

MONROE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Monroe, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes
November 21, 2016

Present: Chairman Donna Lane
Vice-Chairman George King III
Board Member Christine Cascella
Board Member James Martinez
Board Member Carlos Reinoso, Jr.
Board Member Jerry Stevens
Board Member Alan Vaglivelo

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: Secretary Shannon Reilly-Monaco
Board Member David Ferris

Call to Order

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

Board Member Cascella will be Acting Secretary for tonight's meeting.

Exemplary People-Sean Serafino, Third Grade Teacher at Monroe Elementary

Superintendent Agostine introduced *Sean Serafino*, third grade teacher at Monroe Elementary for being selected as a State finalist for the 2016 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST). *Superintendent Agostine* read from the letter that *Mr. Serafino* received from *Dr. Harry Rosvally, Jr.*, Presidential Awards State Coordinator-Science:

“Congratulations. The state selection committee for the 2016 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST) Program has chosen you as a State Finalist in recognition of your outstanding contributions to science education in Connecticut.

Your application packet will be forwarded to the National Science Foundation for review by the national selection committee this fall. If the committee recommends you as the Presidential Awardee, you will receive an announcement in the spring/summer of 2017 from the White House inviting you to Washington, D.C., to be honored with awardees from across the nation at a memorable recognition event.

While you are waiting to hear about the Presidential Award, you will be honored as a State Finalist at a special recognition event hosted by the Connecticut State Department of Education. You may also be recognized by various state organizations during the coming school year. I will inform you of the details of these activities as plans take shape. Please accept my personal congratulations on being selected for this highest honor. Your students, your school and the science education community are all enriched by your dedication and professionalism.”

Report of the Chairman

Acceptance of Donations from the Weller Foundation, Incorporated
The Weller Foundation, Incorporated, has made a \$500 donation to Masuk’s Library, Industrial Arts Program, Performing Arts Programs, and Robotics Team, and a \$1,000 to Masuk’s Math Department Programs.

Consent Agenda

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda

Motion: (J. Stevens)

Second: (C. Cascella)

Discussion: None

Motion passed 7 (Lane, King, Cascella, Martinez, Reinoso, Stevens, and Vaglivo)-0

16-071

Reports of the Committees and Liaisons

Masuk Student Representatives

Student Representative Santee said that the girls’ soccer team made it to the State Championships though they lost to St. Joseph’s. Girls’ hockey started today, and the rest of the winter sports will begin on Monday, November 28. *Student Representative Cobuzzi* said that the SAT test will be given on Saturday, December 3 off-site. There will be a Robotics competition also on the December 3, at Masuk. *Student Representative Brown* added that *Seussical, The Musical*, was very well received. On November 30, there will be an Open House for grade 8 students.

Finance

Chairman Lane said that the Finance Committee met this evening, and they had an update on insurance. The District is looking at an approximately \$600,000 increase for next year’s budget. In addition, the District is in negotiations with the bus company for a new contract, and the Stepney Roof Project will be presented to Town Council on Monday, November 28. *Chairman Lane* added that the budget will be presented at the next Board of Education meeting on December 5.

Ms. DiBlasi added that the current bus contract reads that the District could either negotiate or go out for an RFP. The daily rates for busses from other companies start in the \$400 range and the District is currently paying \$332. *Vice-Chairman King* asked if there would be an increase in that rate. *Ms. DiBlasi* said that the expectation is an increase in the 5-6% range which is still significantly lower than competitors’ rates.

Board Member Vaglivo asked if the increase had anything to do with the new parking lot; *Superintendent Agostine* said that some of that cost is built into the increase. The busses used to be housed on town property but the contract stated that they had to move

off that property within a certain time frame. There was an issue finding a suitable area and the cost of the land is considerably higher in Monroe than in surrounding areas. *Superintendent Agostine* continued that any company who would bid in an open RFP would have built in the business cost.

Board Member Stevens asked for a brief explanation of the RFP Process. *Superintendent Agostine* explained the Request for Proposal process.

CES

Board Member Reinoso said that the next meeting will be on January 12.

Public Participation

There was none at tonight's meeting.

Report of the Superintendent

Fund Balance

Ms. DiBlasi said that the preliminary audit showed no material weaknesses of the District's controls, and they had a few suggestions including the gate receipts at football games and possibly an additional check on payroll.

Insurance

Ms. DiBlasi said that there has been a significant increase in claims from this time last year. Insurance is run through payroll so over the summer when most of the staff is not working, the insurance reserve is reduced. She added that current year spending is on track and again, she is watching the insurance closely.

Superintendent Agostine said that he, *Ms. DiBlasi*, and *Assistant Superintendent Battista* met with *Jay Fiorello* who recommended they increase the medical budget by \$600,000 due to the trend increase and the cost of claims. They also met with *Mike Manjos*, Chairman of the Board of Finance, this morning. He explained that the Board of Finance approached the Board of Education a few years ago, and they wanted to establish a policy between the Town and the Board of Education to maintain the Fund Balance at 18-23% of the medical expenses. A resolution was adopted in 2012-2013 stating that if there was a three month period where the Board of Education fell below the 18% mark, the Town would be responsible for setting up a reserve Medical Reserve Fund and fund it to the minimum of 18%.

