



SCHOOL COMMITTEE

OPEN SESSION MINUTES January 9, 2018

Meeting:	School Committee
Date:	January 9, 2018
Location:	MERMHS Library
Attendees:	Pamela Beaudoin, Superintendent Avi Urbas, Director of Finance Ann Cameron, Chairman Julie Riordan, Co-Chairman Shannon Erdmann Caroline Weld Sarah Wolf Rachel Fitzgibbon
Absent:	Ken Warnock
Guests:	Patricia Puglisi, High School Principal Paul Murphy, Assistant Principal/Athletic Director Nancy O'Neil, Athletic Program Review Consultant
Recorded by:	Gail Hunter

A. Call to Order

Ms. Cameron called the School Committee Business Meeting Open Session to order at 6:25 p.m. Cape Ann TV recorded the meeting.

B. Business Meeting Open Session

- 1) **Public Comment:** There was no public comment.
- 2) **Student Report:** There was no student report.

3) Consent Agenda

- Acceptance of Warrants: 1033 & 1034
- Minutes: 12/3/17 and 11/21/17

Ms. Erdmann moved to approve the Warrants and Minutes, Ms. Fitzgibbon seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4) New Business

5) Continued Business

- Athletic Program Review – Nancy O’Neil, Consultant

Ms. Beaudoin introduced Ms. O’Neil indicating her work is the result of discussions which took place during last year’s School Committee Meetings. The District connected with Ms. O’Neil, an experienced and knowledgeable Athletic Director to conduct a comprehensive third-party review of MERSD’s Athletic Program. During her review she worked one-on-one with Ms. Puglisi. Ms. Puglisi indicated the Athletic Program had grown significantly over the past 5 to 7 years and experienced a change in structure, as a result, it was time to review the program. Ms. O’Neil conducted a comprehensive assessment of the program.

Ms. O’Neil stated it is difficult for a District to be open to this type of review. The personnel in the Athletic Department including Ms. Driscoll and Mr. Murphy are dedicated, detail oriented, calm and measured professionals.

Ms. O’Neil states Athletic Programs are Educational and promote learning. As part of her Power Point presentation she discussed that research tells us participation in activities improves academic performance, attendance and behavior. Students who participate are more likely to graduate and go onto college. Participation in athletic programs is a better indicator of future success in life than GPA or SAT scores. Additionally, students who participate are more likely to be leaders. She went onto say this does not happen by chance and a lot of these outcomes are happening in MERSD.

Ms. O’Neil asked, what are the potential educational outcomes of interscholastic athletics?

- Promotes Learning
- Develops Citizenship
- Enhances Life Skills
- Encourages Sportsmanship
- Results in a Healthy Lifestyle

Discussion moved to a review of the Process for assessing MERSD's program. The process started with Ms. Beaudoin determining the need to review athletics as is done with other school departments.

- Meetings were established with stakeholders: including Superintendent, Principal, Finance Director, Athletic Director, Assistant Athletic Director, Middle School Principal, Coaches, Parents, Faculty and Students.
- Survey were made available to stakeholders.
- Feedback from the surveys, meetings and observations became the basis of the findings and recommendations.

Strengths of the program were highlighted:

- Vocal and Caring support of many stakeholders.
- Athletics viewed as vital to overall process.
- Committed teacher-coaches who promote learning first and foremost.
- Solid participation rates with a fair percentage of multi-sport athletes.
- Ample opportunities for participation.

Final Recommendation Domains:

- **Role of the Athletic Director:** Ms. O'Neil recommends establishing a committee to evaluate effectiveness of the current model of Assistant Principal/Athletic Director and asked, is this in the best interest of the program? She suggests developing better coordination and division of tasks between Athletic Director and Assistant to Athletic Director. Assess: uniform conditions and maintenance as well as transportation decisions with safety first and foremost in mind. Establish a transparent and consistent evaluation process for coaches. Reinforce expectations and process for site/event managers. Conduct annual analysis of the athletic program and revive some energy and enthusiasm for the position of Athletic Director.
- **Role of Middle School:** Ms. O'Neil recommends creating a task force to evaluate, refine and reestablish a clear transparent Middle School Program. Experiences for this age group must be developmentally appropriate. Ms. O'Neil pointed out 70% of youngsters quit organized sports by age 13. Clearly define what you can realistically offer for Middle School interscholastic sports and communicate this. There is a feeling with some that Middle School students are "used" to fill some High School teams. Is this in best interest of Middle School students? Carefully look at concerns.
- **Communication:** Clearly define the program philosophy and make sure it is a living document. Place the philosophy on the athletic homepage and emphasize this with stakeholders. Consider creating athletic program covenants to put a face on the philosophy. Reexamine the "no-cut" rule. Although there is no magic number, overenrolled teams prevent meaningful instruction and participation. Re-define Athletic Council and create more visionary and goal oriented approach. Have coaches conduct team informational meetings PRIOR to the start of the season. The athletic website is under-utilized. Provide more information here, such as philosophy, role of parent,

