

MONROE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Monroe, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes
November 20, 2017

Present: Chairman Donna Lane
Vice-Chairman George King III
Secretary Shannon Reilly-Monaco
Board Member Christine Cascella
Board Member David Ferris
Board Member James Martinez
Board Member Jerry Stevens
Board Member Alan Vaglivelolo

Also present: Superintendent John Battista
Assistant Superintendent Jack Zamarly
Masuk Student Board Representative Kevin Brown
Masuk Student Board Representative William Santee

Absent: Board Member Carlos Reinoso
Masuk Student Board Representative Ryan Winkler
Finance Director Gabriella DiBlasi

Call to Order

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

Motion to amend the agenda the Consent Agenda by moving the Report of the Chairman to the Item 11, New Business

Motion: (J. Stevens)

Second: (S. Reilly-Monaco)

Discussion: None

Motion passed 8 (Lane, King, Reilly-Monaco, Cascella, Ferris, Martinez, Stevens and Vaglivelolo)-0

17-079

Exemplary People

The Board recognized *Ryan Duffy*, a Stratford High School student, for his act of kindness and sportsmanship in assisting a Masuk runner during the recent SWC Championship. *Principal Kobza* said “this speaks to all that is good with high school sports” and relayed how *Ryan* had stopped to assist a Masuk student suffering from dehydration and signaled for help. *Ryan* stayed with the student until help arrived before returning to the race. The Board recognized *Ryan* for going above and beyond in helping a competitor and fellow athlete.

Consent Agenda

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda

Motion: (S. Reilly-Monaco)

Second: (C. Cascella)

Discussion: None

Motion passed 7 (Lane, King, Reilly-Monaco, Cascella, Martinez, Stevens and Vaglivo)-1 (Ferris-abstention)

17-080

Reports of the Committees and Liaisons

Masuk Student Representatives

Masuk Student Representative Santee said the boys' soccer team made it to the State championship for the first time in school history and, though they lost, they had a tremendous show of support. Senior Night for the football team, the dance team, and the cheerleaders will be on Wednesday night at 7:00 p.m., and Masuk will play Newtown. He added there will be a Robotics Tournament at Masuk on Saturday, December 2.

Masuk Student Representative Brown said that DECA will be holding an all-day event, Business Day, where students will have a chance to meet with professionals in the community, and there will be a Family Feud type of event with students and teachers to end the day. He noted the production of *Once Upon a Mattress* was well received, and the Parent Teacher Council will meet on Tuesday, November 29. *Representative Brown* continued stating that *Lily Palumba* was recognized as Rotary Student of the Month for the month of November, and SATs will be administered on December 2.

Public Participation

There was no public participation at tonight's meeting.

Report of the Superintendent

Review of the Fund Activity Statement

Superintendent Battista said that there will be a presentation on Medical later at tonight's meeting. He noted the balance of the insurance fund is \$260,000, but last week's payroll increased it to \$533,000. October and November to date have seen the lowest claims since February 2017.

Medical Insurance Update

Superintendent Battista said there has been slight improvement. From October 2016-October 2017, there were 29 catastrophic claims, and currently there are 13. Though the medical increase for the past year is 33%; the increase for the past five years has been under 10%. *Superintendent Battista* continued that pharmacy claims are down 16%. Brown & Brown are aggressively looking at medical discounts, and they are shopping around for a more competitive stop loss. He continued that he and *Assistant Superintendent Zmary* have visited all the schools and are emphasizing wellness, and a healthier workforce will result in lower costs and claims.

Superintendent Battista stated the Governor is holding back \$500,000 from the Town and reducing ECS, so the Town is receiving approximately \$1 million less than last year. He said that the District will continue to work with the Board of Finance to determine how to apply the State aid received for this year and to develop expectations for the 2018-2019 budget and beyond. *Superintendent Battista* added that it does not appear the District can bring back some of the things they have lost.

Budget Presentation Agenda

Superintendent Battista said the Budget Presentation will take place at the December 4 Board of Education meeting. The presentation will be followed by the workshop, and the areas to be discussed include Staffing, Human Resources, Professional Development and Curriculum, IT, and Operations. The workshop scheduled for December 11 will address Special Education and Masuk Athletics. Any updates or revisions to the budget will be discussed at the December 18 meeting and a workshop will occur, if needed. Budget books will be distributed to the Board prior to the December 4 meeting.

