

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting

August 26, 2013

7:00 p.m.

Lincoln Center

PRESENT: Atwater, Crockett, Hagenow, Leon, Luxenberg, Pattacini, Scappaticci, Thames

ALSO PRESENT: Interim Superintendent of Schools Dr. Kisiel, Assistant to the Superintendent for Finance & Management Brooks, Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services Matfess, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Radikas

ABSENT: Cruz

A. **OPENING**

A.1&2. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m. by Chairperson Pattacini. All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Mr. Pattacini.

Mr. Pattacini explained that Sarah Walton had accepted a position in the school district, and according to state law if a school board member becomes an employee, their seat on the board is to be vacated. Ms. Walton tendered her resignation. Tonight he is asking for a motion to appoint a new board member to complete Ms. Walton's term.

Mr. Scappaticci made nominated Darryl Thames, Sr. to fill Sarah Walton's term through November 17th. Mr. Atwater seconded the nomination.

During his nomination Mr. Scappaticci spoke about how Mr. Thames is a married father of four who works for the City of Hartford as a liaison between the city and the Capital Workforce Partners. He has been a Manchester resident for 21 years and graduated from Howard University with a degree in Political Science with a minor in English. Mr. Scappaticci attended school with one of Mr. Thames sons. Mr. Scappaticci feels Mr. Thames will be an asset to the Board.

Mr. Atwater noted that he was seconding the nomination, even though he is a Republican, as a sign of mutual respect to his democratic colleagues in support of their choice of nominations. Mr. Atwater has worked with Mr. Thames in the past, and he feels recognizes his compassion for helping people. Mr. Atwater feels Mr. Thames work experience will help the board. Mr. Atwater further went on to talk about how he had felt unwelcomed to the Board when he was appointed to fill a vacant term and that nobody should feel that upon stepping up to serve the community. Mr. Atwater welcomed Mr. Thames and hopes he will get a better reception than he did upon his appointment.

Ms. Luxenberg asked for clarification, wondering if Ms. Walton had resigned or was removed. Mr. Pattacini clarified that Walton had resigned.

Ms. Hagenow welcomed Mr. Thames and explained that when Mr. Atwater was nominated the issue that Ms. Walton, Mr. Leon, and Mr. Pattacini had was with the decision making process, not the person, and she wondered why that process has not been fixed in the meantime. She appreciates individuals that are willing to serve their community and notes we need more individuals such as Mr. Thames.

Mr. Crockett welcomed Mr. Thames. He noted that in 2005 he also came aboard as a replacement and that many members started the same way over the years. Mr. Crockett believes in the system and welcomes Mr. Thames.

Ms. Luxenberg noted that one question members had when Mr. Atwater was nominated was that the nomination was circumventing the process. She noted she is happy to have both men joining the Board and hopes this can be a new page in working together and not rehashing the past. She looks forward to working towards the best interest of our students.

Mr. Pattacini echoed Ms. Luxenberg, noting Ron Atwater is recognized as a respected member of the board and he appreciates the perspective he brings to the table.

The vote was called:

7/0 – Voted in favor.

Town Clerk Camposeo stepped forward to swear in Mr. Thames to his new position. Mr. Thames promised to support the Constitution of the United States, the Constitution of the State of Connecticut, and the Town Charter of Manchester.

Mr. Thames took his seat with the other board members.

A.3 ADOPTION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

ADOPTED – Minutes Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of July 8, 2013.

Secretary Leon moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the motion.

7/0/1 – Voted in favor. Ms. Luxenberg abstained.

B. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART I

B.1. Introduction of Dr. Scott Ratchford, Director of Teaching & Learning

Dr. Kisiel introduced Dr. Scott Ratchford, the new Director of Teaching & Learning. Dr. Ratchford earned his Bachelor's Degree from UCONN, his Master's from Maris College, and his Doctorate from UCONN. His research focused on intervention for students with reading disabilities.

Dr. Ratchford joins the curriculum office and will assist Mrs. Raticas in overseeing district curriculum, staff development, coordinating curricular areas, and managing grant proposals.

Dr. Ratchford thanked the Board and noted his first day in the district, which started with Convocation, was an exciting one. He notes Manchester is similar to Danbury, where he grew up, and he is excited to work in this district. He has worked as a teacher, administrator, and a school psychologist and he feels he has been pointed in this direction to work in a community such as Manchester.

C. CONSENT CALENDAR

Dr. Kisiel presented nine items on the Consent Calendar for Board approval.

