

# MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

## Special Meeting

**Wednesday, February 1, 2012**

Immediately Following Budget Workshop  
MHS Freshman Center, Room 293

**PRESENT:** Crockett, Cruz, Hagenow, Kidd, Leon, Luxenberg, Pattacini, Scappaticci, Walton

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

**ABSENT:** Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Richardson

### **A. OPENING**

#### **A.1&2 MEETING CALLED TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 7:56 p.m. All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Chairperson Pattacini.

### **B. PUBLIC COMMENTS (comments limited to budget items)**

None.

### **C. MEETING AGENDA ITEMS:**

#### **1) NATHAN HALE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

#### **2) ADOPTION OF BOARD OF EDUCATION'S RECOMMENDED BUDGET FOR 2012-2013.**

**Mr. Pattacini** clarified the plan for the meeting. First the Board would vote whether to take Nathan Hale off-line for the next school year. Next a budget would be adopted which would reflect that decision. It was decided that all Board members would state their position on Nathan Hale before a vote was taken.

#### **C.1 NATHAN HALE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

**Ms. Luxenberg** first requested that a definition of "off-line" be given for the public.

**Ms. Cruz** stated that in her opinion, taking a school off-line indicated that we would be seeking a cost assessment on how to fund the repairs and we would anticipate funding at some point to repair Nathan Hale. She cautioned

that the timeframe of funding could mean approximately 3-4 years "off-line" for the school.

**Ms. Luxenberg** stated that she felt off-line does not necessary mean the school will come back on-line, but that it allows for flexibility to work on the long-term plan with the Board of Directors and the proposed committee.

**Ms. Walton** agreed that off-line does not necessary mean a guarantee that the school will be reopened, but that it is in everyone's best interest to take the school off-line at this point and that they would then advocate for a like-new renovation.

**Mr. Crockett** asked for clarification on the Board's intention, whether it be ultimately closing the school, turning it into a magnet school, reopening it.

**Mr. Leon** suggested we "suspend" the use of Nathan Hale pending an analysis, instead of using the term "off-line".

**Ms. Kidd** agreed that she feels the school needs to come off-line until recommendations from the committee, which will be comprised of both members of the public as well as elected officials, are complete.

**Ms. Hagenow** agreed it is our responsibility to proceed with taking the school off-line, or suspending use of the school in the best interests of the children.

**Ms. Luxenberg** likes the term "suspend" to eliminate the perception of "off-line" until a long-term plan is achieved.

**Ms. Cruz** believes that since the seriousness of the facilities issues have just been brought to full light, they are not in a position to decide on whether the school will be closed permanently or not, but suspending use of the building for the short-term will allow time for the long-term plan to be completed. In the end, if financing is not available, we may need to ultimately close the school.

**Mr. Pattacini** agrees that "suspend" is a better term. He clarified suspending use of the building means the children will not attend school in Nathan Hale next Fall. It does not mean the facility is closing permanently, but it also does not mean it will not close in the future.

**Mr. Crockett** asked when the committee would be reporting back with a long-term plan.

**Mr. Leon** stated that was unknown, but the next meeting was scheduled for July 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Ms. Kidd** wanted the public to know this was a hard sad decision for all and would like to add the term "temporarily". She has the kids best interests at heart.

**Chairperson Pattacini asked for a motion.**

**Secretary Leon moved that the Board of Education suspend the use of Nathan Hale Elementary School beginning with the 2012-2013 school year pending an analysis of the future use of that building, and that the Superintendent is hereby directed to develop a plan for the Board's review and action to reassign students enrolled at Nathan Hale Elementary School to other District schools. Ms. Cruz seconded the motion.**

#### **DISCUSSION:**

**Mr. Leon** felt making this decision "sucks"! It is hard to do, but necessary, and now we need to move it forward.

**Ms. Cruz** said the tough decisions are ahead of us, and this was simply a necessary decision. The condition of the school is what led us to suspending the use, but that it will be a sad day if we have to close the doors permanently. Today she is not sad, but relieved the Board is not being negligent by keeping the kids in that school, and that the Nathan Hale kids will be attending environments conducive to learning.

**Mr. Crockett** stated that he supports the motion. He is sad but it is the right thing to do. He asked Dr. Kisiel to consider keeping the Nathan Hale community together and housing them in Highland Park until a long-term plan is decided on, which would also allow Nathan Hale to be used in the Fall in case Highland is not ready to open on September 5<sup>th</sup>, as the heat would not be an issue at that point.

**Ms. Cruz** asked Dr. Kisiel if he would be presenting a report on the transportation costs associated with this plan and Dr. Kisiel assured her that he would.

**Mr. Pattacini** stated that his support of suspending the use of Nathan Hale does not in any way reflect on the quality of the education, the staff, or the students, but simply a building that is not conducive to supporting education. He does not want to be in the position of scrambling to find a place to relocate these students next year when the pipes fail. He outlined that in an

emergency the children would be relocated most likely to three gymnasiums, which is still a possibility this year, and we need to suspend the use so that next year we are not at the same risk.

**The Chairman called a roll-call vote:**

**Walton – Aye**

**Kidd – Aye**

**Cruz – Aye**

**Crockett – Aye**

**Leon - Aye**

**Luxenberg - Aye**

**Hagenow - Aye**

**Scappaticci - Aye**

**Pattacini - Aye**

**Nine voted in favor.**

**C.2 ADOPTION OF BOARD OF EDUCATION'S RECOMMENDED BUDGET FOR 2012-2013.**

**Mr. Pattacini** asked for a discussion of the various options first, prior to making a motion on the budget.

**Mr. Leon** outlined that the budget reflects a reduction of \$909,748 resulting in suspending the use of Nathan Hale. Currently there is discussion of adding back \$200,000 to the capital improvements line and \$200,000 for programming (earmarked for 1 Grade 1 teacher and 3 tutors).