TEAM-New Unfunded Mandate

Superintendent Battista said that the State budget for New Teacher Orientation has been eliminated, but Districts are required to implement the training. The cost to the District is approximately \$10,000. This results in another State of Connecticut unfunded mandate.

Superintendent Battista added there is a water leak in the Masuk parking lot, but it will not impact school tomorrow

Presentations

Cigna Wellness Presentation

Anne McCarthy, from Cigna, and *Adrienne D'Antonio*, from Brown & Brown, gave the Board a brief presentation on the Wellness Program and initiatives. *Assistant Superintendent Zamarly* said that the District has a very good working relationship with Cigna and Brown & Brown, and the recently implemented walking program has been very successful in terms of promoting better health and morale.

Ms. McCarthy said the situation with healthcare and insurance costs provided an opportunity for them to get more involved and familiarize employees with the services available as well as with mycigna.com app. She stated that "first and foremost, we want employees to know their numbers." There will be on-site biometric screenings that will be available for blood pressure, BMI, glucose, and cholesterol. The employee will get a score, and it will tell them what they are doing right as well as indicate areas where improvement is needed.

There is also a Lifestyle management program, an opt-in program, for employees to receive coaching in areas such as smoking cessation and weight loss. The program is a holistic coaching program, and the coaches ask about triggers for the behaviors such as stress and depression. The smoking cessation program has an 87% success rate. There are also coaching programs that are more intense for the chronic population which are the majority of the claims costs including diabetes, COPD, morbid obesity, and major depressions. *Ms. McCarthy* reiterated that it is their priority to educate employees.

Assistant Superintendent Zamarly said that they are trying to put a face on Cigna so when employees have a question or concern, they can reach out to *Ms. McCarthy*. He continued stating, "Addressing small issues before they become big issues benefits all employees and will reduce costs." *Ms. McCarthy* continued that she wants to attend the screenings and encourage employees to take the Health Care Assessment. She said that there is a tele-health benefit where a minor condition can be addressed by calling a board certified physician who can prescribe medication, excluding narcotics, over the phone.

This saves the cost and time of an office visit. She continued that they want to see greater participation in enrolling at mycigna.com as it provides employees many cost and time saving services. *Assistant Superintendent Zamary* added that they have already expended \$2,000 from Cigna Wellness Dollars for race registrations for staff. There are over 190 employees participating in the walking program.

Bullying

Superintendent Battista said he felt it was important to share some of the activities the District has discussed to create a positive climate in the schools. *Ann Odoy*, Masuk Guidance Counselor, and *Mark Schwarz*, Masuk Assistant Principal, gave a brief presentation to the Board. *Assistant Principal Schwarz* read the definition of bullying from the website:

“Bullying is the repeated use by one or more students of a written, oral or electronic communication such as cyber bullying directed at or referring to another student attending school in the same district or a physical act or gesture by one or more students repeatedly directed at another student attending school in the same school district that

- A) causes physical or emotional harm to such student or damage to such student’s property,
- B) places such student in reasonable fear of harm to himself, or of damage to his or her property,
- C) creates a hostile environment at school for such student,
- D) infringes on the rights of such student at school, or
- E) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Assistant Principal Schwarz continued that there aren’t a lot of incidents of behavior meeting the definition of bullying, but they have to address mean and /or harassing types of behaviors. He continued that sometimes these behaviors go on outside of school, but if they cause a disruption for a student in school, it is the District’s right to deal with those issues. *Assistant Principal Schwarz* added that staff report any know incidents of harassment, and everything they do to intervene is documented. He added that consequences of bullying vary depending on severity, frequency, disruption though it can range from a meeting to suspension. In addition to discipline, there is counseling for both the victim and the offender to gain a better understanding of the actions. There are forms available for students to report bullying towards themselves or another person and there is the Anonymous Reports app that students use.

Ms. Odoy said there are different philosophies on why children bully. Sometimes they are victims themselves, have low self-esteem, and it can be a learned behavior. The focus at the Elementary level is positive behavior reinforcement and preventative measures. The K-12 School Counseling Curriculum is about believing in yourself, confidence, kindness, and how to navigate feelings, respecting differences, standing up for yourself, giving compliments and teaching strategies to reduce stress and an increase sense of calm.

