

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting

May 24, 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 7:06 p.m. He explained the Board had previously been in Executive Session from 5:40 p.m. until 6:57 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 May 10, 2021. Secretary Pattacini moved and Mr. Heinrich Gundersen seconded the motion.

8/0 – Voted in favor.

B. COMMITTEE REPORTS

B.1. Curriculum & Instruction Committee

Ms. Luna reported the last meeting was held May 10th. In attendance were Mark Gundersen, Emily Luna, Peter Meggers, Tracy Patterson, Amy Radikas , and Diane Burns.

Item discussed included:

Grade 4 Unit of Study: Unit 5 for Grade 4 Power & Perspective was reviewed by Diane Burns, Director of Teaching and Learning, Humanities. The Committee was provided an overview of the revisions made to this unit by the grade four learning plan team.

Learning plan teams have been looking at spaces in current units of study for places and spaces that lend themselves to developing student voice and choice especially as it relates to the district's equity work centering race.

Mentor texts and the role each text plays was discussed as well as student digital notebooks, weekly planning template, teach points, and other supporting resources.

The Committee ended their meeting with a discussion regarding the evolving role of coaches supporting learning plan teams, teachers, and administrators during remote and in-person experiences.

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 Bentley Alternative Education Dues and Fees account to Bentley Alternative Education Computer Supplies and Materials account in the amount of \$1,885.00.

C.3. Establish an appropriation for the Appropriation Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Secondary Special Populations

Recruitment and Retention Grant for the FY 20/22 in the amount of \$22,167

C.4. Permission to apply for the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Secondary Supplemental Enhancement Grant for the FY 20/21 in the amount of \$50,000

C.5. Permission to apply for the COVID-19 Special Education Stipend for FY20/22 in the amount of \$20,000

The Chairman called for a motion.

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

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Thames asked the Superintendent to provide a brief summary of C.4.

Mr. Geary reviewed that we receive funding through the Perkins Grant for tech ed and career pathways. This item, #4, represents a supplemental \$50,000 on top of the regular grant.

The vote was called.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

D. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

Alexandra Hamza reports that despite a shaky start to programs, clubs and events due to the pandemic, the end of the school year gives hope for an imminent return to normal. AP tests began last week and the last tests will be administered by the end of this week.

Manchester High School was able to hold an in-person award ceremony on May 12th to recognize the hard work of students throughout their years at Manchester High School.

The regular sports season is coming to a close with Class and State championships around the corner.

End of the year festivities are now under way. The junior class was able to have their prom in the school courtyard last Friday and it was an overall success.

Leila Affini lost connection during the meeting, but her written comments are below: The class of 2021 also had a senior picnic to High Meadows.

Students have been provided with opportunities to keep busy this summer such as tutoring jobs, enrichment programs and leadership courses.

Speaking of summer, graduation and its rituals are just around the corner starting next week with cap and gown pickups.

Finally, The Student Equity Advisory Team and the World Language Club partnered together this month to educate students and teachers about Asian Pacific Islander Month through videos and announcements. SEAT has also put together a bulletin board in order to celebrate members from that community.

Mr. Thames was excited to hear about some normal activities, such as the junior prom, and he wondered if the kids did the Electric Slide. Ms. Hamza, who attended the party, reported that indeed the slide was done!!

E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

F. Superintendent's Report

F.1. Update on Energy Efficiency Project

Mr. Geary introduced Chris Till, Town of Manchester Facilities Manager, who spoke about the energy efficiency upgrades that are happening in the district and the town. With Covid boosting incentive rates to upgrade infrastructure this project is being fast tracked. We are updating inefficient lighting and the project will pay for itself in less than 5 years. Recently renovated buildings have used LED lighting, but lights in 10 town buildings and 6 school buildings will have their lighting replaced. The schools include Bennet, Highland Park, Martin, MHS, Illing and MRA.

