



SCHOOL COMMITTEE

OPEN SESSION MINUTES SEPTEMBER 5, 2017

Meeting:	School Committee
Date:	September 5, 2017
Location:	MERMHS Library
Attendees:	Pamela Beaudoin, Superintendent of Schools; Avi Urbas, Director of Finance; Ann Cameron, Chairman; Julie Riordan, Co-Chairman; Shannon Erdmann, Sarah Wolf, Ken Warnock, and Rachel Fitzgibbon.
Absent:	Caroline Weld
Recorded by:	Adele Ardolino, Secretary

A. Call to Order

The Committee had just ended an Executive Session. Ms. Cameron called the School Committee Business Meeting Open Session to order at 6:40 p.m.

B. Business Meeting Open Session

1) **Student Report:** None.

2) **Consent Agenda**

- Acceptance of Warrants: FY17 Vouchers 1068, 1069, 1070, and FY18 Vouchers 1006, 1007, 1008, 1009, 1010, and 1011.
- Minutes 8/8/2017.

Ms. Erdmann made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, and Ms. Wolf seconded the motion. Vote: Unanimous by Ms. Beaudoin, Mr. Urbas,

Ms. Cameron, Ms. Riordan, Ms. Erdmann, Ms. Wolf, Mr. Warnock, and Ms. Fitzgibbon.

3) Sub-Committee Reports

- **Elementary Facilities (Caroline Weld/Ann Cameron):** Ms. Cameron stated that at the last meeting the discussion involved educational planning and School Committee involvement in that process to prepare the School Committee for questions that may be asked by the public. The School Building Committee meeting minutes will be included in the School Committee packets going forward. There will be two Community Ed Visioning Workshop meetings on October 4, 2017 regarding the Memorial School project with a tour of the schools prior to the meetings, so that both district communities can see the conditions of the buildings. The OPM is aware of the district issues and how to communicate information to both districts.

Ms. Beaudoin stated that in addition, assessment of the site for the prep work, and there will be a community meeting in mid-October regarding the Memorial School renovation/construction project. District leaders, teachers, and some parents will meet with the Educational Planner on September 25, 2017 for an all-day workshop to consider the needs of education in the future, as it relates to the needs of building the Memorial School facility. The public version of this workshop will be held on October 4th. The 17 Point Plan and the upcoming meetings will be featured on the MERSD Facebook, Twitter, and the Blog.

- **Finance Committee: (Ann Cameron/Shannon Erdmann):** No report.
- **Policy Committee: (Rachel Fitzgibbon/Ken Warnock):** Mr. Warnock explained the benefits of signing up for ClearGov (\$5,500/year), a website dedicated to the PPI index progress and performance of all Commonwealth of Massachusetts schools. Ms. Beaudoin stated that she is in favor of using this tool, because anyone can pick out certain pieces of information to tell one aspect of the story, but the whole story is always there in an objective format, and there is also the ability to add commentary. It will also assist in collecting the data for reports, charts, and graphs. We will have to do some data checks for verification of information. The Committee decided to try it for one year and get input from other towns. Ms. Fitzgibbon stated that there is a 15% discount for each town's subscription.
- **Negotiation Team (Sarah Wolf/Julie Riordan):** No report.

4) Superintendent's Report

Ms. Beaudoin reported that we had a good and exciting start of the new school year.

We are starting a new district tradition to recognize long-term employees with recognition awards for 15, 20, 25, and 30 years of service. The overall theme was Gratitude. These employees received the following desk/shelf ornament awards:

Starfish with a Poem: 15 years of service. To capture the spirit of Manchester and Essex and the spirit of teaching.

Apple Awards:

Red Marble Apple for 20 years of service.

Crystal Apple for 25 years of service.

Golden Apple for 30 years of service (Sue Hardy).

In addition, we introduced the new teachers, and the entire district staff went out to the football field for a staff photo on the bleachers. We also provided a display of the cell phones corresponding to the year they all started teaching. Going forward, there will be yearly photos of all the district staff that will be included in the year books and the website.

Ms. Beaudoin noted that twenty teachers attended the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence workshop. It is important for us to recognize one another and the important work that we do, but emotions matter, and that will be our theme for this school year.

The reports from all the principals stated that it was a very good transition to the new school year.

5) Chairman's Report

Ms. Cameron

6) New Business: None.

7) Continued Business

Review of FY18 SC Goals:

Superintendent's Goals – FY 18: First Read.

Professional Practice: Utilize interest based bargaining methodology to renegotiate META contract.

Student Learning: Assess quality and provisioning in target areas of the academic program. Focus on reading development.

District Improvement: Develop and pass a budget that addresses impact of significant increased health costs on instructional program. How do we keep doing what we are doing with less funding.

Yale Emotional Intelligence Initiative Training and Rollout: Team Goal.

Carry Forward: Implement MSBA Feasibility Phase of the Memorial building project and ensure a capital and maintenance plan is in place to ensure upkeep of Essex Elementary School.

