

MONROE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Monroe, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes
December 7, 2015

Present: Chairman Donna Lane
Vice-Chairman George King III
Secretary Shannon Reilly-Monaco
Board Member Christine Cascella
Board Member Lee Crouch
Board Member Jeff Guttman
Board Member James Martinez
Board Member Jerry Stevens
Board Member Alan Vaglivelov

Absent: Masuk Student Board Representative Ali Moraveck

Also present: Superintendent James Agostine
Assistant Superintendent John Battista
Finance Director Gabriella DiBlasi
Masuk Student Board Representative Kanu Caplash
Masuk Student Board Representative Amit Gupta

Call to Order

Chairman Lane called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. and led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Lane stated that *Board Members Guttman* and *Cascella* would be participating via teleconference call. The legal requirement is that the Board can hear everything the participants say and the participants can hear everything the Board says. *Superintendent Agostine* added that when a vote is taken, the individuals conferencing in must state their name and their vote. *Board Member Vaglivelov* asked for a recess to contact *Board Member Crouch*. A short recess was taken.

Board of Education Positions Elections

Superintendent Agostine said that would he would take nominations for the Chairman position.

S. Reilly-Monaco nominate Donna Lane for Chairman of the Board of Education
Nomination Second: G. King
Discussion: Ms. Lane accepted the nomination. No other nominations were given.

Vote taken to approve Donna Lane as Chairman of the Board of Education

Vote passed - 9 (Lane, King, Cascella, Crouch, Guttman, Martinez, Reilly-Monaco, Stevens and Vaglivello) - 0

15-084

S. Reilly-Monaco nominate George King for Vice-Chairman of the Board of Education

Nomination Second: J. Guttman

Discussion: Vice-Chairman King accepted the nomination. Chairman Lane asked for any other nominations. Secretary Reilly-Monaco asked Board Member Crouch about the status of her residency; the question was unanswered.

J. Martinez nominated Alan Vaglivello for Vice-Chairman of the Board of Education

Nomination Second: L. Crouch

Discussion: Board Member Vaglivello accepted the nomination. No other nominations given.

Vote taken on first nomination, George King for Vice-Chairman of the Board of Education

Vote tied- 4 (Lane, King, Cascella, Reilly-Monaco) – 4 (Crouch, Martinez, Stevens, and Vaglivello)

15-085

Vote taken on second nomination, Alan Vaglivello for Vice-Chairman of the Board of Education

Vote tied -4 (Crouch, Martinez, Stevens, and Vaglivello) – 4 (Lane, King, Cascella, Reilly-Monaco)

15-086

A revote was needed, because Board Member Guttman's vote was not heard or recorded.

Revote taken on first nomination, George King for Vice-Chairman of the Board of Education

Vote Passed- 5 (Lane, King, Cascella, Reilly-Monaco, Guttman) – 4 (Crouch, Martinez, Stevens, and Vaglivello)

15-087

Revote taken on second nomination, Alan Vaglivello for Vice-Chairman of the Board of Education

Vote failed- 4 (Crouch, Martinez, Stevens, and Vaglivello) – 5 (Lane, King, Cascella, Reilly-Monaco, Guttman)

15-088

J. Martinez nominated Alan Vaglivello for Secretary

Nomination Second: J. Stevens

Discussion: Board Member Vaglivello accepted the nomination. Chairman Lane asked for any further nominations.

George King nominated Shannon Reilly-Monaco for Secretary

Nomination Second: C. Cascella

Discussion: Board Member Reilly-Monaco accepted the nomination. There were no other nominations

Vote was taken on first nomination, Alan Vaglivello for Secretary

Vote failed- 4 (Crouch, Martinez, Stevens and Vaglivello)-5 (Lane, King, Cascella, Guttman, Reilly-Monaco)

15-089

Vote was taken on second nomination, Shannon Reilly-Monaco for Secretary

Vote passed- 5 (Lane, King, Cascella, Guttman, Reilly-Monaco)-4 (Crouch, Martinez, Stevens, Vaglivello)

15-090

Board of Education Committees and Liaisons

Chairman Lane reviewed the committee assignments for the next two years.