**Ms. Walton** supports the revised budget as well as the increase to the capital projects line, while maintaining the Superintendent's original staffing proposal and not increasing that aspect of the budget.

**Ms. Luxenberg** supports both increases outlined by Mr. Leon, for a total budget proposal that is still a 0.5% decrease from the originally proposed budget. She feels it is still a fiscally conservative budget that will meet the needs of the District and help grow it.

**Mr. Crockett** feels that bringing back jobs that may not be budgeted for in the following year is not a good idea. He feels the taxpayers are entitled to the savings that suspending Nathan Hale will bring. He feels if those staff members were a priority they would have been in the original budget and he does not want to appear greedy. He does support the \$200,000 increase to the capital improvements plan, but not the \$200,000 increase for programming.

**Ms. Cruz** supports the revised budget as well as the additional \$400,000 as outlined.

**Ms. Hagenow** agrees with Mr. Crockett's stand on the staffing, but does agree with the increase in capital improvements funding. She points out a school won't be shut down because of reduced staff, but it can be shut down if needed repairs are not made.

**Ms. Kidd** supports the revised budget and the capital improvements increase. She thinks we need to take care of priorities.

**Mr. Leon** stated that the increase to capital improvements seems to be at a consensus. Regarding the programming, it is saving jobs not adding jobs. He points out that there are 44.7 positions from the Jobs Fund that are being eliminated.

**Ms. Luxenberg** turned to Dr. Kisiel and asked if he had known while making his first proposed budget that Nathan Hale would be suspended, would he have presented a 1.87% increased budget (as is the revised budget) or would he have asked for more? Dr. Kisiel stated he would have asked for more. He would not have asked for the full \$900,000 being saved by closing Nathan Hale, but the "target" for the budget was 2.5-2.75%. He does support the discussion on adding to the capital improvements line tonight, as well as the personnel.

**Ms. Luxenberg** presented the question she had asked in the past, at this budget increase of 1.87%, did Dr. Kisiel feel the children would be getting the same, better, or a worse education? Dr. Kisiel answered that we can always add more money, but the budget is in the best interests of the children and it is affordable and would support a "slightly" better education, but that is because of the people we have working for us.

**Ms. Walton** asked for clarification on the revised budget numbers, wondering if the monies for the Pre-School were already subtracted. Dr. Kisiel pointed out the 1.87% revised budget accounted for both Nathan Hale being suspended as well as the Pre-School reduction. If the Pre-School monies had been left in the budget it would have been a 2.14% increase.

**Mr. Pattacini** assumed a consensus on the revised budget increase of 1.87%. Initially he only supported the additional \$200,000 in capital improvements, but now he is supporting the additional \$200,000 in programming as well, earmarked for the one Grade 1 teacher and 3 tutors. He then outlined the various ways a motion can be worded tonight.

**Chairperson Pattacini asked for a motion.**

**Secretary Leon moved that the Board of Education reduce the Superintendent's proposed budget of \$102,051,613 by \$909,748, the budget reduction resulting from the suspension of the use of Nathan Hale School. In addition, the Board add \$200,000 for 3 tutors and one Grade 1 teacher and \$200,000 to the 3510 account for capital projects, and recommend the Board of Director's budget for 2012-2013 school year of \$101,441,865.**

**DISCUSSION:**

**Mr. Crockett** will not support the \$400,000 addition. The people funded with the Jobs Funds money knew they were taking one year positions. He will support the \$200,000 capital improvements additional funding.

**Mrs. Brooks** pointed out that Mr. Leon's figures were incorrect, and that the final budget number should be \$101,541,865.

**Ms. Luxenberg** strongly supports the \$400,000 additional funding based on the Superintendent's earlier comments.

**Ms. Kidd** supports this proposed budget. She trusts the Superintendent is doing the right thing for the kids.

**Ms. Cruz** supports the motion as stated with the corrected numbers.

**Mr. Pattacini** supports the motion. It's about jobs, but more importantly about the quality of education in our school district. He defers to the experts (i.e. the Superintendent) to know what is best for the children. This year, any year, it is always a tough year but because of the loss of the Jobs Funds monies, this was an extra-difficult year. The community has to understand that this is a significant reduction in funding that cannot go unnoticed. Mr. Pattacini pointed out that over the last five years Special Education spending has risen \$10 million. The percentage of free or reduced lunch children has risen from 30% to over 50%. Each year we try to find a way to reduce or minimize the impact of additional expenses, but our need continues to grow. He supports this opportunity to improve the quality of education by including the facilities and programming, which will have a direct impact on class size.

**Secretary Leon restated the motion.**

**Secretary Leon moved that the Board reduce the Superintendent's proposed budget of \$102,051,613 by \$909,748. In addition, the Board add 3 tutors and one Grade 1 teacher at \$200,00. An additional \$200,000 to the 3510 account for capital projects, and recommend to the Board of Directors a budget for the 2012-2013 school year of \$101,541,865. Ms. Luxenberg seconded the motion.**

**Chairperson Pattacini called for a roll-call vote:**

**Walton – Aye  
Kidd – Aye  
Cruz – Aye  
Crockett – Nay  
Leon - Aye**

**Luxenberg - Aye  
Hagenow - Aye  
Scappaticci - Aye  
Pattacini - Aye**

**8/1/0 voted in favor.**

**D. PUBLIC COMMENTS (Limited to items on tonight's agenda)**  
None.

**E. ADJOURNMENT**

**Mr. Pattacini called for a motion to adjourn.**

**Secretary Leon moved and Ms. Luxenberg seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.**

**9 in favor.**

**Adjournment 8:59 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Neal Leon  
Board Secretary