

Monadnock Regional School District (MRSD)
School Board Meeting Minutes
February 21, 2023
MRMHS Library/Zoom, Swanzey, NH

Members Present: Michelle Connor, Lisa Steadman, Scott Peters, Kristen Noonan, Jennifer Strimbeck, Brian Bohannon, Eric Stanley, Dan LeClair and Betty Tatro. **Absent:** Cheryl McDaniel-Thomas, Colleen Toomey, Jeff Cesaitis and Nick Mosher.

Administration Present: L. Witte, Superintendent, J. Rathbun, Assistant Superintendent and J. Morin, Business Administrator.

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** S. Peters called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.
2. **MOTION TO ENTER INTO NON-PUBLIC SESSION: MOTION:** S. Peters **MOVED** to enter into Non-Public Session under RSA 91-A:3 (l) Consideration of legal advice provided by legal counsel. **SECOND:** B. Bohannon. **VOTE:** Unanimous for those present. **Motion passes.**
3. **The Board recessed from Non-Public Session and entered into a Non-Meeting.**
4. **PUBLIC COMMENTS:** There were no Public Comments.
5. **#celebrate MRSD:** L. Witte explained the District is on vacation. Celebrate vacation week.
6. **MATTERS FOR INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION:**
 - a. **Debrief from Listening Sessions:** K. Noonan explained that the Listening Session at Emerson was quiet. There were teachers and staff in attendance. Not much happened but she was invited to present at the Candidates Night on March 8, 2023. L. Steadman explained that there was not much traffic in Troy. Small number of people present watched the videos. The discussion at MTC was mostly about how the dropping and picking up of the kids will be. B. Tatro said 1 person attended the Gilsum Listening Session but was very positive. L. Steadman commented that maybe people are good with it and have no questions. K. Noonan said that on a personal level she has seen some negative comments on social media possibly because they do not understand. There are also many people in favor of the project.
 - b. **Board and Superintendent Annual Performance Process:** S. Peters explained the first step in this process is to have all of the Board Members complete the google survey for the Board and the Superintendent. He would like to have this completed prior to the new Board and elected officers. He said that his personal goal is to have everyone respond.
7. **MATTERS THAT REQUIRE BOARD ACTION:**
 - a. **2023-2024 School Year Calendar 2nd Read: MOTION:** B. Tatro **MOVED** to

approve the 2023-2024 School Year Calendar as presented. **SECOND:** M. Connor. **VOTE:** 9.434/0/0/3.567. **Motion passes.**

b. Policies for 2nd Read:

i. DBJ-Transfer of Appropriation:

ii. IMBA-Distance Education:

iii. IKFC-Alternative Diploma for Students with Significant Cognitive

Disabilities:

iv. EBCD-School or District Closings: MOTION: K. Noonan **MOVED**

approve the policies from February 1, 2023 Policy Committee Meeting as presented. **SECOND:** M. Connor. **DISCUSSION:** K. Noonan explained in regards to Policy DBJ the committee was comfortable with a limit of \$5000.00 for a budget transfer instead of the \$10,000.00 which the administration had asked for. With any amount the Board will be notified. **VOTE:** 9.434/0/0/3.567. **Motion passes.**

c. 2023-2024 MRMHS Program of Studies: S. Peters explained that D. LeClair had emailed a motion that he would be proposing tonight. **MOTION:** D. LeClair **MOVED** to remove the class “Issues in Gender and Race in Literature and Media” from the 2023-2024 MRMHS Program of Studies. **SECOND:** J. Strimbeck. **DISCUSSION:** D. LeClair read his email to the Board. He said that he reviewed some of the material that the students are expected to read and watch as part of the course. He said there are books to allow students to think in different ways, not only one. The material is slanted and the parents have a right to know what material is being taught. School is not the place for gender ideology. L. Witte explained all of the syllabus and course materials are on Google Classroom. There are several policies that allow parents to object to the class. This course has been around for a decade. It is part of English 12. J.Rathbun explained that the parents are able to review the schedules but not sure if they have to sign off. It is required reading but per policy the parent can opt out. L. Witte explained that there is one parent that she knows who has opted out. It is the State Law to be able to opt out. J. Rathbun explained this is a Senior elective but there are other electives the students can take. J. Strimbeck agrees with D. LeClair. She said a parent is not able to look at all of the material. It is a burden on the parent. B. Bohannon commented that we are meeting the letter of the law and to call for the vote. L. Witte explained that it is an elective, a stand alone course and a unit in English 12. It is not peppered through all of the courses. State Law allows parents to opt out. L. Steadman asked what if the parents and the students protested the material. L. Witte said there is no legal recourse. M. Connor said sitting down and reviewing the material is difficult. The title is very clear on what will be taught. D. LeClair commented that it is a one sided view. It is teaching ideology and a narrow view. It was asked if the material could be isolated and have the parents opt out of it. S. Peters said the motion is to retire this elective and not offer it as a choice. S. Peters asked J. Strimbeck to make a separate motion. **VOTE:** 2.829/5.473/1.132/3.567. **Motion fails.** It was commented to make it clear to parents that this elective has concerning content and they may not approve of it. J. Strimbeck would like to isolate materials related to the course. L. Witte asked if there was a specific book or movie. J.Strimbeck said she is not thrilled with any part of the materials. S. Peters would like to know what “to isolate” means. J. Strimbeck said it is a huge burden on the parents. The title does not tell all. Isolate all materials to one class not over

