

MONROE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Monroe, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes
February 1, 2016

Present: Chairman Donna Lane
Secretary Shannon Reilly-Monaco
Board Member Christine Cascella
Board Member Jeff Guttman
Board Member James Martinez
Board Member Carlos Reinoso, Jr.
Board Member Jerry Stevens
Board Member Alan Vaglivelo

Absent: Vice-Chairman George King III
Masuk Student Board Representative Kanu Caplash

Also present: Superintendent James Agostine
Assistant Superintendent John Battista
Finance Director Gabriella DiBlasi
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.

Exemplary People - Connecticut Art Education Association Award Winner

The Board recognized *Michelle Janco* for being awarded a Gold Key Award for her art portfolio and an Honorable Mention for one of her drawings from the Connecticut Art Education Association.

Principal Kobza read a letter from *Monica Gagnon*, Michelle's art teacher for the past four years, which stated her talent and dedication to art. He noted that *Ms. Janco* received two scholarships, one from the Lyme Academy of Fine Arts, and one from the University of Hartford.

A sampling of *Ms. Janco's* work was on display at tonight's meeting and *Superintendent Agostine* added that one of *Ms. Janco's* drawings is part of the student artwork displayed in his office.

Report of the Chairman

There was no report at tonight's meeting.

Consent Agenda

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda

Motion: (C. Cascella)

Second: (Reilly-Monaco)

Discussion: Superintendent Agostine noted James Giff's resignation and wished him well.

Motion passed 8 (Lane, Reilly-Monaco, Cascella, Guttman, Martinez, Reinoso, Stevens and Vaglivello)-0

16-008

Report of the Committees and Liaisons

Masuk Student Representatives

Student Board Representative Moravek said there will be a blood drive on Friday, and last Friday, *R.C. Bray*, who narrated the book *Martian*, spoke to Masuk students last week. She said that *Mr. Bray* discussed getting into his line of work, and his presentation was very well received. *Superintendent Agostine* added that *Mr. Bray's* discussion was an excellent opportunity for students to learn more about career options.

This Saturday, Girls' Cheerleading has their league championship. *Student Board Representative Gupta* noted that a Dance Showcase will be presented to students on Friday and on Sunday. There will be a performance for parents and community members. He added there will be a Color Guard competition, The Masuk Classic, on Saturday where 20-30 teams from Connecticut and out of State will compete at Masuk. Friday will be the Girls Basketball Senior Night.

Public Participation

There was none at tonight's meeting.

Report of the Superintendent

Turf Field Update

Superintendent Agostine said the Turf Field Committee gave a second presentation to Town Council last week and reiterated they wanted to go ahead with the project that included the alternative in-fill which had the additional cost of approximately \$200,000. The Town Council will take this issue up at their meeting on February 8, and are having their bond counsel draft a bond resolution for their review. *Superintendent Agostine* continued that the Committee will present the plan to the Board of Finance on February 17, and there is a possibility of a Town meeting later in the month.

The Turf Field Building Committee will meet tomorrow evening, and their discussion will be focused on the amount of bonding; currently, it appears that bonding may be in the area of \$1.7 million of the \$2.2 million project. *Superintendent Agostine* continued that he has asked the Town Council to reserve the Board of Education's right to use the Capital Reserve Fund if the need arises. There is a \$200,000 contingency in the cost estimate of the field.

Notification of CABA'S Day on the Hill-March 2, 2016

Superintendent Agostine asked the Board Members to let him know if they are interested in attending The Connecticut Association of Boards of Education's Day on the Hill on March 2 in Hartford.

Capital Projects

Superintendent Agostine provided the Board with an update on the Capital Projects. The items include the F550 truck, the tractor loader that was taken out of last year's budget, the Track and Field as well as the oil tank replacement at Stepney Elementary.

Food Service RF

Superintendent Agostine said they have received the RFP from the State. *Ms. DiBlasi* has completed it, and it now has to be resubmitted to the State for their final approval. The RFP should go out by February 12 with a due date back from the State on March 11. At least one Board Member needs to be a member of the Scoring Committee on the returned RFPs. *Board Member Guttman* expressed interest in participating.

Technology Grant

Superintendent Agostine stated that *Dr. Zamary* applied for a Technology grant over a year ago, and the District has just been notified that the grant is back in line for approval. The grant was not written to offset budget items; it was to increase the number of Chrome Books and to replace the Wi-Fi system at Masuk.

Budget

Superintendent Agostine said that the First Selectman will present the Town wide budget on Monday, February 8. When the Board of Education adopted the 1.96% budget in January, it was noted that any savings that could be found would be utilized; “We always run the risk when we present an honest, transparent and lean budget to start with, there is not a lot of wiggle room.” By Town Charter, the First Selectman can reduce the Board of Education’s adopted budget. *Superintendent Agostine* asked the Board if they wanted to entertain the idea of making a proactive cut to their adopted budget. *Chairman Lane* said that it was her feeling that the Board of Education unanimously adopted a budget that was presented to the First Selectman, and she was comfortable with what they presented. *Board Member Vaglivo* agreed and said that he did not feel it was appropriate at this time to make changes.