Phase I includes LED lighting upgrades, making the new lighting 60% more efficient than existing fixtures. This will produce an annual savings of about \$200-250k. The LED lights will last about 12 years if run 12 hours a day with a cost of \$1.75-2million. The utility incentive is between \$700k and \$1m for a total cost to the town of \$800k-\$1.1m. Existing annual lighting cost is \$350-380K.

In Phase II the energy conservation measures will address:

- High efficiency motors and pumps
- Variable speed motors
- Building automation system upgrades
- Compressed air system leak repairs
- Insulation

Mr. Till explained the reason for the range of savings is that once we enter Phase II the savings percentage from the utility company is higher than the savings in Phase I. Previously, the utility company paid about 75% of the cost of an energy audit to find potential energy conservation measures for the town. The plan is to swap approximately 8000 light fixtures.

Mr. Till acknowledged the involvement of Mr. Boutillier, Karen Clancy, Buildings & Grounds personnel including Mr. Grande and Mr. Cedrone. There has been an "all hands on deck" approach.

Mr. Pattacini thanked Mr. Till for his work in the district. He wondered how the \$800k-\$1.1m would be funded. Mr. Till explained that Eversource finances up to \$1m at 0% interest through the utility bills themselves over 4-5 years. The savings actually pays down the loan and once that is complete the town will realize the actual savings in their bills.

Mr. Thames wondered how we monitor the savings after the loan is paid down. Mr. Till noted as part of the billing we will still see the actual energy consumption and can compare that to previous years bills. We will be energy benchmarking, tracking use for each school.

F.2. Illing School Improvement Plan

Mr. Geary introduced Iris Gomero, Principal of Illing Middle School. Ms. Gomero, along with several Illing staff members, presented their School Improvement Plan, which can be viewed in full on the website.

Mr. Pattacini enjoyed the comprehensive update and appreciates the hard work. A bright spot for him was to see the progress in reading scores along with the reduction in ISS/OSS. It was also great to see that race and equity are at the forefront of the plan to ensure success for every child.

Ms. Stefanovicz thought it was a fantastic presentation and as a data nerd she enjoyed the details and seeing the approach to what each child needs. Ms. Stefanovicz wondered how many students partake in support intervention tiers. Ms. Beardsworth noted the focus this year has been on attendance, which has been the biggest hurdle with 41% of students being chronically absent this year. Looking at the trends over the last three months, about 80% of those deemed chronically absent early in the year have improved their attendance.

F.3. Update on Covid-19

Mr. Geary reported that while remote learning was not for everyone, a thoughtfully done remote learning plan is possible for next year. There are guidelines being drafted for those who desire remote learning for the 21-22 school year. In most cases, in-person learning is preferable. Current remote families will have the guidelines for remote learning for next school year shared with them soon, so they may decide what works best for their situation.

Mr. Geary reviewed we are still spending the ESSER I funds and have aligned the ESSER II \$6.8m to our goals. The expected funds from ESSER III are able to be spent through the summer of 2024, but we expect to spend them primarily in the 22-23 and 23-24 school year.

Mr. Geary was concerned about a funding cliff, but is less concerned about that now. ECS funding is expected to be an additional \$1.5m each of the next 8 years (as we are 2 years into a 10 year plan). The Governor tried to pause this plan, but the legislature was not in favor of a pause. The growth in this ECS funding will smooth the curve of the federal funding. The innovative work being done with federal funds, over time, will move into the Alliance Grant funding.