The School Committee will review and finalize this report and vote on it at the September 19, 2017 meeting.

Report from the Manchester Master Planning Project (Sue Brown, Town Planner):

Sue Brown introduced herself and stated that she is checking in with the Committee so there is not a disconnect with what the Manchester Master Planning Project is doing in the town and the schools, because the school is a vital part of any community. Manchester is planning what its future wants to look like, and there is a need to have those conversations together—not just the school building projects, but the culture and sense of community that the schools bring to it.

Ms. Brown explained the master planning process to the Committee. The first phase was visioning, and that is now completed, and the Vision Report is on the Manchester website. The outcome was that Manchester wants to maintain the character as a small coastal community. Manchester has hired a consultant to look at economic development to support the need for replacement of the infrastructure, housing development, etc. There is community support for development in the north of 128 limited commercial district. The Complete Streets Plan, which involves improvement and consideration of traffic, pedestrians, and biking, which will be reviewed by the Board of Selectmen on September 25th. A new survey will be circulated in late-September/early October to hopefully engage more of the community in participation and decision making.

Ms. Riordan asked Ms. Brown if the Master Planning Committee ("MPC") is interested in having a School Committee representative present at their meetings, and Ms. Brown replied yes and Ms. Riordan volunteered to be the representative.

Ms. Beaudoin expressed an interest in the setting of speed limits and its effect on the bike and pedestrian populations. Ms. Brown replied that the Bike and Pedestrian Committee are the drivers for this issue.

Ms. Beaudoin stated that she would like to be notified in writing about any approved housing projects, so that the MERSD can plan ahead for the increase in the student population. Ms. Brown replied that the MPC performed a theoretical exercise at a Town forum and no plans are in place for housing development at this time. The MPC is looking at the possible development of affordable housing and community scaled development that will serve the needs of the community. The state would like each town to have 10% of its housing affordable, and Manchester is around 5%. If a town is not ***actively working toward reaching the 10%***, then a 40B development can occur. There is an interest in adjusting our zoning by-laws to accommodate more diverse housing options in town. There is no community support for large scale housing units, and nothing that would change the tipping point of the schools.

Ms. Beaudoin stated that it seems that 110 units will have to be constructed over time and asked about the time line. Ms. Brown replied that this is based on the 2010 census, and we will be working on this for the 2020 census.

Ms. Erdmann asked about what types of housing/facilities are being considered for the north of 128 area. Ms. Brown replied that health, medical and education facilities (possible expansion of the MAC), along with senior housing are being considered. There is also a consideration for the police, fire, and DPW to be moved to that area. Gordon College also owns property in this area, and Gordon is also considering some future development of their land. We are hoping that the upcoming survey will determine the outcome. Most of the proposed developments will have to be approved by the Zoning Board of Appeals to change the zoning accordingly, and/or by a Town vote. Ms. Brown explained that the Master Planning Project is a capital planning tool to assist with the Manchester's decision making process.

Ms. Cameron asked when the Master Planning Committee meets and how can the School Committee become engaged in what is going on, and Ms. Brown replied that the meetings are once per month on a Thursday, and she will send e-mail reminders to the School Committee members. Ms. Brown added that there is a Master Plan site on the Manchester website, where you can comment on in the Tell Us What You Think link.

Ms. Beaudoin asked if there are any plans for youth services, and Ms. Brown replied that she had recently met with the Parks and Recreation Committee, who is frustrated by the lack of space provided for youth services for both Manchester and Essex. It is recognized that field and indoor space is an issue that needs to be addressed.

Superintendent's Evaluation: Ms. Cameron stated that Ms. Beaudoin has received an excellent evaluation and report card, and she read this evaluation to Ms. Beaudoin and the rest of the School Committee.

Ms. Beaudoin gave credit to all the MERSD staff and Committee members and thanked them. The Committee members thanked Ms. Beaudoin for her excellent leadership. Ms. Beaudoin added that one of our strengths is "It ain't never good enough" and always push to the next level.

Ms. Beaudoin thanked the Committee members for their continued support to all the staff and teachers.

School Committee Goals FY 18: The Committee will review this report and vote on it at the September 19th meeting.

Preliminary Discussion—Solar Panels for MERHS:

Mr. Urbas explained that Solect is the vendor and their proposal is to augment the solar panels that we already have in our district through a state funded grant (\$0 cost to us) and these panels are our property, but they provide 6-10% production that off-sets our energy use.

Solect will take care of the cost of installation, but they will own the panels. The generation of those panels will come directly to us, and we will be paying Solect instead of National Grid for the portion that these panels generate (approximately 24% of our total high school/middle school building's electricity production. In return, we get a rate that is fixed for 20 years and is 29% below our current market rate. We are entering into a long-term contract (20 years) which will provide stability, but we can lose if the market price goes down.

