

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting

June 27, 2016

Lincoln

PRESENT: Hagenow, Jacobsen, Leon, Pattacini, Pazda, Scappaticci, Stafford, Stefanovicz, Thames

ALSO PRESENT: Superintendent of Schools Geary, Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Management Brooks, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Radikas

ABSENT:

A. OPENING

A.1. & 2. Meeting Called to Order

Chairperson Pattacini called the meeting back to order at 7:13 p.m. Mr. Pattacini explained the Board had been in Executive Session. 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 June 13, 2016. Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Leon seconded the motion.

8/0 – Voted in favor.

B. COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

C. CONSENT CALENDAR

Mr. Geary presented seven 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. Permission to apply for the FY 16/17 Manchester Head Start Cost of Living Adjustment

C.3. Establish an appropriation for FY 16/17 for the Medicaid Grant in the amount of \$200,000

C.4. Increase in appropriation for FY 15-17 for the Head Start Daycare program anticipated revenue by \$80,000, bringing the total appropriation to \$690,000

C.5. Establish an appropriation for FY 16/17 for State Teachers' Retirement Grant in the amount of \$592,057

C.6. Establish an appropriation for FY 16/17 for the 2016-2017 Summer School Program, funding by tuition payments in the amount of \$40,000

C.7. Extended Field Trip Request - Elisabeth Bennet Academy Discovery Camp - Approximately 55 students attending - 9/19/16-9/21/16; 9/21/16-9/23/16; and 10/26/16-10/28/16. Teachers as chaperones.

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.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

D. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

None.

E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, recommended the movie *Free State of Jones*. He suggested articles in several publications regarding the 4th of July and civil rights. Mr. Stringfellow also spoke about the Panama Canal being expanded after 110 years.

John Garaventa, 105 Comstock Road, had an issue with how Manchester Public Schools conducts RFPs. He has been the school photographer for the last 12 years at Martin Elementary and for the last 9 years at Verplanck Elementary. This past spring it was announced that the district would be consolidating vendors and a contract would be awarded for the school district. He submitted a bid and never received notification of a final interview. When he called to inquire he found out the contract was already awarded to another vendor and he had been marked as a no-show for the final interview. Mr. Garaventa claimed he never received the mailed notification of the final interview time and place due to an incorrect zip code in his address. He now faces significant loss of revenue for his company, which could have been avoided if he was called or emailed to confirm his interview time. He suggests that in the future all letters regarding RFPs be sent via registered mail.

Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Leon seconded the motion to amend the agenda to include item H.1. Approval of Superintendent's Contract.

7/0/1 - Voted in favor.

F. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART I

F.1. Update on Rights and Responsibilities for Transgender Students

Mr. Geary reviewed that two months ago the Department of Justice, in collaboration with the Department of Education, issued a letter reminding school systems of the rights of transgender students. This evening Attorney Linda Yoder of Shipman & Goodwin is here to review this topic with the Board. Attorney Yoder read the letter mentioned above and noted that some people

claim the Justice Department has exceeded its authority and there may be litigation in the future regarding this. However, Attorney Yoder noted that while this is a federal interpretation of a federal law, we are also subject to Connecticut law. Since 2011 Connecticut law specifically prohibits discrimination based on gender identity. We have been applying that law for some time as Connecticut is ahead of the curve in protecting the rights of transgender individuals.

To clarify, Attorney Yoder reviewed that transgender refers to a person who identifies internally as a gender different than what is on their birth certificate. In Connecticut, the law gives a person the right to choose their identity. A transgender male is biologically a female, while a transgender female was born a male.

The law applies to employees as well as students. As this law has been followed for many years it has shown to be non-disruptive to how schools operate and students have not experienced hate.

There are some issues to be dealt with regarding transgender students. Pronouns in documents can be an issue. Name changes can be made without having to go to court to change their gender identification. If a family says it is okay to change a student's name, that is enough. Sometimes bathroom facilities and locker rooms present a problem, but generally students do not disrobe completely and there are areas in which to change privately if needed. Student prefer privacy for many reasons, not just gender issues.

Regarding athletics, the CAIC Interscholastic Sports, Article 9, Section B allows transgender athletes an equal opportunity. The CAIC accepts the gender identification that the school accepts and they have had this rule for a number of years.

In terms of housing for overnight field trips, we cannot ask a student to be in a separate room or be housed with students of their biological sex.