Superintendent Agostine said that the Board of Finance is meeting tonight and that *Board of Finance Chairman Manjos* fully understands the agreement, and the expectation is that the reserve Medical Reserve Fund will be established. He continued that, as always, they are working on getting the budget as lean as possible, and he will look for savings.

Currently, the budget increase is approximately 3.6% with \$600,000 for medical, a \$600,000 increase in Special Education costs due to increased outplacement costs, the transportation increase, as well as contractual obligations with the unions. 1.5 teaching positions will be cut due to declining enrolling at Masuk. *Superintendent Agostine* asked that the December 7 budget workshop be cancelled and to keep the workshop scheduled for December 12 to remain on the calendar.

Demographic Study

Superintendent Agostine said that the District had more students than last year's enrollment, although the projection was that we would be down by 120 students. *Superintendent Agostine* attended a meeting at CES yesterday to discuss why there is an increase in enrollments, and the reason given was that more people are moving into Fairfield County than other areas. The increase may be a new trend, but it is too soon to determine. *Board Member Vaglivello* said that he knows of three new students entering the District in the next few weeks due to reputation of the schools.

Presentations

Student Data Privacy-New Law, Jack Zmary, Director of Technology/Operations

Superintendent Agostine said that though the law is well intentioned it has a significant impact in districts throughout the state. He said that *Dr. Zmary* has been speaking with legislators, and tomorrow he is hosting a meeting with *Representative J.P Sredzinski*, *Representative Fleishman*, and *Doug Casey*, from CEN, at Central Office. *Superintendent Agostine* invited the Board Members to attend the meeting.

Dr. Zmary stated there are challenges with the law, but "no work is more important than student safety and privacy." He noted that the legislators should be commended for bringing this issue to the forefront and added that *Representative Sredzinski* is an advocate for Monroe and has been instrumental in bringing other representatives together for tomorrow's meeting. Act 16-189 is a new student privacy act that requires the Board of Education to adopt new standards for contracts between the Board and a contractor.

The standards include:

- Data ownership
- Data deletion
- Data security and privacy
- Data breach notification

Presently, Standardized testing data is exempt from this law.

Dr. Zmary continued that though it is called the Student Data Privacy Law, it refers to anyone who has possession of student data such as a website, an App or an individual.

Board Member Vaglivello asked if the Standardized Testing included Special Education related testing. *Dr. Zmary* said that districts have been struggling with the definitions in the law, and there is no definitive answer at this time.

The Act was signed into law in June 2016 and went into effect on October 1, 2016. The new contractual standards need to be provided by a Board of Education to "an operator or consultant that is in possession of or has access to student information, student records or student-generated content as a result of a contract with a local or regional board of education."

Information on Act 16-189 is on the District website as is Monroe's List of Approved Digital Resources and a link for teachers to request a resource to go through the process for approval. The District has approximately 300 vendors, sites, and apps.

Dr. Zmary discussed some of the Act's benefits as well as the drawbacks.

Pros

- Generates the discussion and action about student privacy
- Provides transparent communication about the resources the District use
- Movement toward consistent standards for student data privacy

Cons

- Potentially eliminates important technologies for students.
- It is an unfunded mandate.
- It is an inefficient design that requires 169 municipalities to negotiate 1 set of contractual terms.
- Does not address the critical need to teach students about safe technology use.
- Standardized test data is exempt.

Dr. Zamary continued that though the act requires notification about data breaches, it allows contractors up to 60 days to notify the Board of Education while the Board of Education is required to notify parents within 48 hours.

He added that having CEN or Regional Education Service Centers (RESA) manage IT security contracts would be more efficient and effective as the vast majority of districts in the State do not have staff dedicated solely to IT Security and presently. Connecticut Education Network (CEN) provides high speed internet and filtering to CT schools.

The primary challenge with Act 16-189 is that it creates unintended consequences that impact educational innovation and learning. To date, Apple, Google, PowerSchool, and other providers have not agreed with the terms in Act 16-189, although Monroe's PowerSchool and Google contracts are grandfathered through July 2017. More than half of school technology relies on Google.

Dr. Zamary continued that the SBAC testing required districts to purchase thousands of new devices, and over \$30 million dollars of State tax revenue was used to fund grants for local districts to purchase the devices, the majority were Chromebooks. Chromebooks require Google Apps to function. He added that the total cost of the Chromebooks with operating system and office suite is under \$250, compared to \$750 and \$1250 respectively for PC Laptop and Macbook.

There will be a significant impact if there are no changes to the Act including the loss of Google Apps, Apple Apps, Columbia Teachers College Reading and Writing Units, Prezi.com, Khanacademy, and Code.org.

