

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting

Monday, June 11, 2012

7:00 p.m.

Lincoln Center

PRESENT: Crockett, Cruz, Hagenow, Leon, Pattacini, Scappaticci,
Walton

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

ABSENT: Cruz, Kidd, Luxenberg

A. OPENING

A.1&2 MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Chairperson Pattacini.

A.3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

ADOPTED – Minutes Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of May 29, 2012.

Secretary Leon moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the motion.

6/0 – Voted in favor.

A.4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES OF BUDGET MEETING

ADOPTED – Minutes Budget Meeting of the Board of Education of May 23, 2012.

Secretary Leon moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the motion.

6/0 – Voted in favor.

B. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART I

B.1. PTA President Report

Dr. Kisiel welcomed Ms. Jackie Madore, District PTA President and thanked her for her efforts over the past year in working with the PTA organizations in our schools throughout the district. Ms. Madore thanked the PTA Board members and PTA members throughout the district for their work over the year sponsoring various activities for the students, including movie nights, dances, variety shows, bingo, internet safety program, and various other activities. Ms. Madore was especially thankful to the MHS parents for their work with Project Graduation. Ms. Madore pointed out that one school, Washington Elementary, is in danger of not having a PTA next year as they need parents to step up to serve on the Board for that school. This year the Town PTA was able to make donations to Nutmeg at Night, Odyssey of the Mind, Future Problem Solvers, and Project Graduation.

Ms. Madore announced six schools received awards at the CT PTSA Annual Meeting this year. Tonight two seniors were recognized for receiving scholarships from the PTSA, including Jackie Ofrio and Yumna Arif. Ms. Madore thanked the Superintendent, Board, teachers, and community for their support this year.

C. CONSENT CALENDAR

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

C.1. Personnel Action

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

C.2. Transfer of Funds

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

1. Transfer from Buckley School Administration Professional Development to Buckley School Contract Kelly Substitute Professional Development account - \$421.00.
2. Transfer from Bowers School Administration Professional Development to Bowers School Administration Hourly account - \$80.00.

C.3. Appropriation to increase MRA out-of-town tuition to provide services to special needs students ranging in age from 14 to 21 in the amount of \$25,131 for FY 2011-2012 for a total of \$825,131

C.4. Appropriation to support middle summer school program in the amount of \$46,000 for FY 2012-2013

C.5. Appropriation in the amount of \$200,000 for the Medicaid Grant for FY 2012-2013

C.6. Appropriation in the amount of \$771,780 for the State Teachers Retirement Grant for FY 2012-2013

C.7. Manchester High School – Extended Field Trip Request – Student Activities Leadership Camp – Stonehill College - July 18- July 22, 2012

The Chairman called for a motion.

Secretary Leon moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the recommendation to adopt the Consent Calendar, as outlined by Dr. Kisiel.

6/0 - Voted in favor.

D. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Jackie Ofria, a Senior at MHS, spoke about the Indoor Track program. She has been part of track for the past four years and stated it is a powerful program at MHS. She feels the team is suffering due to the decision not to allow practice in the hallways at the school and hopes for a better solution for on-campus practice. She stated that this year they only had three Freshman boys and 3 Freshman girls finish the seasons due to the issues surrounding the practice situation and she feels the team is falling apart. Ms. Ofria went on to say that track changes lives and she hopes for a better solution in the future.

Kodjo Frasmis, also an MHS student, spoke about the opportunity track presents in high school. He feels we need to help the program and he has enjoyed his track "family" over the years.

Chris Parla, a Senior at MHS, has been part of the track program for 12 seasons and is also concerned that the indoor program is no longer thriving. He pointed out there were four times more new students in the outdoor track program this year and the lack of a practice area on campus is the biggest cause. He hopes the Board follows through in a timely manner, not giving false hope, to improve the program for high school students. Mr. Parla stated that track helps kids "lost in life" and gives them motivation to do better and make better choices.

Patrick Dibble, a Junior at MHS, participates in both indoor and outdoor track. He states the lack of participation in the indoor program impacts the outdoor program. Though he feels Star Hill is not the worst option, the bussing of students there causes many students to opt not to join the indoor program. Mr.

Dibble feels we are at a crossroads in the track program and he doesn't want to see the program go down the drain because many students are not willing to try indoor track due to the bussing for practice. He feels it is a good idea for Manchester to reconsider the options and there are other ways to go about resolving the issues for this great program. He states if we continue to lose kids, we won't have an indoor track program at all.

