

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting

June 24, 2019

Lincoln Center

PRESENT: Conyers, Hagenow (left early), Hughes, Maio, Pattacini, Scappaticci, Stefanovicz (arrived late), Thames

ALSO PRESENT: Superintendent of Schools Geary, Deputy Superintendent Dr. Radikas

ABSENT: Meggers

A. OPENING

A.1. & 2. Meeting Called to Order

Chairperson Thames called the meeting back to order from an Executive Session at 7:01 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 extend 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. 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.

Mr. Pattacini 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. 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. Pattacini stated he appreciates the public's 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 June 10, 2019. Secretary Pattacini moved and Ms. Hagenow seconded the motion.

7/0 – Voted in favor.

A.5. Approval of Minutes of Special Meeting

APPROVED - Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Board of Education of June 17, 2019. Secretary Pattacini moved and Ms. Hagenow seconded the motion.

7/0 - Voted in favor.

B. COMMITTEE REPORTS

B.1. Policy Committee

Ms. Hagenow reviewed that the last meeting was held June 10, 2019 with herself, Mr. Hughes, Ms. Stefanowic, Mr. Geary, Ms. Miner and MHS Students present.

The Committee discussed the cover letter for the Board of Education Self Evaluation and recommends that the letter and Board of Education Self Evaluation document be entered into the record at the next Board of Education meeting.

The Committee reviewed the Equity Policy of the Seattle Public Schools. Feedback from the Equity Informed School Climate Assessment indicated that

the Board of Education should address policies and practices that have been shown to be inequitable and an equity policy would offer a format for doing that. The Superintendent will draft policy language and bring back to the Committee at its next meeting.

The Committee heard from Ms. Miner and two students in attendance regarding the dress code at Manchester High School. Specifically, the request is to delete the line in the current dress code that disallows head coverings. Hoods would continue not to be allowed on during the school day and a note about hoods has been added to the draft dress code. The Committee recommended that consideration of this change be placed on the full Board of Education agenda for a first reading.

The Committee discussed the Gifts, Grants and Bequests Policy. The revision grants the Superintendent permission to allow employees to engage in crowdfunding activities (e.g. the use of websites or applications such as Donors Choose, Kickstarter, GoFundMe, etc.) as appropriate. The Committee recommended that consideration of this change be placed on the full Board of Education agenda for a first reading.

Last, the Committee discussed the Volunteers policy. The revision replaces the requirement that volunteers have a background check every three years with a one time background check, which is similar to what employees experienced. The Committee recommended that consideration of this change be placed on the full Board of Education agenda for a first reading.

C. CONSENT CALENDAR

Mr. Geary presented three items on the Consent Calendar for Board approval.

C.1. Personnel Information

Details were provided to Board Members in their packets.

C.2. Establish an appropriation for FY 19/20 in the amount of \$125,000, for the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, Inc., Understanding Root Causes of Inequities Grant

C.3. Permission to apply for the FY 19/20 Manchester Head Start Cost of Living Adjustment

The Chairman called for a motion.

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

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Pattacini asked for clarification of item C.2. Mr. Geary noted this was a continuation of the initial planning grant which funds more professional learning around equity.

7/0 - Voted in favor.

D. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

None.

E. COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Thames reviewed he/the Board received about thirteen emails about the MHS mascot, with 10 in favor of a change and 3 opposed to change. Some suggestions were to keep the current mascot and postpone the question of change for community input or a study. Mr. Thames noted that the students have already accomplished that. Also, one suggestion was to put the question to a referendum vote.

F. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Michele Callahan, 276 Oak Street, is a member of the class of 1988. She is a taxpayer and a former Manchester Public School student. In 2019, Ms. Callahan feels we need to be more conscious of how we use mascots and words. She has two biracial sons who have encountered not so nice words and we need to be aware of how we treat others. She votes to change the mascot at MHS.

