

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting

February 6, 2017

Lincoln

PRESENT: Caldwell, Conyers, Jacobsen, Leon, Pattacini, Scappaticci, Thames

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

ABSENT: Hagenow, Stefanovicz

A. OPENING

A.1. & 2. Meeting Called to Order

Chairperson Pattacini called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Mr. Pattacini.

A.3. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

APPROVED – Minutes Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of January 9, 2017. Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Leon seconded the motion.

7/0 – Voted in favor.

A.4. Approval of Minutes of Budget Workshop

APPROVED – Minutes Budget Workshop of the Board of Education of January 18, 2017. Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Leon seconded the motion.

7/0 – Voted in favor.

A.5. Approval of Minutes of Budget Workshop

APPROVED – Minutes Budget Workshop of the Board of Education of January 25, 2017. Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Leon seconded the motion.

6/0/1 – Voted in favor.

A.6. Approval of Minutes of Budget Workshop

APPROVED – Minutes Budget Workshop of the Board of Education of February 1, 2017. Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Leon seconded the motion.

6/0/1 – Voted in favor.

B. COMMITTEE REPORTS

B.1. Policy Committee

Mr. Thames reviewed the last meeting was held January 9, 2017 with the following people in attendance: Ms. Hagenow, Ms. Jacobsen, Mr. Pattacini, Mr. Thames, Mr. Geary and Inaam Kahn, though Ms. Hagenow had to leave shortly after the start of the meeting.

The Committee discussed the Religious Observances and School Prayer Policy #6115 and will send the policy revisions to the full Board for review.

The Committee discussed the new Volunteers Policy #1401 and will send the policy to the full Board for a first reading.

The Class Size Policy #6151 was revised and will go to the full Board for a first reading at the next meeting.

The Fingerprinting of New Hires Policy will be sent to the full Board.

Next, the Committee discussed the new Personnel - Reports of Suspected Abuse or Neglect of Children or Sexual Assault of Students by School Employees Policy #4141 and this will be sent to the full Board for a first reading. The existing Policy #5141.2, which covers reporting by personnel, is listed as a 5000 series

policy which is for matters pertaining to students. The revised policy will be a 4000 series Policy pertaining to reporting by personnel. A new policy outlining the procedures for child sexual abuse and/or sexual assault response was developed and will be numbered 5141.2, replacing the existing policy in the Students (5000) series. That policy will also be sent to the full Board of Education for a first reading at the Board of Education meeting on February 6, 2017.

The committee discussed the new Personnel - Section 504/ADA Policy #4012 and will send the policy to the full Board for a first reading at the meeting on February 6, 2017. The existing Policy #4012, which covers students, is a listed as a 4000 series policy, which is for matters pertaining to personnel. The revised policy pertains to personnel. A new 504/ADA policy outlining the procedures for students was developed and will be numbered 5012 in the Students (5000) series. That policy will also be sent to the full Board for a first reading at the meeting on February 6th.

The next meeting will be held on March 13, 2017.

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 Manchester High School Mathematics Computer Supplies/Materials account (\$975) to Manchester High School Mathematics Field Trips account in the amount of \$250 and to Manchester High School Mathematics Dues/Fees account in the amount of \$725, for a total transfer of \$975
- Transfer from District-wide Curriculum & Instruction Field Trips account to District-wide Curriculum & Instruction Dues & Fees in the amount of \$32,881.

C.3. Establish an increase in appropriation for FY 16-17 Bilingual Education Grant of \$78.00, for a total appropriation of \$5,023

C.4. Establish an appropriation for FY 16-18 Hartford Foundation for Public Giving in the amount of \$720,000

C.5. Extended Field Trip Request - MHS RoundTable Singers/Jazz Choir - Boston Concert Tour/Competition - 25 students - 4/21/17 to 4/22/17

The Chairman called for a motion.

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

7/0 - Voted in favor.

D. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

Shania Stanton noted that History Day is Saturday February 25th. The Gay Straight Alliance has a coffee shop on February 17 at 7pm. Class rings can be purchased February 22 and 24. Cap and gowns are ordered February 23rd. Ms. Stanton noted that the concert remembering Security Guard Mitch was held last week. There will be a Valentine's Day Dance on February 10th.