C.1. Personnel Action

Details had already been provided to the Board members with their agenda.

C.2. Transfer of Funds

- **Transfers to the FY 2012-2013 budget from Salaries (\$523,836.53), Other Purchased Services (\$20,653.99), Dues & Fees (\$34,781.70), Supplies & Materials (\$15,289.75) for a total of \$594,561.97 to Employee Benefits (\$285,996.39), Professional Fees (\$53,439.03), Contracted Services (\$152,958.15), Equipment & Capital (\$102,168.40)**

- **Transfer from Manchester High School Professional Development to Manchester High School Other Purchased Services in the amount of \$399**
- **Transfer from Bentley Alternative Education, Printing to Bentley Alternative Education Instructional Supplies in the amount of \$1,561**
- **Transfer from Bentley Alternative Education Printing to Bentley Alternative Education Dues & Fees in the amount of \$39**
- **Transfer from Manchester High School Business Computer Supplies to Manchester High School Guidance Travel/Lodging in the amount of \$2,353**
- **Transfer from Manchester High School Language Arts Computer Supplies Instructional Supplies and Math Textbooks to Manchester High School Contracted Kelly Substitutes in the amount of \$7,000**
- **Transfer from Manchester High School Art Professional Development to Manchester High School Art Instructional Supplies in the amount of \$200**

C.3. Establish an appropriation in the amount of \$200,000 for FY 13-14 State of Connecticut, Department of Social Services, Medicaid funds

C.4. Establish an increase in the Enfield Head Start Training and Technical Assistance appropriation for the FY 13-14 in the amount of \$2,228, bringing the total award to \$11,137

C.5. Establish an appropriation in the amount of \$771,780 for the State Teachers' Retirement Grant for FY 13-14

C.6. Establish an increase in the Manchester Head Start Training and Technical Assistance appropriation for the FY 13-14 in the amount of \$3,062, bringing the total to \$15,312

C.7. Establish an increase in the Enfield Head Start appropriation for FY 13-14 in the amount of \$118,232, bringing the total award to \$760,362

C.8. Establish an appropriation for FY 13-14 in the amount of \$25,448.92 to be placed in the Community Use of Schools account and made available to cover repair and maintenance costs to Bailey Auditorium

C.9. Extended Field Trip – Illing Middle School – 8th Grade Class Trip – Washington D.C. – May 14, 2014 – May 16, 2014 – approximately 250 students – Teacher and Parent Chaperones will be present

The Chairman called for a motion.

Secretary Leon moved for the Board of Education to adopt the Consent Calendar, Item C in our agenda. Ms. Luxenberg seconded the motion.

Mr. Crockett asked if #1, Personnel Actions, could be voted on separately. Mr. Pattacini asked if anyone objected to a friendly amendment. There were objections, so Mr. Pattacini asked Mr. Crockett to make a motion on the issue.

Mr. Crockett moved to amend the motion to remove Personnel Actions. Atwater seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken:

**Thames – Nay
Leon – Nay
Crockett – Aye
Atwater – Aye**

**Pattacini – Nay
Scappaticci – Nay
Hagenow – Aye
Luxenberg – Nay**

3/5/0 - Voted in favor. The motion failed.

A roll call vote was taken on the original motion:

**Scappaticci – Aye
Hagenow – Nay
Luxenberg – Aye
Leon – Aye**

**Crockett – Nay
Atwater – Nay
Thames – Aye
Pattacini – Aye**

5/3/0 – Voted in favor. The motion passed.

D. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mrs. Shootz, 12 Conway Road, stated she is not happy with Board decisions. She states that the SMARTR program was started a year and a half ago and this is what they came up with? She saw the sketch on the Bennet/Cheney project. She feels these buildings are for 5th and 6th graders and it is not UCONN or MCC. Her kids went to Bennet and did not melt crossing the street to the Cheney building for classes, and fancy stuff was not needed. She feels \$17 million is ridiculous. She is very upset with the SMARTR program and doesn't feel they

have accomplished anything and we should have had them together. She feels the full cost of the project will fall onto everyone as State taxpayers. Mrs. Shootz went on to say SMARTR is wasting money. Before a Spring vote she wants to see more sketches and common sense pictures. Mrs. Shootz also does not want Washington torn down. She thinks the board should talk to people that live in the area of Washington for feedback. She pointed out that Saint Francis hospital has a walk-over and it makes no common sense to do the same at Bennet. She feels taxpayer money should be used as it is supposed to be and too much money is being spent on schools. She is sick of referendums. She feels we should talk more about education and how kids don't socialize anymore.

