

MONROE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Monroe, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes
November 16, 2015

Present: Chairman Donna Lane
Secretary Mark Hughes
Vice-Chairman George King III
Board Member Christine Cascella
Board Member James Martinez
Board Member Shannon Reilly-Monaco
Board Member Alan Vaglivello

Absent: Board Member Crouch
Board Member Jeff Guttman

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

Report of the Chairman

Dr. Joe Erardi, Newtown Superintendent, addressed the Board on the status of Sandy Hook Elementary. *Keith Alexander*, Chairman of the Newtown Board of Education, was also present. He thanked the Monroe Board of Education and the Administrative Team for their continued support. *Dr. Erardi* said the Sandy Hook construction project remains on time, and they anticipate having a Certificate of Occupancy between June 1 and July 1.

Dr. Erardi continued that it is their true intent to empty the building and return it to the condition as it was when they first moved in. *Dr. Erardi* said that they hope on the third anniversary that every school district in the State will review their safety and security plans. *Mr. Alexander* reiterated his sincere appreciation for what the Town has done for Sandy Hook. *Newtown Board Members Ku* and *Vouros* were in the audience. *Mr. Vouros* stated, "The peace we have knowing that the children are safe and in a beautiful environment is very important and our thanks are forever."

Chairman Lane led the Board in thanking *Secretary Hughes* for his many years of service on the Board and presented him with a gift of appreciation.

Consent Agenda

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda

Motion: (C. Cascella)

Second: (S. Reilly-Monaco)

Discussion: Superintendent Agostine noted the appointment of Jennifer Currie as the .6 Guidance Counselor at Stepney Elementary and the following retirements: Janet Halpin, John Howard, Ruth B. Lubbers, Penelope C. Odell and Brenda Weir.

Motion passed 7 (Lane, King, Cascella, Hughes, Martinez, Reilly-Monaco and Vaglivello)-0

15-080

Reports of the Committees and Liaisons

Masuk Student Representatives

Student Board Representative Moraveck said the fall musical, *The Addams Family*, will be presented this weekend and students will have a preview tomorrow. Photo retakes will take place on Wednesday. *Student Representative Caplash* said parent teacher conferences are taking place this evening, and on Wednesday, *Principal Kobza, Mr. Welch, Mr. Crowley, and Ms. Casinelli* will give a presentation of the new SAT at the Parent Teacher Council meeting. *Student Representative Gupta* said that Career Day, hosted by the Student Advisory Council, will be on Thursday. There will be no school Wednesday through Friday during the week of November 23 due to the Thanksgiving holiday.

Curriculum

Board Member Vaglivello said the Curriculum Committee met, and they would like to add French I Honors and Spanish I Honors. These courses are geared to students who did not take a language in middle school and want to study language as a freshman or Upper classman but may be reluctant as it could impact their GPA. There is no cost other than the curriculum training hours. The other courses the Committee would like to add are Senior Honors electives: Ethical Arguments in Fiction and Non-Fiction, and Travel in Literature. The cost for Ethical Arguments is approximately \$3,500, and Travel Literature is approximately \$4,200. *Superintendent Agostine* said that the honors level designation would also benefit students who want to take a second language as a junior or senior, and not taking it on the honors level could have a negative effect on their GPA.

Finance

Chairman Lane said the Finance Committee met tonight, and the budget presentation will be at the meeting on December 7. She continued that they met with *Dawn Ryan*, who runs the Monroe Early Learning Childhood Center. Since Newtown will be moving out of Chalk Hill, *Ms. Ryan* is looking to return to Monroe Public Schools, and that might be an option. The Committee asked *Superintendent Agostine* and *Ms. DiBlasi* to put numbers together to determine the potential revenue. This will be discussed at the next meeting, as *Ms. Ryan* will need to know by the end of the year if they are coming back to Monroe Schools. The original intent of the program was to aid and assist Board of Education employees to come back to work after having a child and the program has grown over the years. *Ms. Ryan* has outgrown the current space and there are eight individuals on the waiting list. The program has been opened to Town employees as well.

Public Participation

There was none at tonight's meeting.