The Committees include:

- Communications Committee- *Board Member Guttman, Board Member Cascella, and Board Member Vaglivello. Board Member Crouch suggested that Board Member Vaglivello be the chair; Board Member Guttman agreed and Board Member Vaglivello agreed to be the Chairman.*
- Cooperative Educational Services Liaison-This position meets monthly during afternoon hours and a liaison needs to be assigned.
- Curriculum Council-*Board Member Vaglivello*
- Finance Committee-*Chairman Lane, Board Member Vaglivello, and Board Member Cascella*
- Policy Committee-*Vice-Chairman King, Chair; Board Secretary Reilly-Monaco, and Board Member Stevens*
- Youth Commission-This Commission generally meets late afternoon once every few months and a representative needs to be assigned.
- Professional Development Committee-*Board Member Stevens*
- Pension Committee-*Board Member Reilly-Monaco*
- Turf Field Building Committee-*Board Member Cascella and Board Member Guttman*
- BOF Liaison- *Board Chairman Lane*

CES and Youth Commission are unfilled as of tonight's meeting.

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda

Motion: (G. King)

Second: (S. Reilly-Monaco)

Discussion: None

Motion passed - 6 (Lane, King, Reilly-Monaco, Martinez, Stevens and Vaglivello)-0

15-091

Reports of the Committees and Liaisons

Masuk Student Representatives

Student Board Representative Gupta said that today is the halfway point of the second quarter. He added that Wednesday will be an Advisory for FBLA regarding a fundraising initiative for adolescents with cancer. There will be a Winter Sports Parent Information session on Wednesday evening for parents whose children are participating in the winter

season. *Student Board Representative Gupta* continued that the Scores Back scheduled for next Tuesday will be rescheduled, as the College Board has not finished the scoring. There will be a Strings Concert on December 16. *Student Board Representative Caplash* said that Winter sports started last Saturday, and Masuk hosted a Robotics competition also on Saturday. He added that one of Masuk's robots qualified for the Southern New England Championships. Next Saturday, there will be a debate competition at Masuk; *Student Board Representative Caplash* said that last year was the first year the Masuk was awarded trophies in a debate, and they hope to repeat that success this year. The Band Concert will be held on December 10. *Superintendent Agostine* added that there were 39 teams from 17 districts who competed in the Robotics Competition; Masuk had 7 teams, and there was 1 middle school team.

Public Participation

Board of Finance Member Dutches asked if the public would be invited to speak during the budget process. *Chairman Lane* said that tonight was the presentation, and she was not sure if they would be going into the line by line review at tonight's meeting.

Motion to amend the agenda by moving Item #2 under the Report of the Superintendent, Overview of Curriculum & Instruction, Human Resources and Athletics, to New Business as Item E

Motion: (S. Reilly-Monaco)

Second: (A. Vaglivello)

Discussion: None

Motion passed- 6 (Lane, King, Reilly-Monaco, Martinez, Stevens and Vaglivello)-0

15-092

Report of the Superintendent

Superintendent Agostine updated the Board on the STEM lottery. As of Friday, which was the deadline for submitting requests to be entered into the lottery, there were 72 students. As the District typically accepts 75 students, the lottery scheduled for tomorrow will not take place as all the students who have applied to STEM will be admitted into STEM.

2015-2016 Budget

Superintendent's Proposed Budget Presentation

Superintendent Agostine said that the meetings with the District cost centers began in early October. The Budget Book that the Board members have and the ones at Town Hall have an overview of the administration of the District, the District's Goals and Action Plans, the Executive Summary of the Budget, Curriculum and Instruction Budget, Human Resources, Summary for Facilities and Resources, Total Budget Summary, Staff Summary, Enrollment Summary, Special Education, Revenues and the District's Capital Plan. He noted that in the past, they provided a line by line budget as well as the variances but this year, only the variance is presented for greater clarification on the detail of why line items stayed flat, had reductions or increases.