Ms. Odoy continued there is ROCK Week (Random Opportunities of Caring and Kindness) at the middle school as well as Red Ribbon Week which addresses cyber bullying. There is also Pink Promise Day, a day where students promise to be kind to peers and stand up for your peers. Middle School students are also taught to learn about themselves and respect differences. At Masuk, there are class meetings on the first day of school and being kind and respectful is the focus. In advisory, there are programs on

cyber bullying and social media. She continued saying that with constant and consistent intervention, things are changing.

Superintendent Battista added that each school has a climate committee. Assistant *Principal Schwarz* noted that the high school has a kind student and parent community. The athletic teams continue to participate in community service and activities as a team. He reiterated that mean-spirited, harassing behavior is something they deal with as it happens. It is different than being bullied, and they are trying to get students to understand the difference.

Old Business

Curriculum Proposal-Instructional Materials and Resources for History/Social Studies, Child Development Course, Grades 10-12

Motion to approve Instructional Materials and Resources for History/Social Studies, Child Development Course, Grades 10-12, as presented

Motion: (G. King)

Second: (J. Stevens)

Discussion: None

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

17-081

International High School Trip

Motion to approve the Masuk Music Department request to travel and perform in Iceland, from April 11 through April 17, 2019, as presented

Motion: (J. Martinez)

Second: (J. Stevens)

Discussion: Board Member Stevens asked if the trip would be presented to incoming freshman. Ms. Strong said that they will present it to eighth grade students. The ratio of adults to students is 1:10.

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

17-082

New Business

Recommendation of the Superintendent Search Committee

Chairman Lane said that the Board of Education members, along with *Marie Blake*, from the MEA, *Jack Ceccolini*, and *Christa DeLeo*, President of Parents Council, comprised the Superintendent Search Committee, and there was an internal candidate that met their requirements and qualifications. They unanimously felt that Assistant Superintendent Zmary was the best candidate to lead the District.

Appointment of Superintendent of Schools

Motion to appoint Dr. Jack Zmary as Superintendent of Schools as of July 1, 2018

Motion: (S. Reilly-Monaco)

Second: (J. Stevens)

Discussion: Chairman Lane said that after interviewing him, it was obvious that Dr. Zmary was the unanimous choice to lead the District. She continued that Dr. Zmary

has a Bachelors degree and Master degree of Music Education from the University of Connecticut and a Sixth Year in Educational Leadership and Doctorate in Educational Leadership from Southern Connecticut State University. In addition, Dr. Zmary had previously worked in Newtown and Region 15 as a teacher, director of the arts and principal. Currently the Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Zmary joined the District as IT Director six years ago. Board Member Ferris said that when there is a good, qualified staff member, it is important to recognize the existing talent. Secretary Reilly-Monaco added that Dr. Zmary possesses all the qualities the Board was looking for and there are no reservations with their decision.

Motion passed 8 (Lane, King, Reilly-Monaco, Cascella, Ferris, Martinez, Stevens and Vaglivero)-0

17-083

Chairman Lane stated there will be a celebration ceremony in January. *Assistant Superintendent Zmary* thanked the Board for their continued faith in him and stated that Monroe is a special district with students of exceptional character, a professional and dedication staff, and an amazing leadership team.

Motion to approve the Superintendent's Compensation Package of \$197,400 from July 1, 2017-June 30, 2021

Motion: (D. Ferris)

Second: (J. Stevens)

Discussion: Chairman Lane said this was a zero percent increase.

Motion passed 8 (Lane, King, Reilly-Monaco, Cascella, Ferris, Martinez, Stevens and Vaglivero)-0

17-084

Recognition of Board Members James Martinez and Carlos Reinoso, Jr. for their years of Service to the Board of Education

Board Member Martinez and *Board Member Reinoso* were recognized for their contributions to the Board. *Board Member Martinez* said that he was humbled and grateful for the experience and the opportunity to give back to the community. He added there are no party lines between the Board Members, and it was always about doing what was best for the students. *Board Member Vaglivero* thanked him for his input and *Chairman Lane* noted it was a pleasure to have him on the Board.

Motion to Adjourn at 8:55 p.m.

Motion: (D. Ferris)

Second: (J. Stevens)

Discussion: None

Motion passed 7 (Lane, King, Martinez, Reilly-Monaco, Reinoso, Stevens and Vaglivero)-0

17-085

Respectfully Submitted,



Shannon Reilly-Monaco
Board of Education Secretary