

Monadnock Regional School District (MRSD)
School Board Meeting Minutes
January 2, 2024
Monadnock Regional Middle/High School, Swanzey, NH

Members Present: Kristen Noonan, Scott Peters, Edmond LaPlante, Lisa Steadman, Stephanie Lawlor, Eric Stanley, Betty Tatro, Dan LeClair, Brian Bohannon, Jeff Cesaitis, Gina Carraro and Jennifer Strimbeck. **Absent:** Cheryl McDaniel-Thomas.

Administration Present: J. Rathbun, Superintendent

1. CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER at 7:00 PM. S. Peters called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS: H. Ryan of Swanzey explained that he was in the Band when he attended Monadnock. He said the Band is not quite like it was when he was in school. Being a part of the Band impacts student future careers in that field as well as other fields. He would like to see additional funds for the Band Program. He would like students to have the opportunity that he was given.

P. Ryan of Swanzey also commented on the Band Program. She is a member of the Band. She mentioned that the Band no longer performs at sporting events or goes to the elementary schools to encourage the students to participate. She said the Band Program has about 25 members. She is very disappointed in the program. COVID altered the Band experience. She would suggest rebuilding the outreach and play out in the community. Increase the success of the Band. This is not a talent issue, it is a motivational issue.

H. Dean of Swanzey explained that she had contacted members of the Board regarding the graduation date. She is requesting that the Board put the graduation on the next agenda which is January 16, 2024 per Policy BEDB.

S.Tatro of Swanzey would like to echo H. Dean. She explained at the December 12, 2023 meeting with a lot of discussion she felt there was a charge to come back to this meeting with another discussion or recommendation to plan a project graduation. We want a safe, comfortable and special space for students. Monadnock graduation is the same date as Keene High. The timeline is getting tougher and shorter. The parents need the answers.

S. Peters explained that he had it on the last agenda but there was no quorum. He decided not to add it to this agenda with the Superintendent transition. Keene could not be contacted

during the holidays. It will be on the agenda for January 16, 2024. If there is time tonight it may be possible but there are a lot of items on the agenda.

3. Celebrate # MRSD: Superintendent Rathbun said they are glad to have the students and staff back happy and healthy.

This will be Superintendent Rathbun's first Board Meeting in his new position.
Congratulations!!

4. MATTERS FOR SCHOOL BOARD INFORMATION & DISCUSSION:

- a. 2023/24 School Board Goals:** The Board reviewed the list of Board Goals.
 - i. Hire New Superintendent:** The Board has hired J. Rathbun as the new Superintendent.
 - ii. Document Educational Philosophy:** The Education Committee has completed this process and the Board voted on it.
 - iii. Propose First Educational Strategy:** This is work of the Education Committee to the Board.
 - iv. Complete Annual CIP:** The Finance and Facilities Committee completed the Annual CIP and it was approved by the Board.
 - v. Propose Project-Specific Warrant Articles:** There are no project specific warrant articles being proposed.
 - vi. Cohort Study:** This study continues and is regularly presented by J. Rathbun to the Board.
- b. Education Report: Behavior:** J.Rathbun commented that Behavior in general seems minor but if there is no code of conduct and the student is not ready to learn it is very hard to teach them. He hears if they do not behave, kick them out. J. Rathbun explained that this is a public school and there are laws. He presented information with 3 tiers of behavior. Tier One is the majority of the kids in which issues are dealt with in the classroom, Tier Two is detention and loss of privileges and Tier Three is for the heavy hitters. Polly Bath who is paid for with Title II funds goes into each school and builds MTSS expectations. The plans for the individual schools are available. Emerson has theirs displayed on the walls and on the website. J. Rathbun explained it is not considered a menu of consequences. It gives everyone the same set of circumstances you need to have a clear set of guidelines. J. Rathbun commented that there are more students in Tier 2 due to disrespect and not doing work. J. Rathbun commented that in order for the Tier 1 students not to turn into Tier 2 they are looking at a program at the Hillsborough/Deering School District. They have an alternative school on site. They do things differently and have a lot of success. It is a great idea but space is an issue here and how is it funded. It is true that some behaviors that are the same do not have the same consequences for reasons that cannot be discussed. There needs to be clear