Nabila Hoor Un Ein reviewed the activities fair is being held on February 9th for 9th graders. She also noted the Winter Spirit Week is approaching, February 13-17. The Medical Academy is selling EKG Heart Grams to help cover the cost of attendance at the spring leadership conference in March.

E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, gave many recommendations for reading on several history topics, including World War II, the Battle of the Bulge, and Black History Month. He suggested a show on gender roles on National Geographic, as well as homelessness of transgender youth. Mr. Stringfellow is concerned about immigration and feels we need to pull together, not apart.

F. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART I

F.1. Connecticut Kid Governor State Finalists

Madelyn Spina was unable to be here this evening and this recognition will be moved to another meeting.

F.2. Update on Professional Development

Mr. Geary introduced Dr. Amy Radikas, who gave a brief update on the professional development program that supports district goals in Manchester. Her presentation is available on the website.

Mr. Conyers wondered how many full PD days the district has. Dr. Radikas noted there is one full day in August, November and January, along with several half day professional development days. Mr. Conyers wondered if we employ outside speakers or use internal staff for these trainings. Dr. Radikas noted that in the past we primarily paid outside speakers, but now most events are held using internal talent.

Mr. Scappaticci wondered how the format was received by staff at the last PD day in January. Dr. Radikas noted it went well and she received good feedback, and many liked having the mid-day time with Mr. Geary and then lunch. Mr. Scappaticci likes that we use internal talent to teach our other talented staff members.

Mr. Thames asked about pause time. Dr. Radikas noted it is not a commonly used concept, but we started it about a year ago with administration. She noted that teachers are stressed and need time. She does not know another district that does this. Mr. Thames felt it was a great concept.

Mr. Pattacini asked for examples of indicators of student achievement and observed teaching practices. Dr. Radikas noted Pari Ghetia and Diane Sheehan-Burns conduct Learning Walks for principals and teams to observe the workshop model characteristics. The Data Dashboard is also a resource.

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

H. NEW BUSINESS

H.1. Policy Recommendations - First Reading

a. Policy 6115 - Religious Observances & School Prayer

Mr. Geary reviewed that about a year ago a citizen had asked about the possibility of observing different religious holidays than traditionally observed in this district. Since that time surveys were conducted of both parents and students concerning which holidays the Board should consider. Of those not currently observed there were two Muslim holidays and Three Kings Day that were most popular in the survey. Next year only one of the Muslim holidays falls on a school day and that is Eid Al-Adha. The district will be closed on September 5th in observance of that holiday. Three Kings Day next year falls on a Saturday, but consideration will be given to observing that day should it fall on a school day in the future.

Mr. Thames wondered how the survey was administered. Mr. Geary reviewed the first survey was sent to families and did not elicit a good response rate. Next, it was sent to high school students which had a better return rate.

Mr. Leon thought the Policy Committee did excellent work and he wondered how the survey was worded. Mr. Geary reviewed that the question was to check off any holiday which you would celebrate that is not currently on the school calendar. The three listed above garnered far more support than any of the Jewish holidays.

b. Policy 1401 - School Volunteers

Mr. Geary noted we want as many volunteers as possible, however we need a thoughtful system to organize them. This policy introduced a uniform screening process and form for volunteers to submit. Volunteers are divided into two groups, with group one working with children only with supervision, while group two may be unsupervised, such as a coach. Group two volunteers will have a required background check.

Mr. Leon wondered if a parent chaperon on a field trip would be in group one or two. Mr. Geary noted if the trip was an overnight trip they would fall into the group two category.

Mr. Caldwell asked for clarification of the different vetting processes. Mr. Geary reviewed the group two volunteers will have a background check.

Mr. Conyers asked for the timetable on the checks and what the financial cost would be. Mr. Geary noted that the district currently has software able to run these checks so there would be no cost to the volunteer and would have a quick turnaround time.

c. Policy 6151 - Class Size

Mr. Geary noted this revision was simply to clean up some language to reflect the current practice of the district.

