at ease after having his first vaccine, though he reminds people we still need to be vigilant about masks and stay safe.

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

G.1. Equity Policy

Secretary Pattacini moved for the Board of Education to adopt the Manchester Public School's Equity Policy #8002. Ms. Patterson seconded the motion.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

H. NEW BUSINESS

H.1. Acceptance of the Waddell Elementary School Roof Replacement Project #077-0231 RR as complete

Mr. Geary explained that this and the following item relate to roof replacements done many years ago and the accounts are being closed out. This is not new work.

Secretary Pattacini moved for the Board of Education to accept the Waddell Elementary School Roof Replacement Project #077-0231 RR as complete. The scope of work included a roof replacement. The total cost of the project was \$618,281. Reimbursement from the State Office of School Construction Grants & Review to the Town of Manchester for this project is estimated at \$388,870. Mr. Heinrich seconded the motion.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

H.2. Acceptance of the Bowers Elementary School Roof Replacement Project #077-0232 RR as complete

Secretary Pattacini moved for the Board of Education to accept the Bowers Elementary School Roof Replacement Project #077-0232 RR as complete. The scope of work included a roof replacement. The total cost of the project was \$742,402. Reimbursement from the State Office of School Construction Grants & Review to the Town of Manchester for this project is estimated at \$428,329. Mr. Gundersen seconded the motion.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

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

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, spoke about this being the 34th Women's History Month, which was made law in 1987. He noted women have contributed to history in many ways and he recommended several books and articles about women. Mr. Stringfellow pointed out an article from Dr. Cardona, the Secretary of Education, regarding how to safely reopen schools.

J. COMMUNICATIONS

None.

K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

March 22 - Martin School Improvement Plan

April 8 - Highland Park Improvement Plan

April 26 - Verplanck School Improvement Plan

L. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Thames called for a motion to adjourn.

Secretary Pattacini moved and Ms. Patterson seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Christopher Pattacini
Board Secretary