guidelines and more discussion on this. ALMA keeps track of protected data, disrespect, safety issues, refusal and disruption. The actual infractions are listed and reported to the State such as bullying and violence. With the adding of the At-Risk Counselor it is realized that a lot of the behavior is from deeper issues. With the counselors in place it has significantly decreased the number of issues. A different approach to bad behavior before suspension, progressive discipline and behavior before throwing a chair. Is it bad behavior or mental health? It is typically hard in the 8th grade. We see a lot of issues with behavior. G.Carraro asked if the district is over using ISS after she reviewed the numbers. J. Rathbun explained we have a new assistant principal and he is holding the line. It is very tough in Middle School. B. Bohannon commented that it is a tough adjustment for the 7th and 8th grade students coming in from different elementary schools. Are we getting all of the students on the same level? J. Rathbun explained there are general expectations in all of the schools. Expected behavior and expectations are not all the same but we need to have that conversation for the step up. B. Bohannon asked why the different standards for each elementary school, why so many choices. J. Rathbun explained there are 5 schools, 300 staff members and he is not in the schools. There needs to be a buy in which is in every job. Buy in from the employees. S.Peters commented that we are not here to propose ideas tonight. J.Rathbun said that MTSS for each school will be out to the parents. At Emerson it is part of their culture. The elementary schools' counselors and the Guidance Wellness Class have made positive changes in the schools. Parent outreach is the school's job and one way to do that is possibly a podcast. NEASC is currently in the cycle process. J. Rathbun and the elementary school principals will be going to Texas in January to attend a Summit with Robert Mazano. When they return they will sit and discuss to see if this will work. He did mention that we do need an alternative school on site and an on-sight OSS but in a different building. O.Higgins commented that students do not take ISS seriously. OSS is not a solution to the problem.

c. Student Government Report: Owen Higgins the Student Government Representative explained that the Student Government has not met but will be meeting next Wednesday. Currently nothing has changed.

d. Cheshire Career Center Update: S.Peters, L. Steadman and K. Noonan from the Board will be attending a working session at the CCC. J. Rathbun will also attend. The agreement is reviewed every 3 years. He said honestly there is not anything very upsetting in it. It was commented that Monadnock does not feel as if they have a voice at the CCC.

5. MATTERS THAT REQUIRE BOARD ACTION:

a. Proposed Warrant Articles:

i. Proposed Budget: J. Rathbun explained that the Board had asked the administration to reduce the proposed budget to less than \$38,000,000.00. J. Morin and C. Woods were able to find an additional \$150,000.00 in Special Education Contracted

Services. He also explained that there are 2 teachers retiring. The cost savings would be \$188,060.00 if they were not replaced. Reducing those positions would also reduce the default budget. He is confident with the reduction of those teachers it could work with class size. He gave a few examples of multi age classrooms and commented on the size of the Kindergarten in Gilsum next year. He explained the classes in the District and the class sizes recommended by the State. G. Carraro is concerned with reducing teachers. J. Rathbun said that the District is lower in class size than the State. G. Carraro is concerned with behavior issues. Another option to reduce the proposed budget is to reduce 2 At Risk Counselors and the Guidance Coordinator. The last option is to reduce 3 para professionals who are retiring. All of the 3 options bring the proposed number below \$38,000,000.00 and staffing effects the default. K. Noonan would suggest Option #1 which is to reduce the 2 retiring teachers from the proposed budget. **MOTION:** K. Noonan **MOVED** to approve Article One as written with a proposed budget of \$37,950,006.00. The elimination of 2 teaching positions will be through planned attrition (retirement), and adjusts the default budget to \$37,112,717.00. **SECOND:** L. Steadman. **DISCUSSION:** K. Noonan explained her reason for this option. She does not want to do this but this is the best option. J. Rathbun explained that no one believes that there is a big bubble of students coming into the District. The administration has talked to the area Selectboards and K. Barker. No one is predicting an increase in students. It was commented that when we have better schools people want to move here and we will have the space. **VOTE:** 11.868/0/0/1.132. **Motion passes.**

ii. **Specialists Contract:** J.Rathbun had contacted J. O'Shaughnessey regarding the wording on Article Two about the positions which are grant funded. There was a long email and the recommendation is that the District is better off to leave it alone. If you add the language it is confusing. If Article Two fails we can still use the grant funds. **MOTION:** B. Bohannon **MOVED** to approve Warrant Article Two the Specialists Contract as written. **SECOND:** S.Lawlor. **VOTE:** 11.868/0/0/1.132. **Motion passes.** L. Steadman will send the summary page to the Budget Committee.