Mr. Leon asked if this policy remained in line with the teacher's contract. Mr. Geary noted that the contract has a "not to exceed" number and this recommendation is well below that. Mr. Leon pointed out that this policy is a recommendation and Mr. Geary agreed, noting that if necessary we can go over the recommended number.

d. Approval of Revision to Board of Education Calendar for 2017-2018

Mr. Geary explained that we typically approve calendars two at a time, however with the addition of the holiday observance on September 5th next year, the calendar for the next school year had to be amended. There are the same number of PD days. Students will start school after Labor Day.

Secretary Scappaticci moved to adopt the revised Board of Education Calendar for 2017-2018. Mr. Leon seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Leon asked if staff would also have September 5th, Eid Al-Adha, off. Mr. Geary confirmed the district would be closed that day and staff would be off.

7/0 - Voted in favor.

H.2. Action on Recommended Board of Education 2017-2018 Budget

Mr. Pattacini reviewed there were just a few questions left after the three budget workshops held previously.

Mr. Geary reviewed the fields in town that we pay the town the cost of a maintainer (approximately \$85,000) are the high school fields, including grass, leaves, and the synthetic turf as well as trash.

Mr. Geary also reviewed that some unions provide for life insurance after retirement, such as administrators, custodians, paraprofessionals and secretaries. This is all based on contracts.

The number of students in Adult Ed is current 222. The number of students in Continuing Ed is currently 460.

Mr. Leon asked if any alternative budget cuts were received from any Board members since the last budget workshop. Mr. Pattacini had not received any feedback on alternative cuts and had the sense at the last meeting that Board members would approve the current budget.

Mr. Leon brought up the rumor and innuendo that the state was cutting \$750,000 mid-year to local schools. Mr. Geary felt that number might be derived from the \$250,000 mid-year reduction along with the approximate \$300,000 reduction to the Alliance Grant. He detailed the Alliance Grant reductions, including approximately \$108,000 for Chromebooks, \$20,000 for tech support staff, \$20,000 for supplies for the creativity grants, \$20,000 to the Academies at the high school, \$22,000 due to the resignation of an FRC coordinator mid-year, \$40,000 for the reduction of SAAM staff, \$4,000 for the reduction in SAAM transportation, and \$16,000 for instructional supplies for SAAM. As for the loss to the town of municipal aid, the Board has frozen this year's budget to help the town out.

Mr. Leon noted we currently have frozen approximately \$500,000 and he wondered if we promised that to the town. Mr. Geary noted we did not promise it, but the town is counting on it. We are not obligated to turn those funds over, but as a responsible, thoughtful partner we expect to.

Mr. Leon commended the administration and staff for their work on this budget, noting the 2.9% increase is only to maintain what we already have in the district. He feels it is money well spent, pointing out the increase in our graduation rates and test scores.

Mr. Conyers also thanked Mr. Geary for his hard work, however he is concerned about the possible loss of the Alliance funds. He also pointed out the Board of Directors, this morning, announce a plan to have no tax increases this year. Mr. Geary pointed out that no tax increase does not necessarily mean no budget increase. He is sensitive to the taxpayers, but it is our job to put forward a budget that maintains services to our children. Mr. Geary pointed out that if we put forth a 0% increased budget, which amounts to cuts of about \$3 million, we also have to consider the probable cut of \$3.8 million in Alliance funds, plus the approximate \$4 million that the Governor is asking us to pay towards pensions. That equals nearly \$11 million. Given all these unknowns, it is hard to say which programs would be impacted.

Mr. Conyers asked when the budget is presented to the Board of Directors. Mr. Geary reviewed that the budget request is given to the town manager next week, however the Board of Education meets with the Board of Directors on March 8 and March 14 for budget workshops.

Ms. Jacobsen noted this has been a lengthy budget session already. At the last budget workshop she had asked about the cost savings of possibly sharing more services with the town as well as what we could do with the overage in the TOMMIF fund. Mr. Geary replied that he has not yet met with the town regarding shared services, but he will do so soon. He is not sure sharing services would reduce the budget numbers though. As for TOMMIF, we are still looking into that.