Superintendent Agostine continued that the Board of Education starts their department budgets considerably earlier than the Town, and the Town is still vetting their department budgets. *Chairman Lane* added that the F550 and loader might need to be bonded if there are reductions as they are in desperate need of replacement. *Superintendent Agostine* stated the importance of creating and adhering to the 5 year Capital Plan as catching up on projects costs an insurmountable amount of money. *Board Member Vaglivo* asked where Monroe’s budget was compared to other districts; *Superintendent Agostine* said that though it is very preliminary, the range is 1.5%-5% with the average being closer to 2.5%.

Board Member Stevens said that he is happy with the budget they voted on and that it is fair. *Superintendent Agostine* continued that if there are savings to be found before referendum, he would make reductions. *Board Member Guttman* also agreed that the budget they adopted shouldn’t be adjusted at this time.

Board Member Stevens asked about the budget process; *Superintendent Agostine* said that the First Selectman presents the budget to Town Council and Town Council has to have at least one public hearing. From Town Council, the budget goes to Board of Finance, and they also have to have at least one public hearing before it goes to referendum.

Chairman Lane added that the First Selectman can leave the budget as is, reduce it or increase it. The First Selectman can alter only the bottom line number rather than specific line items. The Town Council cannot make any adjustments though the Board of Finance can leave it as is, reduce or increase the Board of Education budget.

Board Member Martinez said that he hoped that the First Selectman considers the growth and success of the District and carefully considers that every penny impacts the students. He concurred that the Board of Education approved a well thought out budget.

Presentations

Board of Education Professional Development-Finance/Human Resources

Assistant Superintendent Battista and *Ms. DiBlasi* gave a presentation on Finance and Human Resources and how the departments work together. *Ms. DiBlasi* said the responsibilities of the Finance Department include:

- Payroll-There are over
- Accounts Payable
- Accounts Receivable
- RFP/Bidding
- Liability and Insurance
- Transportation
- Food Services

Ms. DiBlasi reviewed the Accounts Payable-Purchase Process and highlighted the following steps:

- Determination of Budget
- Receive quote from vendors
- Requisition Created and entered into MUNIS
- Approval from Secondary Leaders/Building Principals and Finance Department
- Generation of a Purchase order
- Vendor fulfillment
- Receipt of items
- Payment made to vendors after confirmation of receipt of goods. The check warrant is signed by both *Ms. DiBlasi* and *Superintendent Agostine* and then it goes to the First Selectman signs off on it. A copy of the warrants is included in the Board packets.

Assistant Superintendent Battista oversees the HR department which includes an HR Generalist and an administrative assistant. He said that they do get support from other areas so it is important that everyone works well together. The responsibilities of Human Resources include:

- Evaluation of every certified and non-certified staff
- The hiring process
- Insurance and Open Enrollment
- Retirees
- Provide orientation for all staff
- Background checks, fingerprinting
- Maintain personnel files

Assistant Superintendent Battista provided the Board Members with The Hiring Process Guide which was developed to ensure consistency throughout the District. The District's Hiring Goal is to maximize student success by hiring, training, and retaining the most highly effective professional staff.

The Hiring Process begins when an opening occurs and an Employee Separation Form is completed on Applitrack. Once the requisition is completed, the position is posted internally for the timeframe determined per each employee group's negotiations. If there is no qualified candidate, the position is posted externally. All applicants complete their application on-line through Applitrack; the on-line hiring process allows District personnel to review and share information with each other. *Assistant Superintendent Battista* added that there are two interviews; the initial interview is conducted after a thorough application review and the second is designed to interview the top candidates from the first interview. He continued that the second interview is always followed by a classroom observation for teaching positions. Once an applicant is selected, a new hire form is completed in Applitrack. Once an applicant is selected, a new hire form is entered into Applitrack. *Superintendent Agostine* stated that as administrators, the hiring process is the most important function; "we have to get it right the first time."

Old Business

Motion to approve the Ethical Arguments in Fiction and Non-Fiction-Grade 12, English Honors Course, and the Travel Literature-Grade 12, English Honors Course as presented

Motion: (S. Reilly-Monaco)

Second: (C. Reinoso)

Discussion: None

Motion passed 8 (Lane, Reilly-Monaco, Cascella, Guttman, Martinez, Reinoso, Stevens and Vaglivello)-0

16-009

New Business

There was none at tonight's meeting.

Adjournment

Motion to Adjourn at 8:15 p.m.

Motion: (J. Guttman)

Second: (S. Reilly-Monaco)

Discussion: None

Motion passed 8 (Lane, Reilly-Monaco, Cascella, Guttman, Martinez, Reinoso, Stevens and Vaglivello)-0

16-010

Respectfully submitted,

Shannon Reilly-Monaco
Board of Education Secretary