feedback forms. Policies and educational forms. Solicit feedback from students and parents through vehicles such as feedback forms and parent forums.

- **Budget/User Fees:** Athletics represents only 1% of the overall school budget. From a cost standpoint, the athletic program is an exceptional bargain when matched against the overall school budget. As with most schools, user fees are, sadly, part of the landscape. The challenge becomes one of sharing the information and the rationale behind the decisions. Explain “the whys” to stakeholders. Study current user fee structure. Is there a better, more reasonable model? Explore corporate sponsorship. Make efforts to establish an All-Sports Boosters. There is a need to consolidate all outside fundraising groups under one umbrella to service all teams. Utilize bid lists when ordering athletic supplies. This results in healthy comparative shopping and cost savings.
- **Facilities:** Maintain a regular cleaning and care schedule for all athletic facilities. Regardless of which entity oversees a facility, the Athletic Director must provide regular inspections and make recommendations. Most appreciate the condition of the main gymnasium and the artificial turf field. As they age, care will be critical. Many share concerns about the condition of Sweeney Park and the Memorial School gymnasium floor. Safety is compromised with both facilities. Explore all Essex field and facilities to alleviate field/facility challenges in Manchester. Establish proper protocol signage for certain facilities. For example, students were observed in the weight room without supervision. As well, the gymnasium, cardio room and weight room are frequently wide open. When left open and unsupervised, these are attractive nuisance liability issues.
- **Other Topics:** Navigating college athletics, School Spirit, All-Sports Boosters, Football is the Privileged Sport, Addition of Certain Sport Programs, Health of Football Program.
- **Final Suggestions:** Develop a strategic plan for reviewing and acting on each accepted recommendation. Appoint a standing internal Athletic Implementation Committee, charged with developing a timely, comprehensive implementation strategy. Membership on this committee should be determined by the school and should include Athletic Director, Finance Director and Principal. The plan should then be communicated clearly and openly to the entire community.

Ms. Cameron asked Ms. Puglisi to indicate her thoughts on next steps. Ms. Puglisi stated there is a lot of work ahead to developing the strategic plan and identifying the committee. She is looking forward to working collaboratively with the new committee to define a time frame and actionable steps; along with examining the role of the Athletic Director and addressing the challenges ahead for the department.

Ms. Puglisi further stated she believes the Middle School issues will need to be addressed by a committee specifically for Middle School. Ms. Beaudoin indicated this review is the first review of the Athletic Department. Several issues raised are legacy issues and it will take time for the District to map things out prior to moving ahead. The Middle School challenges are part of the legacy of a Junior/Senior High School program. Additionally, some philosophical questions will need to be resolved to reflect the desires of the communities. Ms. Beaudoin mentioned the cut/no-cut policy as one of the issues that needs to be fully explored.

Ms. Cameron moved to questions and comments from the Committee.

Ms. Weld stated two years seemed like a long time to wait to implement the recommendations. Over one to two years she would like to see small gains, see things happening and she understands that additional direction will need to come from the Committee.

Ms. Erdmann inquired about the level of response to the survey. Ms. Puglisi indicated there had been 212 responses which was more than generally received. The survey was sent to the community on the school link.

Ms. Riordan indicated MERSD was a smaller District and fielding teams was sometimes challenging. Her sense is that only a few teams would be making cuts. Ms. O'Neil responded that sometimes allowing flexibility is OK and there should be no-cut teams every season. Ms. Riordan went on to say, this is my 5th year on the School Committee and we talk about user fees often.

Ms. Erdmann indicated that the Committee has looked at every user fee model and the Committee is willing to continue discussing the user fee issue.