Stephanie Knybel, 138 Bobby Lane, stated that Monday marks the end of her 25 years as a Manchester Public School parent. She wanted to let the Town of Manchester know that she has been pleased with the education her four children have had in Manchester. She points out her son, who is graduating this year, is taking with him 12 credits as he enters Eastern! She has never been disappointed with her children's education and she is so proud of the staff, students, faculty, and Board members. Ms. Knybel hopes that in the future more good publicity is broadcast regarding Manchester, and not just the bad stories. She points out that this year a senior at MHS earned the Petit Award for her work with MS, among other positive stories. Ms. Knybel feels Manchester competes with private and magnet schools and there needs to be more positive news stories to highlight the benefits of Manchester Public Schools. She feels good things are coming to Manchester.

Mrs. Schuetz, 12 Conway Road, wants to know what the \$30,000 given to the SMARTR Committee is being used for. As a common tax payer, she doesn't understand why decisions are not being made. She questions going to the Board of Directors to ask for more money for the transportation issue and feels the Board of Education should already have that in their budget. Mrs. Schuetz claims there are \$23 million in fringe benefits given to teachers and points out the staff in Manchester have 9 unions. She feels the Board could have fixed the schools but that all they do is talk and do nothing. Her children went through Manchester Public Schools and her daughter feels the education back then was better than what is offered now. She feels the Board needs to listen to the tax payers. Mrs. Schuetz again asked for details on the \$30,000 allotted for 13 people to make decisions on what to do with the schools. She claims the Board of Education and the Board of Directors made the mistakes and she hopes the \$30,000 is not money out the window. She feels the Board needs to take responsibility for Nathan Hale and that all the schools could have been fixed, but the money was taken from one thing to fund another.

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, recognized Memorial Day and Pride Heritage Day recently at Cheney Hall. Mr. Stringfellow recommended several books and articles, including *Vet Haven*, *Brothers in Battle*. He also recommended a program at MCC, Excursions in Learning – for summer enrichment programs. He pointed out a program of the State Board of Education on CTN regarding 20th Century Learning. Mr. Stringfellow recommended an article in the March edition of *Education Digest* about classroom strategies to

monitor learning. He recommended an article on student safety in *Your Teen* magazine, and an article regarding student driving and drug use in the *New York Times*. He hopes Manchester will turn around with help from the new principal at the high school.

Mr. Pattacini stated it was great to hear from the high school students tonight who are advocating for a cause they believe in, especially the seniors who were there simply to show support for the future of the program. He is proud of them.

Secretary Leon moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the recommendation to change the agenda, switching Items E and G, as Mr. Geary was running late tonight.

6/0 - Voted in favor.

E. NEW BUSINESS

E.1. New Policy Recommendations

a) Code of Conduct for Board Members

Dr. Kisiel outlined that this will become an amendment to the bylaws. He consulted with Town Attorney Ryan Barry, as well as Shipman & Goodwin regarding the wording of this code. A 2/3 vote will be required at the next meeting on this issue. Dr. Kisiel stated this is as far as the Board can go to regulate its members.

Mr. Leon recapped the situation for the public that prompted this code, regarding the issue several months ago in which a Board member misused the internet and was accused of harassment of another Board member. It was learned that it is very difficult to reprimand a Board member and this is the only course of action that can be taken. Mr. Leon stated that unfortunately, the behavior in question has not stopped and many members of the Board continue to deal with the inappropriate behavior. He is in favor of this policy.

Ms. Walton is happy to see we have a code of conduct proposed to hold the Board members to the same high standards we hold the staff and students to. She offers a friendly edit regarding a typo in the document.

Mr. Crockett stated he agrees with both Mr. Leon and Ms. Walton, it is unfortunate that we need this in 2012, but feels we will see this in a lot of towns in the future and he will support the proposal.

Mr. Pattacini will also support the policy. He thanked the administration and appreciates the efforts put forth in drafting this policy. He states the bylaws will be re-adopted at the next meeting with this amendment, which will require a 2/3 vote of the Board.

b) Internet Safety Policy

Dr. Kiesel discussed the requirement for applying for special discounts given to schools for E-rates on telecommunication and internet service. These E-rates offset other technical costs. Recently the rules have slightly changed and a separate policy on Internet Safety is now required, regarding designs to block inappropriate material from access and to show evidence of training for student and adult users in the district. This policy is designed to protect our interests and minor children. Definitions provided are to satisfy the FCC requirements in the grant application.