Jill Krieger, 57 Lyndale Street, is a former MHS Principal and she felt that the mascot needed changing during her tenure, but also felt the change needed to come from the students. She is proud of how well they took on this mission. In her 61 years many

words were once used commonly that are now no longer acceptable, for example the Newington Hospital for Crippled Children. Ms. Krieger realizes the Indian name was not meant to be disrespectful, but she supports a change.

Gerry Navarra, 588 East Center Street, is a teacher and coach at MHS and has lived here for 20 years. This debate is not a new one, noting back in 1996 his class also wanted change. Mr. Navarra pointed out that the entire state of Maine recently banned the use of indigenous names and both Killingly and West Hartford are also debating the topic. This, he feels, is an opportunity for Manchester to be on the right side of history and a leader of social justice, not a bystander. In 2005, there was a resolution by Congress that perpetuated stereotypes are harmful. As a coach, he noted they do not use the Indian head on any uniforms, so a vote against change equals a vote for no mascot, as the Indian has not been used in many years.

Ryan Parker, 65 North School Street, is here to talk about durags, noting he refuses to get lost in other people's perceptions of appropriate looks for black and brown boys and girls. Some people think durags symbolize gang affiliation or a negative influence, but in reality it is a cultural norm. We should be focused on an active partnership with students, to be inclusive. To ban certain students attire instead of focusing on a policy of love and embracing the whole student is wrong. This ban harms pieces of black and brown girls and boys.

Paige Tyler, 366 Woodbridge Street, quoted Angela Davis, "In a racist society, it's not enough to be non-racist— you have to be anti-racist." She noted that we need to reconsider the mascot and not sweep history under the rug.

Stephanie Knybel, 185 East Center Street, is not in favor of changing the mascot. She is a graduate of the class of 1974 and a proud MHS Indian. If we have to change the mascot, she would prefer we go back to the history of Manchester and use Silkworms in honor of the Cheney's who settled this town with the silk mills. Ms. Knybel did some research and noted the hawk is a predatory bird and says that another definition is an uncooperative, selfish participant in a game. She does not want the mascot to be Red Hawks, but to rethink the history of Manchester. She also suggested we be like the Cleveland Browns and not have a mascot and just use the letter M.

Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, is a member of the class of 1974 and disagrees with the previous speaker, noting times change. The first people here were Native Americans and they were treated just as badly as slaves. Those against the change should educate themselves and he suggested the book *365 Days of Walking the Red Road*. Mr. Stringfellow pointed out that other states have even removed monuments that are now considered racist and inappropriate. He recommended the books *Indigenous People* and *Unexamined Courage*. He noted Native Americans fought in every war in this country and we need to move along with the changing times.

Ed Berggren, 74 Battista Road, has lived in Manchester for 90 years. He grew up on a farm in Indian territory and they showed people how to raise corn and everyone got along. He is opposed to the change and thinks it is an honor to call our teams Indians. They were a peaceful tribe in Manchester and got along with everyone.

Amanda Navarra, 588 East Center Street, agreed with Ryan Parker that it is a danger to prioritize one group over another. She noted it is clear that enough people are offended over this divisive symbol. We want to bring people together not cause a wedge. She started teacher in Manchester in 2004 and has always refused to wear any Manchester apparel that featured an Indian. Ms. Navarra is proud of the students who researched, invited peers, teachers and the community to rally around this new mascot. She supports their work. She invites those afraid to have their past forgotten to work with the students to honor the Native Americans in a more respectful way.

Jake Skrzpiec, 180 John Olds Drive, teaches at MHS. He works with students to think critically about others perspectives, race, gender, and culture. He notes we should use the past and present to inform the future. We can do better to teach our children. He is a passionate activist and calls us to think about where we want to see Manchester in 5, 10 or 20 years.

Majesty Moore, student MHS, supports the change. Currently MHS has no mascot in her eyes because it cannot be proudly displayed. The majority of students and staff want the change. Ms. Moore noted that alumni can still be proud Indians, but the current students and staff want a change. It is hard to have pride in an M and not have a mascot to rally behind. Using an Indian as a mascot renders Native Americans invisible.

