

Manchester Essex Regional School District

School Committee Meeting Minutes November 16, 2021

Virtual Meeting via WebEx

Members Present: Sarah Wolf, Chair, Theresa Whitman, Matt Harrington, Kate Koch-Sundquist, Chris Reed, and Erick Bourke.

Members Not Present: Ken Warnock

Staff Present: Pam Beaudoin, Superintendent, Avi Urbas, Director of Finance & Operations, and Gail Hunter, Secretary

A. Call to Order: Ms. Wolf called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.

B. Business Meeting Open Session

1) Public Comment

There was no public comment this evening.

2) Student Report – Theo Brown

Theo is the Student Council Representative to the School Committee this evening is his first time joining the School Committee meeting. Theo indicated the consensus among students in returning to the academic rigor of school is going smoothly, however there is a feeling there is work to catch up on. The learning process last year was slower and adjusting to the new level of academic activity has some students feeling they are getting behind. Theo stated he has felt this way in the past and worked with his teachers to get caught up. He believes students and teachers need to communicate about the shift from at home to in school and his experience is that teachers are responsive and willing to help. Underclass mates are shy and need to be encouraged to communicate with their teachers.

Ms. Whitman asked if the concerns about falling behind are more now than pre-covid. Theo stated more than pre-covid students adjusted to casualness of online learning and the in schoolwork-load is bigger. Ms. Wolf stated she is excited to have the Student Council participating in the meetings.

3) Chair's Report

Ms. Wolf stated students have been excelling at sports, open houses and conferences all went well. She noted there appears to be an up tick in cases in the community and it is important to wear masks and maintain social distancing to keep everyone safe and healthy. Ms. Wolf also indicated the School Committee has received several letters from parents and the tone of the correspondence has been positive and respectful.

4) Consent Agenda

- Acceptance of Warrants – 1016 and 1017
- Minutes – There were no minutes to approve this evening.

Ms. Whitman moved to approve the consent agenda; Ms. Koch-Sundquist seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

5) Sub-Committee Reports

- Elementary Facilities/MSBC (Theresa Whitman/Chris Reed) No Report

Superintendent Beaudoin reported the Memorial School Building Project remains on time and under budget. Some items on the completion list will be held to spring 2022. The remaining items are around plantings and drainage. Mr. Urbas added it is prudent to hold off on completing drainage and the fact that the project is under budget allows for the extra time. Mr. Urbas noted the driveway loop will be opening soon. Superintendent Beaudoin added Principal Willis will be communicating with parents explaining new drop off and pick up procedures. The driveway completion was the most significant part of Phase III.

Ms. Whitman asked Superintendent Beaudoin to follow up with her and Mr. Reed regarding participation with the Building Committee regarding EES. Superintendent Beaudoin is interested in Ms. Whitman and Mr. Reed working with Mr. Urbas on commissioning the second Habib Report and working on planning for field replacements.

- Finance Committee (Matt Harrington/Theresa Whitman) No Report
- Policy Committee (Eric Bourke/ Kare Koch-Sundquist) No Report
- Negotiation Team (Sarah Wolf/Ken Warnock) No Report

Ms. Wolf stated the Negotiation Team is working on a timeline with union representatives and she added we love out teachers and have open communications.

6) Superintendent's Report

- Congratulations Fall Athletes
- Girls Field Hockey is playing tonight for a trip to the Division 4 State Championships this is the semifinal round.
- Cross Country in Divisional State Championship with students qualifiers heading to Division 2/3 finals this weekend
- The Thanksgiving Day football game with Georgetown is a non-division game but a fall tradition with lots of spirit.
 - NEASC visit is underway at the High School
 - Manchester Memorial School Ribbon Cutting Ceremony will be scheduled for December
 - DEI Work

Core Value: *We believe our schools must strive to create a just and equitable environment that respects individual differences and the diversity of our communities, country, and world.*

Strategic Initiative: *Celebrate and nurture an inclusive and diverse culture that recognizes the contributions and uniqueness of each learner.*

