

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting January 22, 2019 Lincoln

PRESENT: Conyers, Hagenow, Hughes, Pattacini, Scappaticci,

ALSO PRESENT: Superintendent of Schools Geary, Deputy Superintendent Curriculum & Special Services Radikas, Director of Finance & Management Clancy

ABSENT: Maio, Meggers, Stefanovicz, Thames

A. OPENING

A.1. & 2. Meeting Called to Order

Acting Chairperson Pattacini called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. He noted that due to both the change in day and illness four board members were unable to be here this evening, but there is still a quorum. All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Mr. Pattacini.

A.3. Secretary's Welcome

Acting Secretary Scappaticci extended 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. Scappaticci 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.

Mr. Scappaticci explained that as the Manchester Board of Education, they are here to set goals, listen to reports of the Superintendent, approve budgets, contracts, and personnel appointments, and to create policy for the district. They are not here to make management decisions or solve the problems of individuals. Members of the public with individual concerns may contact the

Superintendent directly. It was explained that meetings of the Board are open to the public, but are not meetings with individual members of the public. Therefore, comments from the audience will be confined to the time designated for the public to address the Board.

Last, Mr. Scappaticci noted he is proud of this school system and appreciates 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 January 7, 2019. Acting Secretary Scappaticci moved and Ms. Hagenow seconded the motion.

5/0 – Voted in favor.

A.5. Approval of Board of Education Budget Workshop

APPROVED - Minutes of the Board of Education Budget Workshop of January 9, 2019. Acting Secretary Scappaticci moved and Ms. Hagenow seconded the motion.

5/0 - Voted in favor.

B. COMMITTEE REPORTS

B.1. Buildings & Sites Committee

Mr. Conyers reported the last meeting was held January 7, 2019 with the following in attendance: Ms. Clancy, Mr. Conyers, Mr. Geary, Ms. Maio, Mr. Meggers, Mr. Pattacini and Mr. Staye. Also in attendance was a member of the public, Mr. Christopher McDermott.

TSKP Studio estimates of the cost to renovate Washington into a building shared by board offices and Parks & Rec, along with plans to turn Martin into a

preschool were reviewed. There was a general discussion about the process to be followed by the Board of Education and the Board of Directors.

It was noted that Washington is not large enough to house all district departments. However, Adult Ed and the Welcome Center are better housed near the center of town, with Adult Ed specifically needing to be on a bus route. There would be little benefit in moving Buildings and Grounds, as it is relatively central to all the schools currently.

The Committee as a whole felt the proposed uses of Martin and Washington were a complement to the 3 school solution that SMARTR2 is entertaining.

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. Establish an appropriation for FY 19-21 for the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving in the amount of \$40,000

C.3. Establish an appropriation for FY 19-21 for the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving in the amount of \$459,500

C.4. Approval of the Manchester High School Graduation Date for FY 18-19 as June 18, 2019 at 6:30 p.m. at the Connecticut Convention Center, 100 Columbus Blvd., Hartford, CT

The Acting Chairman called for a motion.

Acting Secretary Scappaticci moved and Ms. Hagenow seconded the recommendation to adopt the Consent Calendar as outlined in Section C of tonight's agenda.

5/0 - Voted in favor.

Mr. Pattacini recognized the work of the staff and administration in securing two additional grants from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving totalling just under \$500,000. These are competitive grants that were earned by the district.

D. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

Due to midterms there were no student representatives present this evening.

E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Angela Bellas, 126 Lakewood Circle North, is a member of Uniting for a Safe Inclusive Community Manchester. She has a child that will be entering Kindergarten in the fall. She was here this evening to hear a presentation on the Equity Informed School Climate that is no longer on the agenda. This is critical data that we need to hear and understand. Ms. Bellas noted that the release of this report has been postponed a couple of times and she is growing concerned about when the data will be presented. She noted there is a large volume of data at the state and national level regarding school climate and disparities in schools regarding punishments and we need to look and and understand localized data. She is concerned about the climate of students who represent traditionally marginalized and oppressed groups.

Ms. Maria Cruz, 71 Hamilton Drive, is the founder of the Manchester Latino Affairs Council and a former member of the Board of Education. She was also present to hear about the Equity Informed School Climate data and she hopes that after the budget is dealt with that it is put back on the agenda and that families are invited to attend the presentation. Ms. Cruz is hoping the findings provide a framework for creating positive change and embracing diversity in our student body.

Mr. Pattacini thanked the members of the public for their active participation in the community. Mr. Geary reviewed that the initial draft of the Equity Informed School Climate data was due last spring and is 120 pages long. Currently it is at the printer and will be released soon. There is a committee of students and staff that will be part of the presentation and they are hoping for a late March roll out and its release will be publicized. Mr. Geary is excited that people are looking forward to this information.

F. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART I

F.1. Review of 2019-2020 Proposed Budget

Mr. Geary reviewed the purchased professional services and other purchased services proposed budget.

Mr. Hughes wondered if the district has looked into purchasing copiers instead of renting them. Mr. Geary noted that has been looked at in the past, but that due to the amount of use the machines get and the cost we do not want to own them.

Ms. Hagenow wondered how often systems such as sprinklers and fire alarms are tested. Mr. Geary noted fire alarms are tested quarterly and sprinklers are tested annually.

Mr. Conyers asked about the designation of a Water Treatment Facility at Bennet. It was explained by Ms. Clancy that the ph was low in the water at Bennet so the equipment was required to be installed in the past and that now means we have to do annual testing on it.

Mr. Scappaticci wondered if we are on town water at Bennet. Mr. Geary noted we are, but during the original renovation of Bennet it was discovered there was low ph and a system needed to be installed. Mr. Pattacini, who was on the Board at that time, recalled there was copper in the water which is what was affecting the ph and this was done to mitigate that problem.

Mr. Pattacini felt it was interesting to see the budgets over the years and the proposed/approved/actual figures. Lots of decisions are made to try to reduce costs.

Mr. Geary pointed out that we often don't know grant amounts until the last minute, including Alliance funding which we don't find out about until late August. It is hard to plan when funding is unknown but this year the extra Alliance money helped when a budget freeze became necessary, helping to cover costs of some professional development and supplies. Mr. Geary noted that past "actual" dollar amounts are lower than the approved budget due to the fact that

the budget gets frozen, but that often some funding comes from grants, so that is not the total amount spent on a given line, just the total amount that is taken from the regular Board budget.

Mr. Pattacini underscored the flexibility needed in the budget and how lucky we have been to receive grant funding. He wondered why the disposal services amount has dropped. Mr. Geary noted that there are now fewer locations and last year was actually over-budgeted in that line.

Mr. Geary reminded us that he is looking at tweaking school start times to try to improve the transportation budget by requiring fewer buses. He also noted there is a problem with some Medicaid reimbursement when a student eligible for transportation through Medicaid is joined by a sibling who is not eligible, the entire trip is no longer able to be billed.

Mr. Conyers wondered how many students receive specialized transportation outside of Dattco. Mr. Geary reviewed there are 112 students who are transported by an outside services such as Access Transportation. Ms. Clancy reviewed there are approximately 3700 students (both regular and special education) that are transported through Dattco vehicles.

Mr. Geary reviewed he had previously had a question from a board member about MRA tuition. He reviewed that for the 14/15 school year we charged tuition of \$310 per day for out of district students (x182 days). For the 18/19 school year the tuition was \$342 per day, which for a full year student is about \$62,000 a year.

Mr. Geary is going to be presenting some suggestions for cuts to the proposed budget at tomorrow's budget workshop and he will be looking for guidance from the Board. If a large reduction is required ultimately that will required systemwide changes. He will bring the list of suggestions tomorrow evening.

Mr. Hughes wondered with the large overage in the tuition line for magnets causing a budget freeze, how that is affecting the efficient operation of our schools. Mr. Geary reviewed that each PO request is individually reviewed to see if it is absolutely necessary and/or if it qualifies for grant funding. The hardest

hit lines are supplies and materials, professional development, and printing. Mr. Hughes feels it is counter-productive to the budget and we end up spending more in the end if we have to continue this way. Mr. Geary agreed, noting we have been fortunate in the past to receive unexpected grant funds, and also to be able to take the health insurance holiday and have food services assume more salaries that were originally in the Board budget. Mr. Hughes noted it is a priority for him to avoid a freeze in the future and we cannot be too conservative in our budget request.

Mr. Scappaticci agreed with Mr. Hughes. He felt it was powerful when we went over just one school's individual budget line by line. He is comfortable voting for the 4.8% increase to the budget because we have asked for more modest increases in the past and not received them. The Board of Directors needs to understand what will happen if we do not have 4.8%. Imagine cutting sports, arts, music or increasing classroom size. Those things are part of what make Manchester schools so impressive and make our students so engaged. He hesitates to consider increasing classroom size as studies show that size matters.

Mr. Geary suggested we bring thoughts on possible reductions to tomorrow's budget workshop.