Mr. Pattacini asked if this was simply a policy that confirms that we are already abiding by these guidelines?

Dr. Kiesel stated it was, but due to the requirements of the grant application, a separate policy was required.

Mr. Pattacini stated this will come before the Board at the next meeting for adoption.

E.2. Fall Bond Referendum

Dr. Kiesel outlined that recently the administration met with the Building & Sites Committee to compile a list of priorities to present to the Board of Directors for improvements. There are \$22 million in needed repairs. The proposal identifies about 25% of those issues deemed as necessary to protect the infrastructure of our buildings. These are high priority items, not including ADA requirements presented last year. Dr. Kiesel believes this is a separate referendum as it will impact Town facilities as well as schools.

Mr. Leon, speaking as Co-Chair of the Building & Sites Committee, stated this is only a small portion of the \$20+ million that is needed, and the \$4.9 million represents three roofs that take up a large portion of those funds. He feels it is a step in the right direction. In the past the Board has been criticized for not putting money into the schools, and while he wishes it was more, he understands about not asking for too much. Mr. Leon states that these items do not conflict with any work being considered by the SMARTR Committee, and are items needed in the short-term. The work being contemplated by the SMARTR Committee is at least 4-5 years out and these issues simply cannot wait that long. Mr. Leon hopes for \$4-5 million each year for critical improvements.

Ms. Walton asked if the items listed were all Priority 1 cost estimates? Mr. Leon stated they were all Priority 1, but only a small portion of the Priority 1 items, including approximately \$1.5 million for three roofs and \$1.2 million to replace the portables at Illing. Ms. Walton stated these are critical repairs needed to maintain the shell of the buildings.

Mr. Pattacini thanked Mr. Leon for outlining the issue.

Dr. Kisiel pointed out that taking down and replacing portable classrooms at Illing, which only have a life of approximately 10 years, is an issue of health. Those classrooms can breed mold and have an effect on asthmatics in the school. This item is high on the critical list for the health risks associated with the age of the portables.

Ms. Walton questioned the interior paint of classrooms. As a mother sending her child to Kindergarten in the fall, she was disappointed to see chipping paint in the classrooms she toured. Mr. Leon agreed that he would like more money for common areas and classrooms in the buildings, but that is not a priority and the interior painting on the list is to repair areas that have been damaged by leaking roofs.

Mr. Crockett asked Mr. Pattacini to explain the process of a referendum for the public. Mr. Pattacini stated the Board of Education identifies items for repair and the amount request is forwarded to the Board of Directors, who are the fiscal authority in town and ultimately responsible for placing items on a referendum. The Board of Directors will act on the request, and decide if the item is to be put on a referendum, where the voters will have the final say in the Fall.

Secretary Leon moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the motion for the Board of Education to request of the Board of Directors a \$4.9 million critical building repairs as outlined in our packet for this Fall 2012 bond referendum.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Leon states ultimately the public decides this issue and he feels the public understands this is a small step in the right direction and that the public needs to decide to invest in the schools.

Mr. Pattacini echoed Mr. Leon. He feels the community looks to the Board to lead the district in improving the schools. Mr. Pattacini states this is a small but important step to make the needed repairs.

The Chairman called the question.

6/0 - Voted in favor.

F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

G. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART II

G.1. NEASC Progress Report

Dr. Kisiel stated that in the two months since Mr. Matthew Geary has assumed his responsibilities as Principal of MHS, much of his time has been devoted to the issues identified in the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) Accreditation Report. Mr. Geary has been looking at ways or reorganizing the responsibilities of the high school administration to achieve the ends needed.

Mr. Geary presented a power point, which is available on the District website, regarding his reorganization plans. He pointed out the NEASC commendations, as well as the steps necessary to comply with the NEASC recommendations. Mr. Geary presented his administration reorganization, which includes two assistant principals and two deans of students.

Mr. Pattacini questioned, regarding facility improvements, we have already stopped the use of portables at the high school, what else is needed? Mr. Geary stated that one issue from the NEASC report that remains is PE locker room space and PE space. He also noted it is not uncommon to remain on warning for several years. Mr. Geary stated that all equipment shows progress on facilities. Mr. Pattacini offered the Board's support.