Though the Wall Street Journal and Forbes have determined the most common data breaches are caused by human error, Act 16-189 does not address this and focuses on technology. *Dr. Zamary* added that the Act needs to be revised to allow students and teachers access to technology so "responsible and safe use can be taught." Strategies such as "de-identification" can be taught to protect student privacy both in and out of the classroom.

Dr. Zamary concluded that Act 16-189, an unfunded mandate, has unintended consequences that impact innovation and learning, does not address the need to teach safe technology use, has no compliance oversight and the language is vague. *Dr. Zamary's* recommendation is to Repeal/Revise Act 16-189 and "engage a broad cross section of

Connecticut's students, teachers, parents and technology leaders to create a replacement law.”

Old Business

Update on Masuk Parking Fees

Chairman Lane said that at the previous Board of Education meeting, two Masuk juniors asked the Board to re-evaluate the Masuk parking fees. She noted that the fee was reduced last year to \$125 from \$150, but the students requested a further reduction. *Ms. DiBlasi* researched the parking fees at other schools in the DRG, and Monroe is in the ballpark with its fees and noted that Amity charges \$100, Brookfield is \$150, Newtown is \$85, Trumbull has no fee, and Pomeraug's fee is \$250. She continued that some districts only allow parking for seniors. *Board Member Stevens* asked if the discussion could be tabled as the students who initiated the request were not present. *Chairman Lane* said no further action was necessary.

Board of Education Members' Terms

Chairman Lane said that the list the Board was provided was now correct and that there would be many Board Members running next year with the exception of *Board Member Vaglivo* and *Secretary Reilly-Monaco*. In 2019, the rotation will return to a 5/4 split in terms of turnover.

New Business

Curriculum Proposals-New Courses-First Review Literature and Modern Culture-English, Grade 12

Ms. Casinelli noted this is a college-prep level course that will serve as a semester-long senior English class that fulfills the graduation requirements. The course is based on the Film and Literature senior elective that was approved by the Board a few years ago. The NCAA Clearinghouse had issues with the course being counted as an English credit for students going to Division 2 schools so adjustments were made to include additional aspects of culture including music, art and television. There is no additional cost to the District. *Ms. Casinelli* continued that the course's connection to the District's Mission is that it provides the opportunity for students to learn how to critically view and discuss different mediums, “by comparing the techniques of artists, musicians, and filmmakers to the techniques of authors, students will analyze structures and their varied uses across different media.” There are four units to the course: Telling Your Story, Diverse Perspectives, Modern Imagery, and Putting It Together. Each has a Complementary Genre Study and Assessment.

AP Computer Principles-Computer Science, Grades 9-12

Bill McDonough said that his proposed AP Computer Principles course is based on App Development. A group of science teachers and Trinity College applied for a grant to implement the course. The course is designed to get females and non math/science strength students, into computer science and coding. *Mr. McDonough* said that four weeks of training would be necessary to teach the course, and he is in the process of trying to get into the training which would be offered next summer. The course is built around designing apps for android based devices. The apps are completely designed, owned and copyrighted by the students who create them. *Mr. McDonough* anticipates 20-25 students taking the course every year and each student would need to complete two

problem assessments where they build the apps and then turn them into College Board to ensure they have followed proper protocol and procedures. The District would have to invest in the Android tablets for the app development. This is the first AP course not to require a textbook. The training Mr. *McDonough* needs will be covered by the grants through Trinity College. The course will be offered to sophomores, juniors and seniors.

Monroe Reads 2016-2017-Jack Zmary, Director of Technology/Operations

Dr. Zmary and *Margaret Borchers*, Director of the Edith Wheeler Memorial Library, presented the selection for Monroe Reads Together 2016-17. Monroe Reads Together is “a project to engage all of Monroe in the benefits and enjoyment of reading.” *The Unseen World*, by *Liz Moore*, has been chosen, and each Board Member received a copy of the book.

It is the story of a father and daughter set in the 1980s. The father is a computer scientist, and the daughter is a child prodigy who is home schooled in the father’s lab. The father’s mind is failing, and he has not been honest about much of his past, and his daughter must find out who her family really is using technology over the course of her life. *Ms. Moore* will be at Jockey Hollow on March 16, 2017, and the library will host a series of programs revolving around the book’s themes prior to her visit.

Personnel Matter Discussion, Superintendent-Executive Session Anticipated

Motion to enter Executive Session inviting Superintendent Agostine to discuss a Personnel Matter

Motion: (C. Cascella)

Second: (J. Martinez)

Discussion: None

Motion passed 7 (Lane, King, Cascella, Martinez, Reinoso, Stevens, and Vaglivello)-0

16-072

Adjournment

Motion to Adjourn at 9:40 PM

Motion: (G. King)

Second: (C. Cascella)

Discussion: None

Motion passed 7 (Lane, King, Cascella, Martinez, Reinoso, Stevens, and Vaglivello)-0

16-073

Respectfully submitted

Christine Cascella
Acting Board of Education Secretary