all of the courses. S. Peters said the parents have the option to review. L. Witte commented if there is a concern, reach out to the principal. D. LeClair said he had to do research for an hour and a half. J. Rathbun explained the course titles need to be clear and the class description very clear. Every class has something that people are nervous about. The students taking these courses are 17 and 18 years old. It was asked if the parents will be evaluating the courses they take in college? Maybe a shout out to the parents to review the material and courses your students are taking. J. Strimbeck commented that the information is peppered in more than one class and she would like to isolate it to one course. L. Witte explained that in English and Social Studies there is a lot of overlap as well as in English and Art, Science and religion. Artwork, Literacy and English can not be done solely alone. There is structure with the current events, it brings kids engaged. There is a lot of history that is male driven. It is difficult to say that we are not going to teach gender. S. Peters commented that the process is to have the student choose their core classes and then the electives. The parent in turn approves the classes the student picked. J. Rathbun explained the electives in English are to build the required credit. S. Peters said alternative learning is an option. J. Rathbun suggested CCC and ELO instead. S. Peters said the motion failed and it is up to the parents to opt out. They need to approve the electives and core courses. J. Strimbeck would like materials of racism and sexism isolated to one course. We are putting the District at risk. She is ok with students bringing it up and teachers discussing it. S. Peters commented that the materials will change every year that is why it is up to the parents.

MOTION: J. Strimbeck **MOVED** to isolate materials related to current day issues of race and gender to clearly defined elective groups. **SECOND:** D. LeClair. **DISCUSSION:** The administration would have to look at all of the classes, pull out and limit it to one elective in the Program of Studies. B. Bohannon commented that the task is against our academic freedom. We support academic freedom. It is a small group going against it. **VOTE:** 1.834/7.6/0/3.567.

Motion fails. S. Peters commented that this has been one of the most meaningful and productive discussions in a while. We may not all agree but it was a good discussion on what a change in philosophy would mean. He would like to remind the Board Members not to bring up specifics regarding their families. Private student records. J. Morin explained that the schedule gets approved by the parents. You could contact guidance. J. Rathbun commented that the School Guidance Dept. oversees the process. They are involved in college, trade schools and the schedule process for the students. S. Peters would like the Guidance Dept. to come to a Board Meeting and do a presentation. J. Rathbun would suggest after the schedule process is complete. This is a very busy time of year for them. **MOTION:** K. Noonan **MOVED** to approve the 2023-2024 MRMHS Program of Studies. **SECOND:** B. Tatro. **VOTE:** 8.302/0/1.132/3.567. **Motion passes.**

d. February 4, 2023 Deliberative Session Minutes: MOTION: L. Steadman **MOVED** to approve the February 4, 2023 Deliberative Session Meeting Minutes as presented. **SECOND:** M. Connor. **VOTE:** 9.434/0/0/3.567. **Motion passes.**

e. February 7, 2023 Meeting Minutes: MOTION: B. Tatro **MOVED** to approve the February 7, 2023 Public and Non-Public Meeting Minutes as presented. **SECOND:** D. LeClair. **VOTE:** 9.434/0/0/3.567. **Motion passes.**

f. Manifest: MOTION:D. LeClair **MOVED** to approve the manifest in the amount

of \$1,615,845.12 as presented by the administration. **SECOND: K. Noonan VOTE: 9.434/0/0/3.567. Motion passes.**

g. Budget Transfer: There were no budget transfers.

8. Setting Next Meeting's Agenda:

- 1. Policies for 1st read**
- 2. Board Evaluation**
- 3. Superintendent Evaluation**
- 4. Winter Testing Results**

9. Public Comments:

10. 8:29 PM: Motion to Enter into Non-Public Session under RSA 91-A:3, II (b) 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: M. Connor. VOTE: 9.434/0/0/3.567. Motion passes.

11. 8:35 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 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: M. Connor. VOTE: 9.434/0/0/3.567. Motion passes.

12. Return to Public Session: During the 8:35 PM Non-Public Session the Board voted to **SEAL Issue # 4 until June 30, 2023.**

13. ADJOURNMENT: MOTION: M. Connor MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 9:15 PM. SECOND: B. Tatro VOTE: 9.434/0/0/3.567. Motion passes.

Respectfully submitted,

**Laura L. Aivaliotis
Recording Secretary**

VOTING KEY:Yes/No/Abstain/Absen