Ms. Weld liked Ms. O'Neil's definition of school spirit – students participating in the athletic programs demonstrate school spirit through their participation. When lots of students are participating there are fewer students on the sideline to cheer on athletes.

Ms. Weld expressed concern about students in the Weight Room without supervision. Ms. Puglisi indicated that should not be happening. Ms. Puglisi indicated better signage was necessary and when supervision was not available the Weight Room would be locked.

Bigger-Faster-Stronger Program has 12 students enrolled, without fees, coached by Coach Hutton.

Ms. Woolf inquired about the status of the Booster Club and Grid Iron Club. The Booster Club manages the Concession Stands and provides awards. The Grid Iron Club provides additional equipment and supports all sports programs.

Ms. Fitzgibbon asked Ms. O'Neil if she had evaluated Varsity vs. Junior Varsity finding leveling in each sport. Ms. O'Neil indicated that she had not examined that as part of her review.

Ms. Cameron asked if gender had been an issue in her review? Was there a discrepancy between boys' and girls' teams? Ms. O'Neil indicated there appeared to be a good number of offerings for both boys and girls and there appeared to be equity between the two.

Ms. Riordan asked if training for the Athletic Director and Assistant Athletic Director and Ms. Puglisi indicated training had been initiated.

Ms. Cameron opened the discussion to the public.

Greg Blagden, Manchester – stated great job and asked for Ms. O’Neil to share the top three deficiencies needing to be addressed.

Ms. O’Neil responded: Role of Athletic Director, hiring most important thing you do in the Athletic Program, Ms. O’Neil is an advocate of the Teacher- Coaches and Budget and Facilities.

Ms. Beaudoin asked if Ms. O’Neil thought there was an issue with coaching deficiency. Ms. O’Neil does not think there is a deficiency but believes it is critical to be aware of the importance and to focus on the Teacher-Coach model.

Kim Gendron, Manchester – asked if 1% of the school budget was a standard investment in athletic programs. Ms. O’Neil indicated it was. Ms. Beaudoin added that with the addition of user fees and support from Boosters and the Grid Iron Club that total reflects an additional 1-1.5% reflecting closer to a 3% total of the full budget.

Ms. Cameron encouraged the public to be aware of the School Budget and how tight the budget is for the District. An understanding of the Budget will help to shed light on the additional fees required to support the programs and the need for support from Boosters and the Grid Iron Club.

Lauren Harrison, Manchester – Asked why teams cannot fund raise. Ms. Puglisi indicated it is a District policy to not allow students to be engaged in fundraising. It is a safety issue, problems with communication about who was doing what and problems with inequity in programs arose in the past.

Christine Delisio, Manchester – Indicated the baseball uniforms were purchased with the help of fundraising by Varsity members of the baseball team who sold cards at Little League games. Ms. Puglisi indicated this was not her understanding of what had happened, the baseball uniform procurement issue will be reviewed.

Sean Daly, Manchester – Likes the recommendation to seek corporate sponsorship. He believes there are lots of people in Manchester and Essex who would be willing to help. He encouraged the Committee to act and ask the community for help.

Paula Newton, Magnolia – Parent with three student athletes, she stated the program is so large that some students are not getting play time and end up quitting the teams because they are frustrated and discouraged. The “no-cut” policy may be a bigger issue than is acknowledged.

Ms. Riordan responded that this is an issue that varies depending on the sport. For example, there may be too many students playing basketball with only 5 members on the court at a time and 20 on the bench. This is an example of where parameters need to be defined.

Sarah Vallejo, Manchester – JV Girls lacrosse coach believes it is a fairly easy process to anticipate the number of students who may be interested in participating in each sport by reviewing existing youth programs.

Ms. Weld asked if the Committee should discuss and review the fundraising policy. Ms. Puglisi indicated she would prefer the Committee review the fundraising issue. Ms. Cameron indicated the issue would be addressed by the policy sub-committee.

Jake Foster, Essex – asked Ms. O’Neil her thoughts and programming implications on football and specifically the head injury issue. Ms. O’Neil indicated new helmet technology was being developed and instruction is the key. Coaches need to be qualified and trained in the ways to help keep players safe.

Sean Daly and Paul Street, Manchester – asked if information was available regarding how the user fees were allocated in the athletic program. Mr. Urbas indicated that by law all fees are allocated to the programs. There is a detail cost by sport analysis. Additionally, the budget compares our budget on sports to other communities. All information is open and transparent and available on the website. Ms. Beaudoin will add the information to the athletic website.