- Michael Eastman – Culture7.Co
 - Leadership Team Training November 30, 2021
 - Planning Underway with Professional Development Committee for January PD Day
 - SEL/RULER work continues and serves as a foundation for growth
 - MERSD featured as part of Yale Research Study (RULER)
 - Teacher Diversification PLS (DESE sponsored) begins November 18, 2021
 - Tiered Systems of Support RTI structures and resources under review at both elementary schools
- **COVID Management**
 - Numbers remain low but appear to be going up
 - Reporting – Post Weekly Report, updated on Wednesday afternoon, Email communication in cases of outbreaks 9ex. Class/Team)
 - Testing Program available if needed
 - DESE Masking Mandate Extended to 1/15/22 – Expected to be Extended
 - Close Contact Quarantine

Discussion:

Superintendent Beaudoin addressed the attendance rate for this year compared to 2019, there is a slight increase in absences for 2021 with the District maintaining a 95% or better attendance rate. There was interest among Committee members in having more defined work materials available for children absent and more specifically absent due to being quarantined.

Superintendent asked if the District was being asked to develop a plan for remote learning. Ms. Wolf clarified the request was for a more standardized packets to send home for children. She has heard anecdotally there is a lack of consistency around work for children who are absent. Superintendent Beaudoin stated that is up to the classroom teacher. Ms. Koch-Sundquist believes that leaves too much wiggle room.

Ms. Koch-Sundquist stated she wanted families who are quarantining to understand they still have a community connection. Superintendent Beaudoin stated the work that goes home is an accumulation of what went on in the classroom and the work is different for every classroom, every student, and every home. Ms. Koch-Sundquist suggested appropriate practice work be forwarded to make it easy on everyone. Ms. Whitman indicated the request is for a consistent something and to ask teachers to prepare a packet.

Additionally, it was suggested that a letter be forwarded to families with children who are quarantined around the expectations for when the student is out and when the student returns.

7) Continued Business

- SEPAC Update – No report
- FY23 Budget Workshop

Ms. Whitman reported on the joint meeting recently held in Essex with the Essex Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen. Ms. Whitman stated the evening was well planned for and presented. It was an

opportunity for the Committee and Boars to ask questions and have the questions clarified and answered. It was a long meeting and appropriately so according to Ms. Whitman. It was an opportunity for the questions to get out on the table and create some forward-looking action.

- Timeline

November 16, 2021 School Committee – Initial FY23 Budget Discussion

December 7, 2021 School Committee – Presentation of Tentative Budget

December 15, 2021 Public Hearing on Tentative Budget

January 11, 2022 – School Committee Budget Discussion

January 25, 2022 – 2nd Public Hearing

February 1, 2022 – Adoption of FY23 Budget

- Budget Process Overview/History

MERSD Budget

- Operational budget is managed to deliver a stable and predictable spending and assessment growth rate from which apportionment is factored.
- MERSD managed key drivers and wild cards to maintain the agree upon target of 3.5% spending/assessment growth.
- The mechanics of apportionment can inflate or deflate the apportionment growth rate as Town enrollments fluctuate.
- The operational budget has been historically developed to provide level services.

Key Terms

- Spending Growth: percentage/\$ increase in spending approved by School Committee from one year to the next
- Assessment: percentage/\$ increase in annual; charge to Essex & Manchester based on formula defined in the Regional Agreement.

Spending

- MERSD operational budget is managed to deliver a stable and predictable spending and assessment growth rate from which apportionment is factored.
- Revenue Sources 86% Town Assessment and 14% State Funding
- Two types of Budgets – Operational and Capital
- MERSD maintains a stable and predictable spending and assessment growth. Reserve funfs provide temporary bridge prior to eventual correction.
- Key Drivers – Personnel is 65% of spending
- Insurance and OPEB is 20% of spending
- Out of District Tuition and Transportation – 5.2% of Budget

Assessment – MERSD managed key drivers and wild card to maintain the agreed upon target of 3.5% spending/assessment growth.

Apportionment – The mechanics of apportionment can inflate or deflate the apportionment rate as Town enrollments fluctuate.

The Committee also reviewed the use of reserves on the budget. Mr. Urbas stated reserves are not recurring revenue and when used to support the operation budget there needs to be an exit strategy.

8) School Committee Comment – There was no additional School Committee Comment this evening.

9) Adjourn

Mr. Bourke moved to adjourn the meeting; Mr. Harrington seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

WebEx call-In information available at <http://www/mersd.org/domain/818>

MERSD Mission Statement

Education all students, instilling a passion for life-long learning and encouraging local and global citizenship.