Report of the Superintendent

Mausk is named the 2015 Connecticut Technology & Engineering Education (CTEEA)/International Technology & Engineering Education and Engineering Association (ITEEA) High School Program of the Year

Superintendent Agostine said that they are pleased to recognize the CTE Department. *Dan Grenier* and *Rich Reynolds* from The CTEEA (Connecticut Technology and Engineering Education Association) were present at tonight's meeting. *Mr. Grenier* said that the Program Excellence Award involves a lot of criteria and documentation from the department and the criteria is extensive ranging from self reflection and assessment of their program. Last week, CTEEA presented the group with the award but *Mr. Grenier* also wanted to recognize the department with a brief presentation tonight. In March, ITEEA (International Board) will recognize the CTE department in Washington, DC.

Fund Statement

Ms. DiBlasi said they locked in oil for 2016-2017 at \$1.97 a gallon; Stepney is the only school that will be heated with oil, Fawn Hollow uses a combination of natural gas and electricity, and the others are heated with natural gas. Insurance claims through October 2015 were slightly less than the claims for the same time last year. The reserve balance has increased, and no one has hit stop loss. Spending is down by approximately \$60,000 from last year at this time. *Ms. DiBlasi* added that they are looking at preliminary numbers for renewal, but they will not be confirmed before March or April.

Superintendent Agostine said that for the past two years, there has been a zero percent increase in medical, but they do not anticipate that this year and are working with *Mr. Fiorello* from Ovation and Cigna.

Food Services

The District has the signed contract that was approved by the State and Sodexo; it is valid through the end of the year. The District anticipates going out to bid, per the USDA directive, early in 2016. *Student Representative Caplash* asked if they anticipate multiple bids; *Ms. DiBlasi* said the USDA would like to see more bidders but there are only three active companies in Connecticut.

Retirees

Superintendent Agostine said that the end of year celebration will be Thursday, June 2.

Old Business

Turf Field Building Committee Presentation

Rick Henderson, Committee Chairman, thanked the Committee Members including *Superintendent Agostine*, *Ms. DiBlasi*, *Board Member Cascella*, *Secretary Hughes*, *Assistant Superintendent Battista*, *Dr. Zamary*, *Principal Kobza*, and *Mr. DeGennaro*. He noted it was a lengthy process to find the best firm, and the Committee is very pleased with Milone & MacBroom. *Dan Kroeber*, Project Manager, and *Vince McDermott*, from Milone & MacBroom, gave the Board a brief presentation. *Mr. Kroeber* said that the work they have done to date includes:

- Topographic Study
- Geotechnical Investigation
- Drainage Inspection
- Site Investigation

Mr. Kroeber continued that they looked at facility deficiencies and their findings are:

- Track-routine maintenance is due every seven to eight years and it is time to do that; a new paint job to give it structural integrity
- Additional two sprint lines are desirable
- Shot put area is not up to current standards
- Existing grass field has some drainage issues
- Athletic field lighting is substandard
- Sound system is substandard

Synthetic turf is a major component of the project; some of the benefits of synthetic turf include:

- Allows for unlimited use of the field
- Community use will expand
- All weather surface-reduces the number of postponements
- Annual maintenance costs are decreased
- Enhances physical education program during the day

The proposed design includes:

- Replacing natural grass field with a synthetic turf field-would include permanent markings on the field for all sports to eliminate having to stripe the field for each individual sport and game. A logo on the field is possible.
- Rebuild the D zones (areas behind the end zones) which would include a new long jump, triple jump and pole vault event area.
- Eight lane sprint area
- Change the location of the Scoreboard to the North side
- New Athletic fields lights-state of the art
- Resurfacing of the track

There are two options for the types of synthetic turf; Crumb rubber and alternative infill systems. He said there are some perceived environmental risks with the Crumb rubber, and they wanted to provide the Board with options. The only difference in the cost of the project is the cost of the infill; Crumb rubber is approximately \$380,000 and alternative fill is \$600,000. The improvements to the existing field are approximately \$1 million, \$400,000 in track improvements, \$400,000 in lighting and security. Milone & MacBroom recommended a 10% contingency. If the contingency is not needed, the money could be used to purchase loose field equipment such as hurdles and high jump pads. They also discussed having a new walkway from the field to the parking lot, and an elevated seating platform.

Mr. McDermott said that since 1998, the conventional material that infills the polyethylene fibers has been a combination of Crumb rubber and sand. The source of the

Crumb rubber is recycled tires. *Mr. McDermott* continued that there have been recent coverage of concerns regarding the safety of Crumb rubber, and much of that information is not new. There have been numerous studies conducted in Connecticut. Milone & MacBroom conducted their own study in 2008 and subsequent to that, studies were done by the Connecticut Department of Public Health, the Department of Environmental Protection and UCONN Health Systems that has been peer reviewed by the Connecticut Academy of Science and Engineering. While the components do have materials that are carcinogenic; in the real world of the fields, those elements are not released to the players.