Superintendent Agostine said that he felt it was important to state the District's Mission Statement. The Mission Statement reads, "The mission of the Monroe Public Schools is to ensure that all students reach their full potential as innovative thinkers and responsible citizens through a challenging, inquiry-based curriculum delivered by skilled, dedicated, and engaging educators." He added that there are two Budget Goals:

Educational Goal: Provide the support for all students to graduate with college and career ready skills.

Fiscal Goal: Continue to be fiscally responsible through contract negotiations, new energy savings, and other cost containment strategies.

Superintendent Agostine reiterated that the District's cost containment strategies have been very effective.

The following Parameters were set to Guide the Budget Process:

- Seek funds to support our Mission and Vision
- Class size matters
- Core academics programming is supported by elective and co-curricular programs
- Budget reductions, if necessary, will always be made to impact the least number of students.

The Budget Assumptions:

- 4.6 FTE certified staff reductions due to declining enrollment; *Superintendent Agostine* noted that there have been steady enrollment declines since 2007-28-008 and the District has reduced the certified teaching staff in a "predictable and corresponding pattern." The reductions include eliminating a 1st grade section at Monroe Elementary and Stepney Elementary, a reading position at Masuk, a business section at Masuk and a .6 reduction in English at the high school. *Superintendent Agostine* said that they are confident at this time that no individual will be impacted as the reduction will be achieved through attrition.
- Three non-certified staff reductions due to declining enrollment.
- Demographic projections are accurate.
- Medical & Dental Insurance increase of \$500,000. *Superintendent Agostine* said that the District has been very fortunate with the self insured plan and the HSA plan but this year, the costs for procedures have increased dramatically, and Ovations and Cigna recommend that the District put \$500,000 more towards Medical and Dental Insurance at this time.
- \$50,000 contingency for unforeseen Special Education costs
- State Grants, such as the Educational Cost Share and Excess Cost, are uncertain at this time.
- Includes \$405,035 for the Honeywell lease payment
- Contractual salary increases
- Masuk, Monroe Elementary and Stepney oil tank replacements will be bonded
- F550 truck and loader costs are in this operating budget

Superintendent Agostine presented a slide on the Budget Increase vs. CPI (Consumer Price Index), and it illustrated that the budget, since 2009-2010, has been under inflation. Last year, we were slightly above it, but the overall trend is significantly below the CPI.

Key Drivers of the Budget

Contract obligations (Salaries)	1.33% increase
Transportation Costs	2.77% increase
Benefits (Medical, Dental, Workers' Comp)	7.19% increase
Special Education Costs	10.20% increase

Medical costs-*Superintendent Agostine* presented a slide on Medical Costs; Employees are picking up a greater share of their medical costs each year. He also provided a slide on Energy Avoidance Costs. In 2013-2014, due to the implementation of the Honeywell Project, the cost of oil at Stepney Elementary was dramatically reduced from the prior year costs. Replacing the boiler has resulted in saving approximately 10,000 gallons every year. The District has been fluctuating between natural gas and oil at Monroe Elementary and Masuk; Jockey Hollow is committed to gas. Fawn Hollow uses a combination of natural gas and electricity. The Projected Total Utility Costs Systemwide

for the 2016-2017 School Year are not significantly different than what they were in the 2011-2012 School Year.

The budget overview:

Salaries-increase of 1.33%

Benefits-increase of 7.19%

Transportation-increase of 2.77%

Special Education Instruction-increase of 10.27%

Energy-decrease of 1.48%

Facilities-increase of 1.06%

Textbooks and Supplies-decrease of 13.72%

Technology-decrease of 1.15%

Other Professional Services-decrease of 1.15%

Other (the Loader, F550 and non-instructional equipment)-increase of 57.38%

Honeywell Lease Payment-no increase or decrease

The Proposed budget for FY 17 is a 2.43% increase from the adopted budget for FY 2016. *Superintendent Agostine* presented a pie chart which illustrated that salaries and benefits account for approximately 75% of the budget.

Enrollment Projection-*Superintendent Agostine* said that there has been a steady decline in enrollment; the projection for the 2016-2017 school year is 3,092 students. He added that declining enrollment is a statewide trend and the only districts that are showing either flat enrollment or even slight enrollment increases are the urban centers. The District has lost 926 students since the 2008-2009 school year and the District has cut 47.45 teachers in that time frame; "we are in line in reducing staff commensurate with the decline in student enrollment. *Superintendent Agostine* continued that this is also the case for non-certified staff.