Ms. Pazda felt this was a helpful presentation and she wondered about showers in locker rooms, recalling that in the past they were open/group showers. Attorney Yoder noted that locker rooms are different now and offer more privacy. Mr. Geary noted our locker rooms are undergoing renovations this summer and there will be ample private spaces.

Ms. Pazda also noted she has been questioned by parents about athletics in terms of a transgender female having an upper hand against biological females. Attorney Yoder noted that coming out as transgender is not an easy choice, and it is certainly not done to gain an athletic advantage.

Ms. Stefanowicz also remembered the lack of privacy in locker rooms as a student and hopes the renovations being done take this into consideration.

Mr. Thames hopes we will be sensitive in rolling out this information as it can be confusing. He pointed out that not all people may be comfortable with this and we need to respect the rights of all children.

Mr. Scappaticci noted that being a gay man he is probably more comfortable with this than some. He feels it is a learning process and that "sex" is just a box checked on a birth certificate. Mr. Scappaticci notes that some of the arguments used to prevent or block transgender rights across the country are the same arguments used in the past to prevent integration of schools and the army's "don't ask/don't tell" policy.

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

H. NEW BUSINESS

H.1. Approval of Superintendent's Contract

Chairman Pattacini noted that under state law the Board must evaluate the Superintendent on an annual basis. He read a letter from the Board to the Superintendent, outlining their approval.

Mr. Leon noted that Mr. Geary is doing a great job, even though he came to the Board young with no superintendent experience. Mr. Leon feels that the Board believed in Mr. Geary and it is playing out as they hoped. He feels the energy and sees the changes and Mr. Leon believes that in the next 3-5 years Manchester will be a model district in the state.

Mr. Thames feels Mr. Geary is doing a wonderful job with school and district improvement plans and hiring new staff. He sees Mr. Geary as a perpetual student, noting he is always reading and learning new ideas.

Secretary Scappaticci moved for the Board to authorize the Board Chair to enter into another three year contract with Matthew Geary to cover the dates July 1, 2016 - June 20, 2019. Mr. Leon seconded the motion.

8/0/1 - Voted in favor.

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

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, supports the Consent Calendar, especially the Head Start appropriation. Regarding the presentation by Attorney Yoder, Mr. Stringfellow felt it was eye opening as he learned the different terms. He suggested an article *Blurring the Lines*. Mr. Stringfellow noted that discrimination can go both ways and we need to treat people as human beings.

J. COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Pazda shared information about a conference she attended recently in Pittsburgh regarding the role of strong family and community engagement. She noted there were over a thousand participants with all states represented and Manchester sent 11 people.

One topic discussed was how schools and communities can mobilize to ensure kids are healthy and ready to attend school every day and engage in learning over the summer. Reading proficiency by the end of grade 3 was emphasized. Topics such as book clubs,

family engagement, grade level reading, social and academic justice were discussed. Another session regarding training volunteers to evaluate Boards of Education with a focus on the goals of the district was presented. Whether the Board is presenting information in a manner the audience truly understands was also discussed.

Mr. Thames also attended the conference and found it very meaningful. Regarding the Board evaluation tool, Mr. Thames feels we do good work and welcomes evaluation. The importance of collaboration with all stakeholders was stressed. While in Pennsylvania for the conference, Mr. Thames visited some Family Resource Centers that provide opportunities to parents to help them become community advocates and grow as parents. He felt the activities they presented were rich and helpful.

Mr. Pattacini thanked the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving for financing the trip for the 11 participants. The highlight for him was the Family Resource Centers, which provided parents opportunities to grow, and provided programs to help parents become community advocates.

Mr. Pattacini attended a program the past week where Mr. Geary and Christa Perkins presented on the social thinking curriculum/Ross Greene combination we have integrated in our schools. The presentation received a standing ovation.

Ms. Pazda read a letter she wrote to Chairman Pattacini. She outlined that she ran for the Board again in 2013 due to concerns about the quality of education in Manchester. Now there is an intense focus on student achievement, the 2025 plan has been adopted and the first phase of the referendum has passed and construction has begun to ensure we have 21st century facilities. Ms. Pazda feels now is the time to resign from the Board and serve Manchester Public Schools in a different capacity. She was thankful for the opportunity to serve the community for the last three years.

Mr. Pattacini thanked Ms. Pazda on behalf of the Board for her work and for the future work she will contribute to the school system. He feels she is a phenomenal voice for curriculum and instruction.

K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

None.

L. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Pattacini called for a motion to adjourn.

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

9/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment 8:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Scappaticci
Board Secretary