

**MONROE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Monroe, Connecticut**

**Meeting Minutes  
December 5, 2016**

**Present:** Chairman Donna Lane  
Secretary Shannon Reilly-Monaco  
Board Member David Ferris  
Board Member James Martinez  
Board Member Jerry Stevens  
Board Member Alan Vaglivello

**Also present:** Superintendent James Agostine  
Assistant Superintendent John Battista  
Finance Director Gabriella DiBlasi  
Masuk Student Board Representative Kevin Brown  
Masuk Student Board Representative Michelle Cobuzzi  
Masuk Student Board Representative William Santee

**Absent:** Vice-Chairman George King III  
Board Member Christine Cascella  
Board Member Carlos Reinoso, Jr.

**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**

There was no report at tonight's meeting.

**Motion to add Item A., Under New Business, A Review and Anticipated Vote on the Revised Calendar for 2016-2017 and 2017-2018**

**Motion: (D. Ferris)**

**Second: (S. Reilly-Monaco)**

Discussion: None

**Motion passed 5 (Lane, Reilly-Monaco, Ferris, Stevens, and Vaglivello)-0**

16-074

**Consent Agenda**

**Motion to approve the Consent Agenda**

**Motion: (J. Stevens)**

**Second: (D. Ferris)**

Discussion: None

**Motion passed 5 (Lane, Reilly-Monaco, Ferris, Stevens, and Vaglivello)-0**

16-075

## **Reports of the Committees and Liaisons**

### **Student Board Representatives**

*Student Board Representative Santee* said that all try-outs for Winter sports have concluded, and games and scrimmages will begin shortly. Next Monday is the midpoint of the second Quarter. *Student Representative Cobuzzi* said that the World Language Honor Society will have their induction ceremony on Wednesday, and the Band Concert will be on December 15. *Student Representative Brown* said that Masuk hosted a Robotics Competition on Saturday with 36 teams from Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts. He added that four Masuk teams qualified for the Southern New England Championships.

### **Public Participation**

The junior class President and Vice-President updated the Board with a follow-up on their research regarding the price of parking passes. They provided the average for the Southwest Conference and DRG B. *Board Member Ferris* thanked the students for the information.

*Board Member Vaglivello* asked how many schools had Pay to Play and parking fees. *John DeGennaro* said that it is definitely the majority, but he can get more exact information. *Board Member Stevens* asked the students what they were looking for. The students' response was that they want to reduce the parking fee to \$100.

### **Report of the Superintendent**

#### 2017-2018 Superintendent's Proposed Budget Presentation

*Superintendent Agostine* presented the proposed estimate of operating expenditures for 2017-2018. He said that putting together the budget for the next school year begins in late October, early November, though it will not be expended until June 2018.

The presentation began with a review of the District's Mission Statement:  
"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."

There are Educational and Fiscal Goals for the Budget:

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

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

*Superintendent Agostine* said that the Board of Education has been very diligent in implementing cost containment strategies. He continued that the residents should be taxed for the amount of money needed to run a good educational program, "no more and no less than what is needed."

Parameters 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.

Budget Assumptions:

- 1.5 FTE Certified Staff Reductions
- The new demographic projections are accurate.
- Medical and Dental Insurance Increase of \$600,000
- No Contingency for Unforeseen Special Education Costs
- State grants (such as Educational Cost Share, Excess Cost, etc.) are uncertain at this time.
- Includes \$346,702 for Honeywell Lease Payment
- Contractual salary increases that have been negotiated and those that remain to be negotiated between now and the end of this school year

Budget Increase vs. CPI-Starting in 2009/2010

For a number of years, the budget increases were well below what CPI was and last year, the District was slightly above CPI in 2015/2016 school year. *Superintendent Agostine* said that the increases of 5.0-7.0% are a thing of the past though this budget has a different starting place than previous years. In 2011/2012 and 2012/2013 there was no increase and the following years had modest increases of 1.3, 1.5 and 1.6%.

*Superintendent Agostine* provided a history of the Budget Increases for the past 15 years. This year's increase is projected at 3.47%.

Key Drivers of the Budget:

- Contract Obligations have increased 2.53% from 2016/2017
- Transportation Costs have increased 6.52% from 2016/2017
- Medical Insurance has increased 9.93% from 2016/2017
- Special Education Instruction has an 16.67% increase from 2016/2017

*Superintendent Agostine* noted that the increases in Medical Insurance and Special Education represent 2% of the proposed 3.47%. He added that the Board of Education costs for Medical Insurance are remaining relatively flat for the proposed budget, and it has been so for the past few years. Employees are continually picking up more of the costs every year since 2011.

*Superintendent Agostine* continued that energy costs have been reduced for the most part due to the Honeywell improvements. Though the gas costs have increased, the costs of oil and electric have come down significantly. Electricity costs systems wide have been reduced significantly due to the Honeywell Project.

### In District Enrollment Patterns

*Superintendent Agostine* said that there has been a fairly consistent and dramatic decrease in student enrollment. The District averaged a decrease of approximately 100 students every year, and the projection was that the decline would continue until 2022. 2016 was flat and the projection for the 2017-2018 is also flat. He added that the demographer said that there has been an unexpected in migration of people into Southern Fairfield County due to the availability and affordability of housing in the area. If this trend persists, a rebound effect will take place. *Superintendent Agostine* added that the District has been very persistent in keeping the teaching staff ratio to students even. He added that the 1.5 FTE staff decrease will be at Masuk.