Mr. McDermott continued there are many alternatives available that are worth consideration including coated sand, coconut husks mixed with rice and alternate rubbers. *Board Member Vaglivo* asked what the UCONN peer review study said. The response was “the use of outdoor/indoor artificial turf fields is not associated with elevated health risk.” This study was confirmed by New York State DEC and the State of California. *Vice-Chairman King* asked if all the alternative materials were approximately the same cost. The response was, yes, though the TPE is a bit more expensive as the best comes from Portugal.

Superintendent Agostine clarified that the replacement of the turf and infill will be 10-12 years out while all of the other improvements stay intact so regardless of the type of fill, funds need to be set aside for replenishing the surface on a ten year cycle. The District typically spends \$30,000 a year in maintenance and going to a synthetic field would save \$25,000 a year.

Superintendent Agostine continued that if the project moves forward, he would recommend that money returned to the Town in the Capital Reserve Fund be designated for turf replacement. He added that with the relatively small cost difference, he would recommend the use of alternative materials. *Student Representative Caplash* asked what prompted the study to be done. The response was that a group from North Haven who thought there might be an issue, and they had tested laboratory samples but not samples from the actual field. Subsequent studies showed that there were no toxins released. The studies did not satisfy the group, and they have called for additional studies. *Board Member Vaglivo* asked if there were any peer review journals that contradicted the studies; *Mr. McDermott* replied that there were not to the best of their knowledge. *Chairman Lane* asked if there was a market for selling the topsoil to offset the cost; *Mr. Kroeber* said there is an opportunity for the Town to hold the material for future use. *Board Member Reilly-Monaco* asked if there was a difference playing on Crumb rubber versus the alternative materials. The response was that there is no difference in playability, though organics have a nicer feel. *Student Representative Moravek* asked about a cooling system with the field. *Mr. McDermott* replied that when ambient temperatures rise, the fiber gets hot and an irrigation system is not suitable for the field itself. *Student Representative Caplash* asked if the replacement cost of a turf field will be greater than the maintenance of a grass field. The response was that it would be, and it would be a capital cost.

Superintendent Agostine added that the one of the advantages of a turf field is that it gives virtually unlimited use and greater flexibility, so it equates to gaining 2.5 fields. *Board Member Reilly-Monaco* said that she had asked *Mike Monaco*, whose field is oncology, to look into the question of turf field safety. He said that he couldn't find any data

suggesting that black Crumb was directly related to or was a cause to cancer or illness. There are substances present in it but is not released to athletes. *Superintendent Agostine* added that if Town Council approves the proposal, there could be a Town meeting in January or February, and once bonding is approved, Milone & MacBroom would meet with Planning and Zoning. Construction could begin in June, and the fields could be ready for use beginning in September.

Motion to approve Option 2 (Organic fill) for the turf field project with the recommendation that the project move forward to Town Council for their consideration

Motion: (S. Reilly-Monaco)

Second: (A. Vaglivello)

Discussion: Board Member Reilly-Monaco stated that she was more comfortable with the option to use organic materials. Student Board Representative Gupta asked which organic alternative would be presented to Town Council. The response was that they would be looking at the options in greater detail.

Motion passed 7 (Lane, King, Cascella, Hughes, Martinez, Reilly-Monaco and Vaglivello)-0

15-081

Motion to approve Student Policies #5113-Students-Attendance and Truancy, # 5113.2-StudentsTruancy, and#5131.6-Students-Alcohol, Drugs and Tobacco, as presented

Motion: (C. Cascella)

Second: (G. King)

Discussion: None

Motion passed 7 (Lane, King, Cascella, Hughes, Martinez, Reilly-Monaco and Vaglivello)-0

15-082

New Business

Policies-First Review

Vice-Chairman King said that the policies are being combined due to redundancies. Policy # 5118, Students-Nonresident students will be used and Policy # 3240, Business/Non-Instructional Operations-Tuition Fees will be eliminated.

Adjournment

Motion to Adjourn at 9:00 p.m.

Motion: (S. Reilly-Monaco)

Second: (C. Cascella)

Discussion: None

Motion passed 7 (Lane, King, Cascella, Hughes, Martinez, Reilly-Monaco and Vaglivello)-0

15-083

Respectfully submitted,

Board of Education Secretary