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, expressed his congratulations to Mr. Thames. He is glad to see more diversity on the board and hopes for changes in attitude as well. He would like to see equity looked at in a new way as well as the achievement gap, and make it count. He also congratulated Dr. Ratchford, a fellow UCONN graduate. He hopes that the board listens to his constructive criticism. He hopes it will be a good new school year with Mrs. Radikas. We can't do the same old thing. Times change and he hopes that critics will help solve the problems. He feels we are struggling as a school system. Mr. Stringfellow noted this past weekend there was an MLK 50 year march. Governor Malloy will be speaking at an upcoming event on the subject this weekend. Mr. Stringfellow would like to reach out to other ethnic groups. He recommended several articles in *TIME*, the *NY Post*, and *USA Today*, as well as a book, *Myth of Muslim Tide*.

E. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART II

E.1. Opening of School Report

Dr. Kisiel gave a brief Power Point regarding the opening of the school year. He noted that approximately 800 employees gathered in Bailey Auditorium this morning for Convocation. The school level teachers of the year were recognized, as well as the District Teacher of the year, Linda Mason, from Bowers School. The measure was "Bring the Joy into Teaching & Learning". Dr. Debbie Silver was the keynote speaker, and spoke about the art and the heart of teaching with a powerful and humorous message to share. Staff then participated in 20 school climate workshops.

There were 66 new appointments due to 37 retirements, 21 resignations, 3 new Kindergarten teachers (Buckley, Washington, Highland Park), and 5 new Administrators. Three appointments are still pending. Dr. Kisiel noted that 18% of the new appointments were minorities.

Among the many improvements over the summer, the roofs at Bowers and Waddell will be completed this week, with just some finishing work left to do.

The portables at Illing were removed over the summer. Also at Illing, three classes were renovated and the lockers were refinished.

Sidewalk repairs were accomplished throughout the district. The lavatory floors in six elementary schools were refinished. A new gas line was installed in MHS Science labs. A new kitchen floor was installed at Verplanck. Many more minor projects were also carried out.

Dr. Kisiel noted school buildings opened to teachers on August 20th, due to the buildings being cleaned and used for summer programs. Most cleaning has been completed, but he asked for patience on the last few items as the summer programs caused some delay in cleaning schedules.

Dr. Kisiel noted that the district is now utilizing 100% of available classroom space in grades K-5 except for 1 open classroom at Keeney. The schools are all racially balanced. Dr. Kisiel reminded the room that the enrollment projections are expected to increase over the next few years and noted he has asked for new enrollment projections to be done. In planning for the district he notes racial balance should always be kept in the back of our minds.

Dr. Kisiel reviewed the new school registration process, which is computer-based. Parents of returning students will have to go online to verify information instead of the dreaded pile of papers that typically comes home the first day of school. He received an email from a parent of four who was doing "a happy dance" about Infosnap, noting in the past the first day of school has always left her grumpy with all the paperwork, and Infosnap took her merely ten minutes to complete information on three of her four children. Dr. Kisiel had heard some concern about the third party arrangement with using an outside company for this program, however he assured parents their information is safe and if they are concerned they can complete the information in person.

Regarding funding, we have met minimum budget requirements and we are now an considered an Alliance District. Of the 30 Alliance Districts, only one did not meet the requirements this year. The 2013-2014 Alliance Grant was submitted to the state July 3rd, with revisions submitted early August. Dr. Kisiel has not had word yet about the money.

Dr. Kisiel reviewed that the Board of Directors is considering postponing the referendum on the 5th/6th grade academy and school security monies to be included in the referendum until April 2014.

Dr. Kisiel reviewed that the Teacher Evaluation district plan was approved by the State Department of Education with some minor revisions. The

administrators training on the new system occurred over four days during the summer. The teacher training begins August 27th with school-based workshops and will continue throughout the year. One day a month all administrators will continue with training for ten months.

Mr. Leon felt the convocation was an excellent program, especially Linda Mason's presentation. He wondered if the recording of that presentation can be shown at a future board meeting so the public can see it.

Mr. Thames noted this is the second year of the Alliance Grant and wondered how long it took last year to be notified of our award. Dr. Kisiel reviewed that the grant was submitted in October and we were notified of the funding in January.