We are part of an energy purchasing consortium of higher education organizations and municipalities called Power Options, a non-profit organization and we pay an annual fee of approximately \$500/year and receive advice about what is going on with electricity and natural gas, and how to get the best contracts with the best terms. Power Options also solicits proposals from solar panel companies. Power Options recommends Solect. All the benefits that come in the form of tax credits, which we cannot get, state incentives, and credits that would potentially go to National Grid will get packaged into an amount of money that can benefit us. Solect will receive a capped investment return.

Ms. Erdman asked how the proposed panels (24% solar portfolio) will work with the existing panels. Mr. Urbas replied that it might be a total of 30%, but the existing panels are not locked into the 20-year rates. Ms. Erdmann asked if there was a conflict of interest between Power Options and Solect, and Mr. Urbas replied that there is a bit of a conflict of interest. Ms. Erdmann asked how long has Solect been with some of the school districts/municipalities and what has the

school districts/municipalities experience been like with Solest. Mr. Urbas replied that he has received a lot of positive feedback about Solest. Power Options has reported that the one criticism they have received about Solest is that an installation service person brought the equipment a day early. Mr. Urbas added that Solest is a young company and 20 years is a long time under this model. The prior exclusive provider was SunEdison, and it went bankrupt. Mr. Urbas inquired about what will happen if Solest goes into bankruptcy, and his understanding is that we will continue to get that portion of energy at the same rate; Solest can sell this contract to someone else, but neither the rate nor the duration of the contract can be changed. Mr. Urbas will have an attorney review the proposed contract.

Ms. Cameron asked the following questions:

Will Solest provide technological upgrades to the panels? Answer: No.

Can Solest calculate savings each year for us, so we can show the savings in our budget presentations? Answer: Yes.

Would we use Solest at Essex Elementary School? Answer: No. This school building does not have a roof that will remain in good enough condition for 20 years.

Ms. Cameron asked what Mr. Urbas needs from the Committee this evening regarding this solar panel proposal. Mr. Urbas replied that tonight he would like to get the Committee's initial sense on the matter and any additional questions or concerns you would like him to inquire about, and then bring it for a decision at the September 19th meeting, or decide to put the project on hold. Mr. Urbas explained that the life span of the roof is a consideration—if we had to repair the roof, we would have to pay Solest to remove and replace the panels, and Mr. Urbas is in the process of getting price quotes for this service, in the event it is needed.

Mr. Warnock raised the issue of will Solest be responsible if the panels degrade. Mr. Urbas replied that Solest is insured and manages maintenance; degradation will minimize our energy savings, but they do have a system degradation factor in their model. Mr. Warnock asked if Solest is insured and will provide maintenance in the event of a catastrophic event. Mr. Urbas replied that he will check into this. Mr. Warnock raised the issue regarding competitive bidding, and Mr. Urbas replied that we received post-competitive bidding from Power Options. Ms. Wolf stated that she has a friend who works in the solar panel field in Vermont, and she feels that Solest is a good business model.

Ms. Cameron stated that she gets the sense that the Committee is in support of Solest's proposal, and Mr. Urbas will pursue this and report back to the Committee.

Mr. Urbas asked if the appearance of how these panels will look on the building a concern to anyone and provided schematic photographs of the existing and proposed solar panels. The Committee reviewed the photos.

Ms. Cameron cautioned that the existing roof must be protected and not compromised by Solect, and Mr. Urbas replied that he will check into this as well. Mr. Warnock raised the concern regarding extensive snow storms and its effect on the roof of the building and the solar panels. Ms. Beaudoin added that this could prove to be a safety concern as well.

Ms. Beaudoin raised the concern regarding the panels near the playing field and can these panels hold up against all sorts of playing balls that will strike them, and Mr. Urbas replied that he had already questioned this and Solect will most likely move these panels to another area on the roof. Ms. Fitzgibbon asked if free-standing panels are a possibility, and Mr. Urbas replied yes.

Ms. Beaudoin asked if abutter approval is necessary, since the proposed panels will be visible to the neighborhood and asked if Solect can provide photos of what the panels will look like from the ground and from the houses across the street.

Mr. Urbas made a list of all the questions to be addressed by Power Options, Solect, the district's attorneys, and the Town of Manchester, and he will report back at the September 19th meeting.

8) Committee Comment:

Ms. Fitzgibbon suggested that the Committee provide communication regarding the raise in price of the parking, because she has heard that many parents and students are upset about this. Ms. Beaudoin replied that she will address this. Ms. Fitzgibbon also pointed out that the online handbooks need to be updated, and Ms. Beaudoin replied that she will investigate.

9) Public Comment:

None.

Adjourn

Ms. Erdmann made a motion to adjourn, and Ms. Riordan seconded the motion. Vote: Unanimous by Ms. Beaudoin, Mr. Urbas, Ms. Cameron, Ms. Riordan, Ms. Erdmann, Ms. Wolf, Mr. Warnock, and Ms. Fitzgibbon.. The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Adele Ardolino
Secretary to the MERSD School Committee