b. **Program of Studies:** J.Rathbun explained the Program of Studies really needs to be approved at the next meeting. If there is push back it slows the school down. S.Peters suggested if there are any questions from the Board to email ahead of the next meeting. J. Rathbun explained that the pre-requisites in Art and Music have changed and there are format changes. The Board discussed class sizes. J. Rathbun explained that not every class in the Program of Studies will run. It may be because of size and interest among other things. **MOTION:** B. Bohannon **MOVED** to approve the Program of Studies for the 2024-25 School Year as presented by J. Rathbun. **SECOND:** B.Tatro. **DISCUSSION:** J. Cesaitis asked about the programs through the CCC and where is that information available. K. Noonan mentioned the website. J. Rathbun said that representatives from the CCC have already talked to our kids. **VOTE:** 8.937/1.098/1.834/1.132. **Motion passes.**

c. **Approve the Consent Agenda**

i. **December 12th, 19th & 27th, 2023 Minutes (public only)**

ii. **Manifest: \$1,965,384.40. MOTION: B.Bohannon MOVED** to approve the consent agenda which includes the December 12, 2023, December 19, 2023 and December 27, 2023 Meeting Minutes and the Manifest in the amount of \$1,965,384.40. **SECOND: B. Tatro. VOTE: 11.868/0/0/1.132. Motion passes.**

d. **Sealed Minutes:** The Board will vote on the SEALED Minutes in Non-Public Session.

e. **Vote on adding agenda item: MOTION: K. Noonan MOVED** to add the discussion regarding the graduation date to the agenda. **SECOND: B. Bohannon. VOTE: 11.868/0/0/1.132. Motion passes.** B. Bohannon asked what information the Board would need to know in order to make a decision at the next meeting. L.Steadman would suggest a survey for the seniors and their parents through ALMA emails per Policy ILD. B.Bohannon asked what data we are looking for through the survey. **MOTION: L. Steadman MOVED** to generate a survey to graduating seniors and their parents to collect preferences for graduation date and time. **SECOND: B. Tatro. DISCUSSION: J.Rathbun** explained that the Board had asked for a solution and the calendar was discussed and approved in February. D. LeClair commented whatever the Board does someone will be upset. E.Stanley commented that Keene High School changed their date. J. Rathbun will reach out to the administration at KHS. K. Noonan commented that parents had asked the Board to change the date and students had concerns because of sports, the Board listened to the concerns and finally changed it. Someone suggested Sunday and J. Rathbun said it could not be Sunday because of religious services. L.Steadman commented the survey would be to gather data. We are not discussing the motion. J. Rathbun commented we will not get every parent to participate. L.Steadman would suggest the survey to close at 5 PM on January 16, 2024. **VOTE: 4.132/6.742/.995/1.132. Motion fails. MOTION: E. Stanley MOVED** to ask the administration to contact Keene High School to change their graduation date. **SECOND: D.LeClair. VOTE: 8.541/2.196/1.131/1.132. Motion passes.** B. Bohannon asked if it is possible to make the change to the calendar. J. Rathbun explained the administration will do what the Board wants us to do. The administration does not have a recommendation.

6. SETTING NEXT MEETING'S AGENDA:

- a. **Band Concerns**
- b. **Graduation Time and Date**
- c. **Public Hearing**
- d. **Prepare for Deliberative Session**

7. **Public Comments:** S.Tatro is also concerned about the Band Program. She would also ask anyone with concerns or questions regarding graduation to email her.

H. Dean commented that she as well misses the Band at sporting events. She mentioned

MTSS which is used in her district. She said that communication between her children's teachers is a little better at the elementary level. S. Tatro mentioned that she received a newsletter from the Middle School. H. Dean commented that there are grandparents who have grandchildren graduating in both districts, how do they decide. She asked why the change now? *E.Stanley leaves the meeting.*

8. 9:31 PM Motion to Enter into Non-Public Session under RSA 91-A:3, II (c) Matters which, if discussed in public, would likely adversely affect the reputation of any person, other than a member of the public body itself, unless such person requests an open meeting. MOTION: K. Noonan **MOVED** Motion to enter into Non-Public Session under RSA 91-A:3, II (c) Matters which, if discussed in public, would likely adversely affect the reputation of any person, other than a member of the public body itself, unless such person requests an open meeting. **SECOND:** S.Lawlor **VOTE:**10.737/0/0/2.263. **Motion passes.**

9. RETURN TO PUBLIC SESSION

10. 9:46 PM Motion to Enter into Non-Public Session under RSA 91-A:3, II (b) The hiring of any person as a public employee. MOTION: K. Noonan **MOVED** to enter into Non-Public Session under RSA 91-A:3, II (b) The hiring of any person as a public employee. **SECOND:** S. Peters **VOTE:** 10.737/0/0/2.263. **Motion passes.**

11. ADJOURNMENT: MOTION: K. Noonan **MOVED** to adjourn the meeting at 9:49 PM. **SECOND:** L. Steadman **VOTE:** 10.737/0/0/2.263. **Motion passes.**

Respectfully submitted,

Laura L. Aivaliotis
Recording Secretary

VOTING KEY:Yes/No/Abstain/Absent