Mr. Pattacini stated it was great to see the staff today at convocation and felt it was an exciting day. Regarding Kindergarten enrollment, he wondered if the numbers were at or higher than expected. Dr. Kisiel felt they were right at projections and noted Kindergarten numbers are always a gamble and fluctuate from year to year. Buckley had 13 more Kindergarteners than expected, Verplanck had 15 more, and Highland had 11 more. Dr. Kisiel noted we plan the best we can, and this year required a net increase of two teachers.

Mr. Pattacini spoke about the fact that the Board of Directors are debating moving the school questions to an April referendum. Mr. Leon had earlier expressed concern that the plan needs to be made clearer and more work needs to be done to explain the plan better to the community. Mr. Pattacini is hopeful that pushing the referendum off until April will not cause the project to lose time. He wondered if delaying the referendum would take the Cheney project out of the current cycle. Dr. Kisiel noted that as long as a decision is made by June 30, 2014 we will still be okay, so an April referendum, should it pass, will not delay the project.

F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

F.1. Policy Revisions

a. Policy 3110 – Budget

This policy revision was presented at the last board meeting in July and makes the board policy consistent with the Town Charter.

b. Policy 6141.3 – Acceptable Use of Technology

This policy revision was also reviewed at the July meeting. The reference to Cheshire Public Schools should be removed from the policy as it was not used.

Dr. Kisiel had not had any feedback on either policy revision from Board members.

Secretary Leon moved for the Board of Education to adopt the revisions to Policy 3110 – Budget. Mr. Crockett seconded the motion.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

Secretary Leon moved for the Board of Education to adopt the revisions to Policy 6141.3 – Acceptable Use of Technology. Mr. Crockett seconded the motion.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

G. NEW BUSINESS

None.

H. COMMUNICATIONS

None.

I. COMMITTEE REPORTS

I.1. SMARTR Committee

Dr. Kisiel stated there is not much to say regarding SMARTR. As noted, the potential referendum is up for discussion by the Board of Directors tomorrow evening. At the last meeting that was discussed, including the addition of security monies to the referendum question.

I.2. Buildings & Sites

Mr. Crockett noted that the committee last met on August 1, 2013 and discussed the previous referendum projects and updates, which were all reviewed by Dr. Kisiel this evening.

J. PUBLIC COMMENTS (Limited to items on tonight's agenda)

Mrs. Shootz, 38 Bobby Lane, noted the Board of Directors will be talking about schools and security tomorrow. Mrs. Shootz wonders why we can't have the security question on November's referendum. This is about security for our children and should be a high priority. She hopes the Board of Directors is listening and while she understands there are questions about the school building projects, she feels security is important. She notes other schools have security and wonders why we are not setting this up for Manchester. We need to think of the priorities in town. Her children went through the school system

and she knows what kids need. She speaks for herself and all mothers – she wants the kids to be safe. Why are we not talking about this?

Mr. Pattacini asked the administration to clarify the issue of security.

Dr. Kisiel stated that typically no response is given to public comment, however some clarity needs to be given regarding school security and the referendum. Dr. Kisiel notes that in comparison to other districts, we are in reasonably good shape regarding security. He notes what is up for discussion for referendum are enhancements, not necessities. He cannot discuss those specific issues as they would reveal vulnerabilities; however he has spoken with Town Manager Scott Shanley regarding possibly considering lending monies to the Board of Education to get some security work done, including installing panic buttons in all schools and numbering all rooms. Dr. Kisiel notes that he is confident most issues have already been taken care of in regards to security. One issue remaining is the concern that classroom phones cannot call out. Most needs are not immediate and there are measures in place to circumvent the issues. He notes the \$1.4 million being requested will not cover \$4 million worth of desired projects, but he assures the public that our children are not in danger and we have put into place as much security as we can and he is confident of the safety of our children.

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, offered his support for the Consent Calendar, especially #3 regarding Medicaid funds. Regarding Dr. Kisiel's remarks regarding security, it is important not to have a knee-jerk reaction. He notes that Enfield and Glastonbury have instituted armed guards. He wants our kids to be safe, not fearful. He notes Newtown was tragic but should not be on our minds forever. Mr. Stringfellow recommended several articles, including one on "child free life", noting that childless people are still voters and their tax dollars have a voice too. In *Parade* on August 11th there was an article regarding the school day. Friday's *Journal* had an article on the Chrome books being given out at the high school. Mr. Stringfellow liked that the mini page in the *J* was about diversity this week. He recalled exchange students when he was in school as he is an MHS grad, class of '74, and proud of it.

K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

None.

L. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Pattacini called for a motion to adjourn.

Secretary Leon moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Neal Leon
Board Secretary