Superintendent Agostine also showed a graph on Cost Avoidance Due to Teacher RIFs which illustrated the impact of staff reductions. He said that if the District had not been

reducing their staff since the 2012-13 school year, they would have spent \$1.8 million more in next year's budget for staffing. The increase would have been 3.06% increase rather than the 2.43% increase with the proposed 2016-2017 budget.

Risks to the Budget include:

- Decrease in state and federal funding/Governor's budget cut
- Unanticipated special education costs in excess of \$50,000
- Unfunded mandates
- Unanticipated maintenance/emergency repair costs
- Unsuccessful bonding for oil tank replacements

Superintendent Agostine continued that the proposed budget provides support for all students in meeting the Connecticut Core Standards, provides adequate maintenance for all of the schools and provides teacher training in all District initiatives such as BYOT, CCSS and Teacher Evaluation.

The Revenue Sources for the Budget include:

- Tax Revenues
- Educational Cost Sharing
- Grants
- Excess Cost (SPED)
- Facility Use
- Pay to Play

Superintendent Agostine said that though the State has announced that the educational cost sharing grant will remain level, remaining level for as many years as it has, is actually a reduction; "If they aren't giving us more money commensurate with CPI or other index, we are gradually losing ground every year." *Superintendent Agostine* added that the District has been very diligent between the Honeywell Project and the Ad Hoc Study to have a solid understanding of the buildings and what the needs are for the future.

The 5 Year Capital Needs Projection include:

- Replacing the football field at Masuk with turf-2015-2016
- Replacing the oil tanks at Stepney, Monroe Elementary and Masuk-2016-2017
- Traffic pattern work at Masuk-2016-2017
- Replacing PA and Clock system at Fawn Hollow-2017-2018
- Front driveway drainage and reconfiguration at Fawn Hollow-2017-2018
- Roof replacement at Stepney-2017-2018

The Equipment Replacement Plan includes:

- Replacing the F550 truck at Masuk-2016
- Replacing the Tractor and Loader-2016
- Replacing the Cushman 1970-2017
- 17" Walk behind floor machine at Masuk-2017
- 17" Walk behind floor machine at Stepney-2019
- Replacing the F350-2018

Board of Finance Member Dutches asked if any consideration has been given to using the 10-248 Capital Reserve Account for items such as the loader. *Superintendent Agostine* said that is a discussion that can take place later in the process. She also asked if the Cost Sharing Grant is based on enrollment; *Superintendent Agostine* said that it has a lot to do with the demographics of the Town.

Student Representative Caplash asked if the District would lobby the State if they fail to fulfill their obligation; *Superintendent Agostine* replied that this has been an on-going discussion for many years and that it is a slow and lengthy process.

Board Member Vaglivo asked if there would be additional budget workshops; the response is that workshops are scheduled for December 9, December 14, and on December 21. The December 14 meeting was deemed unnecessary this year.

Old Business

Policies-Second Review

Motion to approve Policy #3240-Business/Non-Instructional Operations-Tuition Fees and Policy #5118, Students-Nonresident Students

Motion: (G. King)

Second: (S. Reilly-Monaco)

Discussion: Vice-Chairman King said that the policies are being combined; #3240 is being deleted and the relevant language is being added to Policy #5118

Motion passed- 6 (Lane, King, Reilly-Monaco, Martinez, Stevens and Vaglivo)-0

15-093

New Business

Monroe Early Learning Center

Superintendent Agostine said that in 2000, the Board of Education created a daycare center for the children of Monroe teachers and in 2003, a preschool program was created and housed at Masuk. In 2011, when STEM was created, and there was a shortage of space. The program went off site and out of the District's auspices. He continued that the staff at both the daycare and preschool were Board of Education employees. When it was jettisoned, the individuals formed an LLC, and petitioned the Town to house the program at Chalk Hill. *Superintendent Agostine* continued that the LLC still exists though the situation is not a viable option beginning in September 2016.

