

MONROE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Monroe, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes
October 5, 2015

Present: Chairman, Donna Lane
Vice-Chairman, George King III
Secretary, Mark Hughes
Board Member, Christine Cascella
Board Member, Lee Crouch
Board Member, Jeff Guttman
Board Member, James Martinez
Board Member, Shannon Monaco
Board Member, Alan Vaglivello

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
Masuk Student Board Representative, Ali Moraveck

Call to Order

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

Report of the Chairman

Teacher of the Year

Superintendent Agostine introduced *Jennifer Parsell* as Monroe's Teacher of the Year for 2015-2016. He described her as a teacher of the utmost quality and deserving of the honor. *Superintendent Agostine* outlined the process to become Teacher of the Year. It begins in early spring when staff members nominate candidates and once the nominations are received, the building Principals and former winners convene to review the applications and make their selection.

In addition to speaking at Convocation, the Teacher of the Year enters the State Teacher of the Year Program, and after the State level there is the National Teacher of the Year selection. *Ms. Parsell* will be recognized at the Bushnell Auditorium on November 10. Prior to that, she and *Mr. Kobza* will be participating in the National Blue Ribbon Award Ceremony in Washington. *Ms. Parsell* will give the Board Members a presentation on the Unified Sports Program later this evening.

Consent Agenda

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda

Motion: (S. Monaco)

Second: (L. Crouch)

Discussion: None

Motion passed 9 (Lane, King, Hughes, Cascella, Crouch, Guttman, Martinez, Monaco and Vaglivero)-0

15-071

Reports of the Committees and Liaisons

Student Board Representatives

Student Representative Gupta said the PSAT will be administered for Grade 11 next week, and underclassman pictures will be taken next Thursday and Friday. He added that many students are applying for early admission and application. Deadlines will be in the coming weeks.

Student Representative Caplash said there will be a Financial Aid meeting for seniors this Wednesday evening and this Friday. *Amit Gupta* and *Veronica Regina* will be recognized as Masuk Students of the Month.

Student Representative Moraveck reported that early Capstone presentations will be held on Wednesday afternoon. She added that the first Unified Sports soccer game will be held tomorrow, and all the sports teams are doing well.

Finance

Chairman Lane said that the turf field plans are a bit ahead of schedule and the testing of the existing field will be the next step. They discussed the budget process, as well as the addition of a .6 guidance position. The position will be discussed and voted on later in the meeting.

Policy

Vice-Chairman King said that there are a number of policies they will be bringing before the Board.

Public Participation

There was none at tonight's meeting.

Report of the Superintendent

Masuk Named a 2015 National Blue Ribbon School

Superintendent Agostine announced that Masuk was named a National Blue Ribbon School for 2015. It is one of 335 schools in the Country with the distinction of being a Blue Ribbon School. He said that the Blue Ribbon Process is similar to a NEASC visit. There are stringent criteria to be met, and Masuk was selected for their high academic achievement. *Superintendent Agostine* continued that in his career, he has "never seen the spirit and the positive energy of a high school like Masuk."

New Insurance Plan-Non-Affiliated Staff

Assistant Superintendent Battista has been working on the Affordable Care Act implications for the District; the District has to offer insurance to 95% of staff to avoid being penalized. An employee doesn't have to accept the coverage but it has to be offered by the District. Some non-affiliated staff will be offered coverage; substitutes who work an average of 4 days a week are eligible. He provided the Board Members with a breakdown of the plan which is cost effective and low risk for the District. The deductible is higher than the Teacher Plan and the prescription plan is a bit higher though the employees' monthly costs will be lower due to the higher deductibles.

Sodexo-One Month Extension

Superintendent Agostine said that the State of Connecticut has not finalized the contract language so the USDA was able to offer a 30 day extension for the existing contract. Monroe is one of the 48 Districts that were impacted.

Presentations

Unified Sports - Jennifer Parsell

Jennifer Parsell said that she was approached by Administration to coordinate a Unified Sports Program that is an extension of Special Olympics. The goal is to unite high school students through sports and create a school culture of acceptance, compassion, and understanding. The team has grown from 9 students to 35, and the State program has grown to over 3,500 students from 190 schools participating in unified sports.