Katherine Miner, student MHS, thanked the Board for their time and willingness to listen to the students, noting it means a lot to them. They put a lot of work in with their team for this change and to be able to present and be supported and respected means a lot.

Liam Chenette, student MHS, is proud to be part of the group working on this change. The use of the mascot has been deemphasized over the last several years because it is racist and wrong. Nobody would stand for a team called the Whites, the Blacks, the Italians. It is offensive. He is proud that the Board has listened to the student's voice. It is an important discussion. Mr. Chenette noted it is important that alumni are here as well. We are not trying to change their identity as an Indian. Currently, it is like MHS does not have a mascot, only the letter M. He noted the majority of students and staff support this change. Last, he noted we do not even use Indian on apparel due to a 2012 decision to deemphasize it.

Sarah Waggoner, student MHS, wants a symbol the students can rally behind and have pride in to unite the community. She wants everyone to feel comfortable with the mascot, not feel shame about it. We should not be putting down anyone's race.

Jill Kilgus, 560 Porter Street, has taught in town for 22 years and has two students in the system. She hopes the kindergarteners she teaches have the determination, drive, and critical thinking that these students have displayed. If you know better you should do better. She supports the voice and dignity shown and wants to bring the town into the new light, enlightenment in education.

Marley Howard, Student MHS, thinks using the term Indians is racist, insensitive and hurtful. She wants the mascot to be inclusive.

Annabelle Watson, Student MHS, is a junior and is very involved in this change and proud of their work. A mascot should bring people together, not divide them. This is a way to unite the community.

Kate Dias, 22 Thayer Road, is a member of the class of 1990. She notes that many alumni do not embrace the Indians mascot. As a student she recalls having an Indian mascot on the field, but we didn't know better then and we do now. She pointed out that having a mascot meant to honor a people who do not feel honored by it does not

make sense. This change is coming from students and that is the most powerful type of change. If we fail them it is a travesty of our educational system. The students did surveys. They sought out conflict and engaged in conversations about it. They have done an extraordinary amount of work and this is what we want our educational system to be. She can still remember the great time of her youth, but this change shows a healthy respect and willingness to grow.

Maxwell Toth, 70 Kensington Street, is a 2018 graduate and a sophomore at Clark College. He is studying American Studies and has learned about the horrors of the Native Americans. He wonders if this shameful history is what we to represent MHS. It makes him sad to see an indian on the cover of his yearbook. Mr. Toth urges consideration of how we want to be remembered. This has been brewing for years and he supports the change.

Parag Joshi, 134 East Middle Turnpike, is a teacher at the high school and thinks a mascot should be something everyone can rally behind and be silly about. He appreciates the thought to honor the Podunks, but not through the use of a mascot, but in another way, such as a memorial or a statute. We should keep the good part.

Martha Johnson, Student MHS, votes for the change, noting there is no pride in using an M instead of a mascot.

Nelson Javon Martinez, II - Student MHS is an active student activist. He has spent two years working on this change. He notes there are valid concerns, but it is offensive to have a race as a mascot. Even the term is ignorant, noting Christopher Columbus deemed the Natives Indians because he thought he had landed in India. Students created the mascot and students have realized it is no longer appropriate. This is not a new issue and has been in the works for about twenty years. The Red Hawks will unify and include all students.

Cassandra Holder, 139 Maple Street, is a proud MHS graduate and employee. She was happy to see steps already made, such as changing Columbus Day to Indiginous People's Day (not Indian Day!). It was inappropriate in the past to dress up as an Indian and it is something we do not celebrate now. We should respect the indiginous people and listen to the students and continue with the change.

Rosemary Litco, 175 Stoney Brook Drive, graduated MHS last week and wanted to buy some MHS apparel, but couldn't because she did not like the Indian displayed on it. It is inappropriate, racist and hurtful.