Superintendent Agostine asked the Board to reconsider forming a daycare and a preschool to be housed in one of our facilities, run by Board of Education employees, and open to Board of Education and Town of Monroe employees. There are two classrooms at Fawn Hollow that are suitable with separate doors so the programs would not interfere with arrival or dismissal times. *Superintendent Agostine* continued that the District will be able to cover their costs and perhaps generate a small amount of income. Based on current costs, a daycare and preschool for 15 children would generate approximately \$315,000 annually, and the expenses would be approximately \$283,000 resulting in a positive cash flow of approximately \$31,800.

Superintendent Agostine clarified that it is not the intent to bring back the LLC. It is his recommendation to implement this as part of the District's programming and direct control. *Vice-Chairman King* asked why the LLC was no longer viable, *Superintendent Agostine* said that the LLC's current contract for the lease space expires in August 2016, and the current owner is not pursuing to continue the program.

Motion to establish a Daycare and Preschool for the Monroe Board of Education and Town of Monroe employees pending any State or local ordinances or restrictions

Motion: (S. Reilly-Monaco)

Second: (A. Vaglivello)

Discussion: Secretary Reilly-Monaco asked if there was a guarantee the District would not lose money; Superintendent Agostine said he could guarantee it.

Motion passed- 6 (Lane, King, Reilly-Monaco, Martinez, Stevens and Vaglivello)-0

15-094

Motion to approve the 2016-2017 District School Calendar

Motion: (J. Martinez)

Second: (J. Stevens)

Discussion: None

Motion passed- 6 (Lane, King, Reilly-Monaco, Martinez, Stevens and Vaglivello)-0

15-095

Motion to approve the 2017-2018 District School Calendar

Motion: (J. Martinez)

Second: (J. Stevens)

Discussion: None

Motion passed- 6 (Lane, King, Reilly-Monaco, Martinez, Stevens and Vaglivello)-0

15-096

Motion to approve the Board of Education Meeting Dates for January through December 2016

Motion: (J. Stevens)

Second: (S. Reilly-Monaco)

Discussion: Chairman Lane said there are Tuesday meetings in February, September and October due to holidays that occur on Mondays. She added there is only one Board of Education meeting rather than two for the months of June, July and August.

Motion passed- 6 (Lane, King, Reilly-Monaco, Martinez, Stevens and Vaglivello)-0

15-097

Overview of Curriculum & Instruction, Human Resources, and Athletics

Assistant Superintendent Battista said that there were some reductions in the testing line item and the textbook line item though workbooks increased due to the new math program, Math in Focus. He added that the professional development is mostly done by the secondary instructional leaders and that the train the trainer model has been very effective in reducing costs.

Assistant Superintendent Battista continued with a discussion on Human Resources; most of the increases are general wage increases plus step in the different areas which are broken out in the budget. All of the increases/decreases are based on the reduction of staff and the general wage increases plus step. The line item for substitutes is reduced as the use of substitutes has decreased. *Assistant Superintendent Battista* proposed an increase of \$5.00 a day for substitutes as Monroe is currently at the bottom of the DRG with the daily rate of \$75.00. It has been a long time since there was an increase in substitute pay. Some of the other increases are for lifeguards who are required whenever there are classes in the pool and the stipends which only increased for girl's ice hockey and the homebound tutoring. *Mr. DeGennaro* said he was pleased that girls' ice hockey will be joining the athletic program. The cost is approximately \$16,000 though with the stabilization of transportation costs, they were able to reduce the overall increase to \$12,600. Though enrollment is declining, participation in sports has not decreased. *Board Member Stevens* asked what the fee per student was for ice hockey; *Mr. DeGennaro* said there is no surcharge though they pay for ice time, which is approximately \$1,400-15,000.

The budget workshop will take place on Wednesday evening at 6:30 p.m.

Motion to Adjourn at 9:30 p.m.

Motion: (G. King)

Second: (A. Vaglivello)

Discussion: None

Motion passed – 6 (Lane, King, Reilly-Monaco, Martinez, Stevens and Vaglivello)-0

15-098

Respectfully submitted,



Shannon Reilly-Monaco
Board of Education Secretary