Mrs. Parsell presented a brief video on the program. Tomorrow is the first soccer game. The team will be playing against Oxford. She introduced two members of the team, *Matt Winkler* and *Alec Beavers*.

Board Member Crouch asked how players/partners are recruited. *Matt* said that everyone at Masuk is looking for new opportunities to get involved, and a lot of the interest in the program was due to word of mouth. They play basketball, soccer, and volleyball and participate in tournaments throughout the State. *Board Member Crouch* asked where *Mrs. Parsell* saw the program going in the next few years. She said that she would like to see it implemented at the middle school and eventually at the elementary schools.

Surveys

Assistant Superintendent Battista gave a brief presentation on the 2014-2015 Surveys. There were four surveys last year:

- Parent Surveys-These surveys were developed by the Schools' Climate Committees, distributed by Panorama and analyzed by SCC and Administration
- Student Surveys-These surveys were also developed by the Schools' Climate Committees; they were distributed and analyzed by Staff and Administration
- Staff Surveys-These were developed by the School and Central Office Administration; they were distributed and analyzed by School and Central Office Administration
- District Communication Survey-This survey was developed by the Superintendent; they were distributed and analyzed by District Administration

The Parent Survey included questions regarding

- Communication
- Learning Environment
- Physical Safety
- Respect for Diversity
- Rules and Norms
- School Connectedness
- Social Emotional Security
- Technology

Assistant Superintendent Battista said that all the survey results can be found on each school's website. There was significant improvement in all areas with the exception of a question in the Social Emotional Security area, "There are groups of students in the school who exclude others and make them feel bad for not being part of the group."

Assistant Superintendent Battista said that the Schools' Climate Committee is researching it further to ensure that people understood the question and to determine if there is really an issue and how can it be resolved and improved. He continued that the State requires that as part of the safe school climate, these six questions must be asked:

- In my child's school, there are clear rules against physically hurting other people.
- I have seen students at my child's school being physically hurt by other students more than once.
- There are groups of students in the school who exclude others and make them feel bad for not being part of a group.
- Students at my child's school will try to stop students from insulting or making fun of other students.
- Students in my child's school respect each other's differences.
- Parents/guardians feel welcome at my child's school.

The Student Survey focused on school culture, safety and security as well as Administration and the instructional program. *Assistant Superintendent Battista* provided examples of some of the questions specific to elementary school students, middle, and high school.

District Communication Survey - - 82% of the responses said they prefer to get their communications through SchoolMessenger from the District and principal as well as email from the teacher. Improving communications was a goal throughout the District, and 92% of the responses were positive and satisfied with the level of communication they experienced.

Assistant Superintendent Battista said that Panorama will be doing all the surveys this year. *Student Representative Caplash* asked if there was a general trend for student responses. *Assistant Superintendent Battista* said that it was mostly positive.

Board Member Vaglivelo asked if there were any students on the Climate Committee. *Assistant Superintendent Battista* said there were not, due to the sensitive information discussed at the meetings.

Old Business

There was none discussed at tonight's meeting.

New Business

Creation of .6 New Position-School Counselor

Motion to approve the creation of a .6 position for a Guidance Counselor at Stepney Elementary

Motion: (S. Monaco)

Second: (C. Cascella)

Discussion: Superintendent Agostine said that the counselor who is presently split between Stepney and Fawn Hollow will become full-time at Fawn Hollow, and she will handle the 504 responsibilities for both schools. Board Member Crouch asked how the position is being funded; Superintendent Agostine said that there is no issue budgeting the position next year, but the issue is carrying this individual through this year. He added that he and Ms. DiBlasi are looking at funding sources. There are five maternity leaves coming up which may result with savings in salaries.

Motion passed 9 (Lane, King, Hughes, Cascella, Crouch, Guttman, Martinez, Monaco and Vaglivello)-0

15-072

Adjournment

Motion to Adjourn at 8:25 p.m.

Motion: (L. Crouch)

Second: (S. Monaco)

Discussion: None

Motion passed 9 (Lane, King, Hughes, Cascella, Crouch, Guttman, Martinez, Monaco and Vaglivello)-0

15-073

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Hughes
Board of Education Secretary