Mr. Scappaticci read an article stating that our schools have declining enrollment. He thought enrollment was flat. Mr. Geary noted this year our enrollment rose by 50 students. Over the last ten years it has declined, but in recent years it has remained flat. Mr. Geary noted one argument is that less kids cost less, but that is not necessarily true. He pointed out that in addition to the students that attend district schools, we must pay tuition for the approximate 500 students that attend magnet schools, which costs approximately \$2.1 million. He also notes that needs change and there is a cost associated with meeting those needs. Mr. Scappaticci felt that while you can have a difference of opinion, you cannot have a difference of fact and the fact is that our enrollment is NOT declining.

Mr. Scappaticci asked about how the Board budgets regarding retirements. Mr. Geary reviewed that top salaries for a senior teacher vary between \$83,000 and \$89,000 depending on the salary scale. For known retirements, \$51,000 is budgeted for a replacement. In some circumstance, such as shortage areas, we may pay as much as the top figure that the retiree received, but in no circumstances would the replacement be paid more than the top step (currently \$89,000). We work hard to save money on hiring, and there are no individual negotiations, there is a union contract. At the moment we are aware of seven June retirements.

Mr. Scappaticci was appalled to read this morning someone in the town was quoted as saying we have had no results from our investment of resources. Mr. Scappaticci pointed out the increase in both graduation rates and test scores. He noted that attendance rates have risen and there has been a change in school culture and climate. Mr. Geary noted that in 2012 the graduation rate was 76.9% and this year it is 90.4%. We still have a long way to go, but we have made steady increases over time. It is not practical to expect dramatic increases in a short period of time in our diverse district with complex needs. To say we have seen no results is not looking at the whole picture. We will continue to trend upward. Mr. Scappaticci also pointed out that MHS graduates graduate with more college credits than anyone in the area. Mr. Geary added that we also have the 2nd highest UCONN credit graduates in the state. It was also pointed out the dramatic decrease in suspensions, expulsions and arrests.

Mr. Scappaticci is proud of the direction Manchester is headed in and he cautions his elected colleagues that staff reads their comments and after all their hard work it is disheartening.

Mr. Thames noted that over the last several years that he has been a member of the Board he has seen the development of district and school improvement teams and the development of our mission, vision and goals. He looks at this budget based on that vision, noting there is no padding and no games. The budget was arrived at after a thoughtful process. He was taken aback by the article in today's paper and the tone and animosity it projected. Mr. Thames noted he volunteers as a Board member for the best interests of our children and Manchester Public Schools. He wants to make sure our kids grow up to be successful adults. This is a student-centered budget. We are concerned about a high quality education. He notes we need to work together, be thoughtful and conscientious and remember we are all on the same team.

Secretary Scappaticci moved for the Board of Education to adopt the recommended Board of Education 2017-2018 budget of \$114,110,227. Mr. Leon seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Caldwell appreciates the time put into the budget, however at the last budget workshop he expressed his concern that a 2.9% increase equates to \$3.2 million. Over the last five years our budget has increased about \$10 million. Mr. Caldwell loves the progress we have made, but in a district made up of 54% Free/Reduced Lunch students, over half of our families experience economic hardships. The state is going through harsh economic times as well and yet we are asking to increase our budget. Mr. Caldwell agrees with the Board of Directors that we should have a flat budget. He cannot bankrupt families in the process and he will not vote yes on this budget.

Mr. Leon pointed out that from the first budget workshop he asked Board members to show where they would like cuts made if they want a reduction in the budget. Nobody has offered any suggestions. We need to bring the budget to the Board of Directors next week and we have no alternatives on the floor to consider at this point.

Ms. Jacobsen noted we are in a tough position with the state in turmoil. To come up with alternatives is difficult without knowing the state funding numbers. She is having a tough time deciding whether she will vote yes or no, though she understands the need to give a number to the Board of Directors. She notes eventually we may need to reduce the budget anyway.

Mr. Leon pointed out that not supporting the only budget we have in front of us is not the answer. By town charter we must submit a budget. If we vote no on this budget, or the vote is split, what would we deliver to the town?

Mr. Caldwell asked at the last meeting about the possibility of using the excess TOMMIF fund to help alleviate the increase in healthcare costs.