Ms. Delisio, Manchester – is looking for information on fields. There appears to be no specific person in charge of fields, either in the Town or School according to Ms. Delisio. Ms. Cameron suggested that Ms. Delisio have a conversation with Mr. Blagden who served on the Fields Committee.

- **Program of Studies**

Ms. Puglisi started her discussion by stating this is one of her favorite presentations because it underscores the hard work of the teachers and their desire to develop programs that help to engage students and modernize programming. Presentation focuses on changes moving forward.

Art Department: There has been significant growth in the program over the past 3-4 years. After a foundation class, students move into a studio lab style environment and work in a medium of their choice. The department is offering four AP programs beginning next year. Number of students has increased dramatically.

English Department: Implemented grade 12 electives the students are engaged and excited. A new creative writing elective has been added and the course will include publishing a literary magazine. Allowing students to engage in writing poetry and essays – these are students who may not have participated in the journalism class.

Math: Added a proposed elective, Life Skills in the 21st Century. To help students focus on real life skills, how to balance a checking account, buy a car, pay rent, buy a house, amortize a mortgage and to be better prepared for life outside of school.

Science: Students are moving from biology and chemistry to physics and several of the students should not be making that move without completing Algebra II. Adding Introduction to Biotechnology, an exciting add to the program looking forward to skills students will need after graduation. Program in Gloucester is coming into the Guidance Department for a presentation. Stem department has moved into the science department rounding out the computer science program.

Social Studies: US Government and Democracy for freshmen and sophomores moving to Democracy in the Digital Age, teaching students how to read and digest the news. A new course on Conspiracy Theories will look at documents and information making decisions on these theories. The course will help develop critical thinking skills.

Next generation of standards and writing literacy across departments has been implemented. Grade 8 moving forward teachers are looking at teaching technical writing.

Ms. Cameron asked for a motion to approve the Program of Studies dated January 3, 2018.

Ms. Erdmann moved to approve the Program of Studies, Ms. Woolf seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- **Appointment of School Committee Secretary**

Ms. Weld moved to approve the appointment of Ms. Hunter as new School Committee Secretary, Ms. Fitzgibbon seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- **FY 19 Budget Discussion**

Looking at a \$900K deficit for FY 19. Assumed \$454K reduction through attrition. Leaving the District with \$550K gap to close.

Credited \$75K to assumption of revision for Health Care and \$50K to retiring health care costs credited.

Special Education budgets conservatively with a \$200K reserve for possible new students requiring out of District tuition and transportation. Earmark this for the possibility that funds are needed. FY 20 budget may require a cut in programs but this year the reserves are holding us through FY 19. This is a short-term solution and will need to be reviewed throughout FY 19.

These steps put us at \$225K of goal. Additional savings may be realized by taking the following steps: full day kindergarten on Wednesday saving \$8K in bus fees, eliminate late bus \$25K by consolidating bus runs and \$50K by eliminating a run.

Solar savings \$10K, stipends for teachers \$30K by charging student activity fee, \$5K secretarial retirement, overtime "extra year time" \$60K, hiring cap \$30K. All this puts us within \$7K.

6) Sub Committee Reports

Elementary Facilities: Working on PSR moving from 7 schemes to 4 or 5. January 31, 2018 next Building Committee Meeting.

Finance Committee: Ms. Riordan will attend the meeting on January 10, 2018

Communication Policy: There appears to be policy issues to address. Committee will meet.

Negotiations: 8-hour training with the Team

- 7) **Superintendent's Report:** There were a few people who did not get a phone call regarding no school days. We need to find the people and correct their information. Updated Parent's Education Meeting, the meeting will be held March 7, 2018, presenter is David Brooks and his book is *Raising Resilient Children*. Special thanks to the facilities team for clean up after the snow.

- 8) **Chairman's Report:** Chairman no report.

- 9) **Public Comment:** Ms. Delisio asked about the home across from the school recently sold, the home is adding a new driveway with anticipation of 4 cars. No one from the school was aware of the sale or notice to comment which was mailed certified mail from the Planning Board. Ms. Beaudoin suggested changing the name on certified mail from the Planning Board in the future. The Committee thank Ms. Delisio for her information.

10) Adjournment

Ms. Erdmann moved to adjourn, Ms. Fitzgibbons seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gail Hunter