Mr. Leon thanked Mr. Geary for a concise report that he can understand. He feels encouraged and that the Board made the right choice in hiring Mr. Geary. Mr. Leon appreciates the fact that Mr. Geary is not a patient person, as actions need to be taken and it is good to have a plan with goals. Mr. Leon shared that he has heard nothing but positive feedback on Mr. Geary over the last couple of months.

Ms. Walton commended Mr. Geary on the hard work and dynamic leadership he has displayed and she looks forward to more growth.

Mr. Scappaticci has interacted with MHS students recently and has also heard all positive feedback about Mr. Geary. He is also pleased to see the pink bracelets many are sporting and feels this impacts the culture of the

school and he looks forward to continued changes. Mr. Geary distributed the bracelets to all Board members.

Mr. Crockett appreciates the encouraging report and the enthusiasm of the leadership. He hopes next year goes well, just cautions Mr. Geary not to ask for more money!

Ms. Hagenow also appreciates the efforts shown in the report and states it looks like Mr. Geary is trying to work smarter, not harder. She appreciates the focus on the positive behavior.

Mr. Pattacini also thanked Mr. Geary for his efforts in gathering input and giving a clear presentation. He stated change is not easy and he looks forward to hearing about more positive changes in the future and offers his full support.

H. COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Leon reminds everyone that Relay for Life will take place in Northwest Park this weekend and invites everyone to come show their support of the American Cancer Society.

I. COMMITTEE REPORTS

I.1. Building and Sties Committee

Mr. Crockett stated that on May 3rd the Committee toured Highland Park. In attendance on the tour were Mr. Crockett, Ms. Kidd, Mr. Leon, Ms. Luxenberg, Mr. Pattacini, Mr. Till, Mr. Brennan, Mr. Verdura, and Mr. Ziegler. Attendees for the meeting that followed were Mr. Crockett, Mr. Leon, Ms. Luxenberg, and Mr. Ziegler. The Committee had received a request from Washington School for a lilac tree to be planted as a memorial for a deceased student. The donated tree will be planted by the Buildings & Grounds department by June 30th.

Mr. Crockett stated the next meeting of the Building & Sites Committee occurred on June 7th. Committee members present were Mr. Crockett, Ms. Hagenow, and Mr. Leon. Others in attendance were Dr. Kisiel, Mrs. Brooks, Mr. Pattacini, and Mr. Ziegler. The priorities list for the proposed referendum was discussed.

The next meeting of the Building & Sites Committee is scheduled for 4 June 14th, with a tour of Highland Park commencing at 4:30.

I.2. Curriculum & Instruction Committee

Mr. Crockett, who was not in attendance at the last meeting, gave the report. At the May 7th meeting Committee member present was Ms. Cruz

who met with Dr. Richardson. Also present were Ms. Kidd, Mr. Thorndike, and Claudia Millette. Mr. Thorndike reviewed the 2012 Summer School Program and Ms. Millette reviewed the newly written English Language Arts Curriculum for grades 7-8.

I.3. Policy Committee

Mr. Scappaticci noted the last meeting was held June 5th, with members Ms. Cruz, Ms. Hagenow, and Mr. Scappaticci present, as well as Dr. Kisiel. The policies discussed were presented tonight.

I.4. Superintendent Search Committee

Mr. Pattacini stated that the Committee, which is comprised of members of the Board of Education, has been interviewing candidates. Initially a decision was forecast by the end of the school year, though the Committee is not sure that deadline will be met.

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

Ms. Jackie Madore, 45 Northfield Street, stated that as a victim of harassing emails and phone calls by the Board member in question, she thanks the Board for bringing for the proposed amendment to the bylaws on conduct and she hopes and prays no other Board members or members of the public have to experience the uneasiness and frustration of receiving the type of emails she has.

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, offers his support of the Consent Calendar. He is impressed with Mr. Geary and agrees that the Board made the right choice. Mr. Stringfellow hopes to hear from Dr. Eastlake regarding helping students of color enroll in AP courses. He recommends an article in *Education Next* regarding school reform and the Common Core. Mr. Stringfellow notes that we are not alone in our search for a Superintendent, as both East Hartford and Middletown are in the same process. Mr. Stringfellow recommends a book by Dr. Tony Wagner, *Creating Innovators*, about thinking outside the box. Mr. Stringfellow notes he gave Mr. Geary information regarding cyber bullying and internet safety. He also recommends the book *Bully Nation* by Dr. Jesse Klein.

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.

6/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment 8:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Neal Leon
Board Secretary