### Risks to the Budget:

- Decrease in State and Federal Funding/Governor's Budget Cut
- Unanticipated Special Education Costs
- Unfunded Mandates
- Unanticipated Maintenance/Emergency Repair Costs
- Continued High Medical and Prescription Costs

### The Proposed Budget:

- Provides support for all students in meeting the Connecticut Core Standards
- Provides adequate maintenance of all school buildings
- Provides teacher training in all District initiatives such as the Columbia Writing Project, Inquiry Learning and Bring Your Own Technology

The proposed budget for 2017-2018 is \$56,537,779.

### The 5 Year Capital Needs Projection

*Superintendent Agostine* said the following facilities improvements have been made:

- Monroe Elementary Electrical Upgrade and Water Tank Removal
- Masuk and Fawn Hollow Roof Replacements
- Security enhancements in all buildings including sally ports, controlled access, panic buttons, and glass upgrades
- Honeywell Project implementations including HVAC upgrades, Masuk gas conversion, lighting upgrades, and lock replacements
- Stepney Elementary Oil Tank Replacement
- Playground Safety Improvements
- Masuk Turf Field
- Proposed Stepney Elementary Roof Replacement

*Superintendent Agostine* said that after the work scheduled for this summer, all of the projects will be relatively small. He added that is also the case with equipment replacement.

*Board Member Vaglivo* asked how the budget compares to other districts.

*Superintendent Agostine* replied that others don't have their budgets out as yet, but he believes the 3.47% increase would be in the range. He added that every district is faced with an increase in medical costs which is a significant cost driver. The costs of

procedures have increased dramatically in recent years. *Superintendent Agostine* continued that there is an agreement with the Board of Finance that the Town would kick in a reserve Reserve Account if the reserves dropped too low. He added that in addition to the possibility of *Jay Fiorello* adjusting the proposed costs, the Teachers' Union has until December 31 to notify the District of any retirements.

Overview of Curriculum & Instruction, Human Resources, and Athletics  
*Assistant Superintendent Battista* said that under Curriculum and Instruction, there are some Special Education pieces which will be discussed at Monday's workshop. There is an increase of 4% for conferences and course fees for all the schools, Special Education and Central Office. He noted there was a \$34,000 reduction on External Vendors as he and *Ms. Casinelli* changed the format on the Summer Institutes. Rather than paying teachers a per diem rate to attend, they now get paid \$100 for travel time. The tuition for public and private tuition have had significant increases which will be addressed in greater detail at the Budget Workshop on Monday. *Assistant Superintendent Battista* said that they look at what the District needs rather than just adding to a prior year's figures. There were increases in library books as well as classroom library books and consumables such as Math in Focus workbooks.

*Assistant Superintendent Battista* next discussed Human Resources. He said that the District requests teachers to provide the District with any lane changes so they can be factored into the budget. He said that the Custodians, Paraprofessionals, and Secretaries' contracts will be negotiated this year so the anticipated amounts and legal fees are listed under Negotiation Reserves. *Assistant Superintendent Battista* continued there was no increase for substitutes though the Permanent subs were trued up as was the Summer Technical help and Intervention Tutors.

*John DeGennaro* provided a budget summary to the Board Members. He said that it is relatively flat as stipends have remained the same and transportation costs may be contained due to games and scrimmages that can be played on the new Turf Field without having to travel. Uniforms, police, crowd control are flat, and there is a slight increase in equipment. The total Athletic budget has a minimal increase of \$500 which is a fraction of a percent. *Mr. DeGennaro* continued that the number of students participating has increased. There are 34 different programs with 54 levels of play. There are no increases in Pay to Play or the Family Cap.

## **Old Business**

### **Curriculum Proposals-New Courses-Second Review**

#### **Motion to approve AP Computer Principles as presented**

**Motion: (A. Vaglivo)**

**Second: (J. Martinez)**

Discussion: None

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

16-076

**Motion to approve Literature and Modern Culture as presented**

**Motion: (A. Vaglivello)**

**Second: (S. Reilly-Monaco)**

Discussion: None

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

16-077

*Superintendent Agostine* said there is a longstanding agreement between the Board of Education and the MEA that the last working day before Christmas is a half day rather than the full day as indicated on the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 calendars. A motion was made to adjust the calendars to reflect the half days.

**Motion to Adjust the 2016-17 School Calendar to change December 23 to a half day and to adjust the 2017-18 School Calendar to change December 22 to a half day**

**Motion: (D. Ferris)**

**Second: (J. Stevens)**

Discussion: None

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

16-078

**Motion to Adjourn at 8:55 p.m.**

**Motion: (S. Reilly-Monaco)**

**Second: (J. Stevens)**

Discussion: None

**Motion passed 7 (Lane, Reilly-Monaco, Ferris, Martinez, Stevens, and Vaglivello)-0**

16-079

Respectfully submitted,



Shannon Reilly-Monaco  
Board of Education Secretary