Troy Peters, 276 Oak Street, is a 1988 graduate of MHS. Mr. Peters, a black man, had on a tee-shirt with a picture of a white man with the term "The Caucasians" on it to highlight how ridiculous using a race as a mascot is. He played basketball as an MHS student and he never has referred to himself as an "Indian". He does not understand how people long gone from school have a problem with this change. The current students want the change and did the research to back up their mission.

Vanessa Phillips, 46 Strickland Street, was an initial member of the activist team and is proud of their work. She wonders why this is such a problem and concluded that some people feel like their history is being erased. She noted history lives in your memories and we should not be afraid of change. This is not going to impact the lives of alumni. The indigenous people, however, are impacted and were erased from where they used to live. We took their land. The mascot Indian is not a sign of change but of injustice and inequality.

Tim O'Neil, 62 Hollister Street, is a 1980 graduate of MHS and gives credit to the students for their strong beliefs. He, however, is still opposed to the change. He feels changing the mascot would be a mistake and we should listen to the 90 year old speaker who thinks the mascot is not derogatory, but he will leave the Board to figure that out.

Mr. Thames thanked everyone for their passionate comments. He asked Board members if they wanted to move Item I.1. to be dealt with next. They did.

Secretary Pattacini moved for the agenda to be amended to move item I.1. to come prior to Item G. Ms. Hagenow seconded the motion.

7/0 - Voted in favor.

I.1. Manchester High School Mascot

Secretary Pattacini moved for the Board of Education to change the Manchester High School mascot from the Indians to the Red Hawks, effective for the 2019-2020 School Year. Mr. Scappaticci seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Conyers thanked everyone for coming out this evening. He was impressed that both sides of the argument were received with respect and clapping. Mr. Conyers thought it was great to hear students opinions on this topic and he will vote for change. However, he would like to see a more Manchester-centric mascot name chosen to celebrate our history. He is proud of our history and has an appetite to learn more and would like to hear more about the Podunk history in town.

Ms. Maio thanked the student activities for the copious amount of work this battle took. Their drive and determination is inspiring. This mascot was created in 1949 and to think that in over 70 years there has been no cultural change is ignorant. Ms. Maio felt all the members of the public who spoke were eloquent. She noted four points: 1) the majority of people are in favor of a change; 2) 70 years of social changes demand a change; 3) the current student body does not identify with the current mascot; and 4) the indigenous people are offended by the mascot. In her view, there is no other choice but to change the mascot.

Mr. Hughes had drafted a statement he was prepared to read to ask for a postponement of this vote. However, after listening to all the speakers he is prepared to vote for change this evening. He appreciated the speakers and wants to look into ways to honor the Native Americans.

Mr. Scappaticci remembered fondly the boy dressed as the indian mascot running down the football field in his youth. However, through the climate survey he recalled the Superintendent saying we need to be comfortable leaning into discomfort. It is important to acknowledge that in the climate survey some students reported not feeling heard. He believes the students put forth a solid argument. It was impressive and well-researched. The students have told us what they want very clearly. They know what is right. Adults do not always know better. To delay this vote would be like

saying “we’ll see” which often equals a no. We have seen through student research and even through the National Congress of American Indians there is support for this change. The United South and Eastern Tribes want this change. We don’t need additional studies, they have been done. Mr. Scappaticci pointed out he has two history degrees and he feels some history belongs in a museum to be interpreted by people who can understand why it happened. We get to say who we want to honor, but the Native Americans do not feel honored by our use of this mascot. Changing this does not erase our history. He agrees that he would like to see more education around Indigenous People’s Day, to embrace history and use it to study. There is a momentous choice tonight. Mr. Scappaticci is proud for us to walk out of the shadow of history and into the bright light of the future.

Ms. Hagenow is not opposed to change, especially since MHS hasn’t used the mascot in many years. She does not think it is tossing history aside, just moving forward. The Climate has changed and we need to change with it.