Mr. Pattacini noted it is still early in the budget process. We are here to take a recommendation from the Superintendent, who is the expert we hired to run the school district. Mr. Pattacini reviewed this is only the first in many steps on the road to adopting the budget. There will be an opportunity to discuss the TOMMIF fund, grants, and state aid in the future. Board members can support this proposed budget while understanding that we may need to make changes in the future. This is a bipartisan effort and we need to work with the Board of Directors. Mr. Pattacini regrets that some Board of Directors have been disparaging of the Board of Education and administration. It is disappointing. He hopes to show them at the workshops and help them understand the needs of the school district.

Mr. Leon asked for a five minute recess to caucus.

Mr. Pattacini called a recess at 8:37 p.m.

The meeting was called back to order at 8:46 p.m.

Mr. Pattacini called the question.

4/2/1 - Voted in favor.

The budget recommendation passes. Mr. Pattacini stated this is a tough budget cycle and he thanked the administration for their work. He is proud of the work done on this budget in the best interests of the district. Mr. Pattacini acknowledged we will have to work with the Board of Directors to balance the needs of the district with the ability to pay for those needs.

H.3. Action on Recommended Technology Equipment and Service to the Cheney-Bennet Academy

Mr. Geary reviewed the major change is the introduction of Smart TVs in place of white boards. Also phones were added to every classroom. Mr. Geary noted that initially the state reimbursed for laptops and they no longer do. This is a better way to do things.

Ms. Jacobsen asked why there is computer equipment in almost all rooms, including special education and ELL spaces, the conference room, and nurse's exam room. She wondered why so many computers are necessary. Mr. Geary pointed out that the Special Education and ELL spaces are outfitted just as a classroom would be. Regarding the exam room, he speculated the computer would be for the nurse to chart, however he would ask health services. Ms. Jacobsen asked what room 312 is and why two computers are necessary there. Mr. Geary noted that is a teacher workroom where staff can go to prepare. He pointed out the conference room is for meetings and requires a Smart TV for presentations. Ms. Jacobsen was confused about why the special education room needed this technology, especially if they do not currently have it in their elementary buildings now. Mr. Geary again explained that these are instructional classrooms and are outfitted equitably. Ms. Kerri Kearney pointed out that the majority, if not all, of our special education classrooms at the elementary level currently have technology, though some of it may be Elmos, which is an older version. We try to keep the technology the same in the district and this is in line with what is currently at Bennet. It is common practice to have interactive whiteboards in the district.

Ms. Jacobsen asked about the addition of a phone in the cafeteria. Mr. Geary noted that with the larger cafeteria it was a safety issue to have access to a phone in an emergency. Ms. Jacobsen wondered if the cafeteria would need an

additional cash register. Ms. Kearney was not aware of a need for that but she will follow up with food services.

Ms. Jacobsen wondered if all classrooms have a sound system for hearing impaired students or students with auditory processing issues. Ms. Kearney noted that rooms are bluetooth capable for a receiver to be used if needed.

Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Leon seconded the motion: RESOLVED, the Board of Education approves the plans and specifications for Technology Equipment and services to the Cheney-Bennet Academy, prepared by TSKP Studio and dated February 6, 2017, and the associated cost estimate for submission to the Department of Administrative Services, Office of School Construction Grants, for Review of Final Plans for Construction Authorization.

7/0 - Voted in favor.

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

None.

J. COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Leon felt that the press conference held today by the Board of Directors was a political stunt. They did not consult with us and it was a poor display of not working together. Mr. Leon felt it was interesting that the press was not here this evening for the vote and he is disappointed.

Mr. Caldwell asked if a motion passes with a majority of the Board or only a majority of Board members present. Mr. Pattacini clarified that for some specific items, such as the bylaws, a $\frac{2}{3}$ vote of the entire Board is required, but other motions only require a majority vote of those present.

Mr. Pattacini thanked Board members for an excellent retreat Saturday. He notes we are working towards a fully integrated vision and mission with our data dashboard. He is excited about the work done and the relationships built.

K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

None.

L. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Pattacini called for a motion to adjourn.

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

7/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Scappaticci
Board Secretary