Mr. Geary outlined the planned budget for the \$6.8m:

- \$280k for Directors of STEM and Humanities for grades 5-12
- \$90k College & Career Coordinator
- \$750k Staffing for 21-22 MPS PK-12 summer programming
- \$150k Chief of Schools
- \$130k Remote Administrator
- \$1.1m 20 FTE teachers grades K-6 to facilitate smaller classes
- \$600k 15 case managers to support home visits, tutoring and chronic absence
- \$678k contracted services for mental health supports
- \$390k 6 behavior techs
- \$75k technology coaching stipends (25 @\$3k each)
- \$500k upgrades to staff devices
- \$500k upgrades to student devices grades 5-8
- \$180k 2 system analyst/info tech positions
- \$130k 2 elementary tech integration specialists
- \$110k Purchasing agent (a repurposed position)
- \$760k insurance for staff funded through the grant

Mr. Geary noted we have never seen an influx of funding like this and he is sensitive to the economy and avoiding a funding cliff.

Mr. Geary reviewed that the Board of Directors approved our 0% increase budget, so there is no need for the budget workshop scheduled for later this week.

The Buckley renovation is on time and the school will move into the Robertson space. Manchester Middle Academy, currently occupying Robertson, will move into the Central Office location next door. Mr. Geary noted that while some Central Office staff continue to work from home, he is actively looking for space for Central Office for the next three years.

The Highland Park School is in a design phase to look at combining the cafeteria and library to repurpose the library area for needed additional classrooms.

Mr. Geary informed us that about 1000 students are signed up for Curiosity Camp at the elementary level (to be held at Verplanck, Waddell and HPS) and about 400 students for grades 5-8, which will be held at Bennet.

Regarding the building projects, the Ed-Specs for Keeney will be presented soon to get that project underway.

Tomorrow, Mr. Geary and Mr. Thames will attend a meeting regarding union work on projects, which the Town manages.

In regards to the change in mask guidelines, students will no longer need masks at recess or gym, though masks will continue to be required inside schools through the end of the year. The Covid numbers in the state are decreasing and the number of vaccinated people are rising. We are working to provide a vaccination clinic for students ages 12-15 for the Pfizer vaccine.

Ms. Stefanovicz appreciated the breadth of view regarding in-person and remote learning, depending on the child and not throwing everything Covid-related out the window.

Mr. Pattacini appreciated that the ESSER funding aligns with our grant funding and the work we are doing in the district.

Mr. Thames agreed the budget workshop for Thursday is cancelled. He also appreciated that funds are earmarked for mental health and the guidelines for remote learners for next year.

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

H. NEW BUSINESS

H.1. Ratification of the Manchester Employee Local 991 of Council #4, American Federation of State, County – Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO

Secretary Pattacini moved for the Board of Education to approve the Manchester Employee Local 991 of Council #4, American Federation of State, County, Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO (Food Service Employees) contract, covering the period of July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2024. Mr. Gundersen seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Thames asked for a synopsis of this contract. Mr. Geary noted this contract dates back to last July and provides for a 2.5% pay increase per year for four years. Mr. Geary noted how much we appreciate the hard work of our food service employees over the course of the pandemic, helping provide meals for our families.

The vote was called.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

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

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, suggested Robert Merry's book, "President McKinley: Architect of the American Century" along with the children's book, "Who was Theodore Roosevelt?" Mr. Stringfellow suggested an article in *Attitude* magazine about ADHD and children of color, along with an article in the same magazine about teenage anxiety. In the *TIME* May 24-31 edition there was an article on the "Vision of Equity" that he suggested. Last, Mr. Stringfellow recommended a book *The Anatomy of Facism* by Robert Paxton.

Mr. Geary mentioned some comments on Facebook around the tax implications of the budget. With the Board of Education requesting and receiving a 0% budget increase, there would be no impact to taxes. Any unspent funds remaining this year would be put in a capital account to offset future capital spending needs.

Another question from Facebook was about attendance and distance learning. Mr. Geary clarified that distance learning did not work for everyone and that is why there is clear criteria to be able to participate remotely next year.

J. COMMUNICATIONS

None.

K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

Monday, June 14 - Waddell School Improvement Plan

Monday, June 28 - Close of School Update

Monday, July 12 - Spring Data Update

L. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Thames called for a motion to adjourn.

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

8/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment 9:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher Pattacini
Board Secretary