Mr. Pattacini noted that he was so proud to hear everyone tonight. He is proud of these Manchester graduates. We teach critical thinking, respect for others, and to be a global citizen in a multicultural world. This was a student-led and staff-supported initiative that he supports.

Mr. Thames thanked people for their comments on both sides of the topic. He can see both perspectives. He thinks it is time to pass the torch to the new students and hear their voice. Mr. Thames talked about his ancestors who did not come here voluntarily, but on slave ships. If the mascot was named Slaves it would not honor the people who helped build this country. It makes no sense. If people did not stand against stereotypes there might still be slavery. It is not acceptable to treat people as “less than”. Although the original intention of the Indian mascot may have been to honor the tribes, it is no longer honorable. Mr. Thames appreciates the students saying that this is not their future. The National Congress of American Indians agrees, stating that the use of these mascots perpetuates negative stereotypes.

The vote was called.

7/0 - Voted in favor.

Mr. Scappaticci moved to go into recess. Mr. Pattacini seconded the motion.

**7/0 - Voted in favor. Recess called at 8:26 pm
Back in session at 8:45 pm**

G. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

G.1. Update on School Resource Officers

Manchester Police Chief William Darby gave a presentation, available on the website, regarding arrests in the schools over the past several years. Chief Darby has been in this position since November, having been with the department for 9 years and with Newington for 21 years.

Mr. Scappaticci wondered if there was a waiting list of officers who desired to be School Resource Officers. Mr. Darby stated they usually have multiple applicants with 124 officers in the department, but there are many different specialties they can apply for. Mr. Scappaticci wondered about special training for SROs. Mr. Darby stated there is a week long SRO training program along with other periodic trainings. He also pointed out the general raining officers receive on crisis intervention and de-escalation also come in handy.

Mr. Scappaticci noted the arrests in schools seems to be trending down, and was curious if this may be impacted by restorative discipline. Mr. Geary noted we have made an effort to not call for an arrest in minor instances. It has been a good collaborative effort as there used to be 70+ arrests a year 7-9 years ago. We work closely with the Manchester Police Department.

Ms. Stefanovicz thanked Chief Darby and wondered what a typical day for an SRO is. Srg. Birios, who is located at MHS, noted they start their day in the halls at 7:00 a.m. by greeting students. They mentor and build rapport with kids. SROs also work with family members to help get a child on track when needed. They try to be a friendly face.

Mr. Conyers wondered if the SROs work closely with the security guards at the schools, how they interact with the elementary schools and police explorers.

Srg. Barrios stated that each SRO is assigned a few elementary schools to be their point of contact. They do not visit the schools daily, but if there is an issue the school calls that SRO directly. One of the SROs is the advisor for the Police Explorers and also teaches the Law & Order class required for seniors.

Chief Darby noted that they are exploring ways to get more programs in the school for future officers. Sixty college credits are required to be hired and a bachelor's degree is a requirement for a promotion to a supervisory position. You must be 21 years of age to attend the police academy. He wants to expose kids and get them interested young. He hopes to expose more students to police explorers and possibly expand the law & order class.

Mr. Thames thanked the officers for their presentation and noted he likes the SRO program. It is a great way to engage with police in a non-violent manner and for officers to be role models and mentors to our youth.

G.2. Update on School Start and End Times

Tabled to the July meeting.

H. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

I. NEW BUSINESS

I.1. Manchester High School Mascot

Addressed above.

I.2. Policy Recommendations

2a) Policy 1401 - School Volunteers/Chaperones

Mr. Geary reviewed current policy is to update this screening every three years. He is recommending the policy be revised to be similar to the employee screening with a one time screening.

2b) Policy 3280 - Gifts, Grants, Bequests

Mr. Geary noted that to ensure equity we had tried to limit teachers using funding sources such as Donors Choose. With the RISE Network, which matches donor funding, the Superintendent would like to ability to approve innovative projects on a case by case basis.