Ms. Hagenow notes we have a significant amount of support services and wondered if that need has increased over the past 3-4 years. Mr. Geary noted it has and we have added social workers, behavior techs, assistant principals and we have worked to keep class sizes reasonable. Also, we have had more steady paraprofessional substitute coverage through Delta-T than in the past. Mr. Geary noted that a few years ago he dropped about 20 para's from the budget to cut costs, but wound up not only rehiring those 20, but even a few more. We try to maintain as many students in the mainstream classes as possible and we need paras to be able to accommodate that. As a result of these changes, student behavior has improved. Ms. Hagenow noted that if services are cut that school climate will suffer.

Mr. Conyers is concerned about the budget figure, but he sees it as a correction to several years of not having proper budget increases, though he is

skeptical that the Board of Directors will agree. He noted it is a yearly frustration with not having any idea about what to expect in terms of funding.

Mr. Geary pointed out that the Board of Directors has a challenging job balancing the budget with the sustainability of tax increases to the community.

Mr. Pattacini noted the budget process is the time for us to determine what the district needs so that the Board of Directors can determine the community's ability to support that. That means that we find out at the last minute the need to cut budgets because the funding level is so far below our needs. We have nipped and tucked over the last five years (with an average budget increase of 1.5% each year) and looking at other districts we are about \$5million below where we should be in terms of funding. We cannot continue to rely on unknown grants appearing to help our budget. Mr. Pattacini notes we need guidance now, not in April, on what our estimated budget will be.

Mr. Geary noted that \$1million is less than a percentage point in terms of the budget.

Mr. Pattacini supports a 4.8% increase, but he would like to talk to the Board of Directors soon about the budget. We have a right to request a joint meeting with them to discuss the budget. He also noted that we have no control over the costs that CREC bills us for, which underscores the problems we are facing with educational funding.

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

H. NEW BUSINESS

H.1. MRA Roof Replacement

Mr. Geary reviewed that the MRA roof replacement was part of the Capital Projects budget of 18/19 and the General Manager was going to cover that cost through bonding. However, due to the need for asbestos remediation the cost has increased and this is just a motion to approve the new figure.

Mr. Conyers asked what the increase was. Ms. Clancy reviewed the total amount is \$588,883 with the town assuming about \$236,000 and the state reimbursing about \$352,000.

Acting Secretary Scappaticci moved for the Board of Education to authorize the Superintendent to submit an SCG 049 Grant Application and Summary of Educational Specifications, along with any other forms as may be required, for a School Building Project to the State Department of Administrative Services Office of School Construction Grants for a construction grant in accordance with GS S10-283 and Chapter 173 of the Connecticut General Statutes. Ms. Hagenow seconded the motion.

5/0 - Voted in favor.

H.2. SMARTR2 Recommendation

Mr. Geary reviewed that SMARTR2 is recommending the three school project and considering net zero energy funding. He noted also that the Board of Directors met last week with Odyssey school to discuss the potential of them using the Nathan Hale building. We will make a recommendation and see what the Board of Directors does with it.

Mr. Pattacini asked if board members have any comments about the recommended motions.

Mr. Conyers, who sat on SMARTR2, pointed out that the last motion, about Martin becoming a preschool, is important as it is a current need in our district.

Mr. Hughes likes the work SMARTR2 has done and he was able to attend a few meetings. He liked that the feedback from the public was incorporated into these motions as well.

Ms. Hagenow agrees with the proposed motions as she also sat on the SMARTR2 committee. She was also impressed with the information regarding net zero energy.

Acting Secretary Scappaticci moved for the Board of Education to recommend that the Board of Directors appropriate funds to renovate and expand Bowers Elementary School, Buckley Elementary School, and Keeney Elementary School; that the Board of Education recommend that the Board of Directors consider including funds to ensure that the buildings are net zero energy facilities, to the extent fiscally possible; that the Board of Education recommend that the Board of Directors appropriate funds of not less than \$10 million, including any funds remaining from Phase 1, for the repurposing of various decommissioned schools, beginning with the Nathan Hale building; and that the Board of Education move to designate Martin Elementary School as a preschool center once students from Martin are relocated as part of Phase 2. Ms. Hagenow seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Pattacini thanked the administration, the town and the building committee, especially the Chair Mr. Murphy, for their work on SMARTR2 and for listening to the community in crafting the motions. He is excited about this step in the process. The possibility of repurposing Martin as a preschool is a direct response to community input.

5/0 - Voted in favor.

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

None.

J. COMMUNICATIONS

None.

K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

January 23, 2019 - Budget workshop

February 11, 2019 - Budget Adoption; Update on Legislative Breakfast and Pending Legislation

February 25, 2019 - Update on Building Projects

March 11, 2019 - District Improvement Plan Update

L. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Pattacini called for a motion to adjourn.

Acting Secretary Scappaticci moved and Ms. Hagenow seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

5/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment 8:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Scappaticci
Acting Board Secretary