2c) Student Dress Code

Mr. Geary noted this change would allow head coverings such as hats, durags and religious coverings, however would still exclude hoods. This would apply to grades 9-12 next year.

Mr. Geary noted these were all first reads and would be voted on at the July 8th meeting.

Mr. Conyers wondered if there was some sort of mandatory reporting that can be required if a person is arrested or has other problems. Mr. Geary noted they will retain the ability to rerun a background check if someone is uncomfortable or has suspicions about a person.

Mr. Scappaticci wondered if Principal Miner had any concerns about changes to the dress code at MHS. She stepped forward and stated she is comfortable with the change. Mr. Scappaticci liked that the request for a change came from the students.

Ms. Stefanovicz asked for elaboration about 2.b. and how teacher's were funding innovative projects this past year. Mr. Geary noted the Alliance Grant provided for mini-grants to teachers for creative use, but with the tight budget currently, he is hoping for a more thoughtful oversight of funding requests such as through Donors Choose.

I.3. Adoption of Board of Education Self Evaluation

Secretary Pattacini moved to accept the Manchester Board of Education Self Evaluation. Mr. Scappaticci seconded the motion.

7/0 - Voted in favor.

I.4. Educational Specifications - Buckley Elementary School

RESOLVED: The Board of Education approves the educational specifications for additions and renovations to Buckley Elementary School, dated June 20, 2019. Motion by Mr. Pattacinni and second by Mr. Scappaticci.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Conyers asked for an explanation of this motion. Mr. Geary noted that there is a June 30, 2019 deadline to file plans with the state. The items are basics such as classroom size. Tonight he is asking for a vote on the first two schools in line for renovations and both of them will house about 400 students, but otherwise will be similar to the last two renovated schools.

7/0 - Voted in favor.

I.5. Educational Specifications - Bowers Elementary School

RESOLVED: The Board of Education approves the educational specifications for additions and renovations to Bowers Elementary School, dated June 20, 2019. Motion by Mr. Pattacini and second by Mr. Scappaticci.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Pattacini thanked Mr. Geary and is excited for the next steps for the work going on in the schools.

7/0 - Voted in favor.

I.6. Superintendent's Evaluation

Tabled until the July meeting.

I.7. Superintendent's Contract

Tabled until the July meeting.

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

Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, supports the Consent Calendar, especially items #2. He feels there is a multicultural divide in this country. It is time for a change. Mr. Stringfellow would like to see a forum about Indigenous People's Day in October and suggested some speakers. It would be an opportunity for us to learn. Mr. Stringfellow enjoyed the presentation by the Police Chief and felt a Government Academy would be a good addition. It is good for students to see police as friends and not the enemy. Last, Mr. Stringfellow touched on sex slavery and identity theft.

Stephanie Knybel, 185 East Center Street, wanted to know what will be done with the Indian symbol on the front of MHS. She hopes it will not be destroyed. As for the new dress code suggestions for MHS, she is not in favor. She is old school and to her that means gentlemen take off their hats in buildings. She doesn't like the dress code being watered down. Ms. Knybel noted that jobs have rules and we are "just making it easier for kids". She does not like this.

K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

Monday - July 8, 2019 - Spring Data Update

Monday - August 26, 2019 - Opening of School Update

Ms. Stefanovicz attended the MHS Graduation and felt that the order of the presentation of diplomas seemed to highlight test scores over overall achievement. She does not believe this fosters an environment we are looking for. Mr. Geary suggested the Policy subcommittee review this.

Mr. Conyers agreed with Ms. Stefanovicz, noting he heard parents advocating for alphabetical order for diplomas as some missed their student's name being called.

Mr. Thames had a time at graduation, noting that is what makes us, as Board members, appreciate why we are here. He congratulated the graduates and gave kudos to the Board members for their sacrifice to be here.

L. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Thames called for a motion to adjourn.

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

7/0 - Voted in favor. Adjournment 9:35p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Christopher Pattacini
Board Secretary