

MONROE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Monroe, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes
November 6, 2017

Present: Chairman Donna Lane
Vice-Chairman George King III
Secretary Shannon Monaco
Board Member James Martinez
Board Member Carlos Reinoso
Board Member Jerry Stevens
Board Member Alan Vaglivelolo

Also present: Superintendent John Battista
Assistant Superintendent Jack Zamarly
Finance Director Gabriella DiBlasi
Masuk Student Representative Kevin Brown
Masuk Student Representative Will Santee
Masuk Student Representative Ryan Winkler

Absent: Board Member Christine Cascella
Board Member David Ferris

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

Chairman Lane acknowledged a donation of \$336.90 from The Weller Foundation that Masuk requested for the Child Development course to purchase 30 books, once the book is approved by the Board.

Chairman Lane added there have been rumors regarding the Board of Education having a plan, "Scenario X" - Monroe Elementary and Stepney Elementary schools would close and students relocated to Chalk Hill. *Superintendent Battista* noted they did look at a scenario last year at a resident's request, but they dismissed it as there is not enough space at Chalk Hill to accommodate both schools' populations. *Chairman Lane* reiterated that the Ad Hoc Committee's study confirmed the decision to stay with the current configuration; a copy of the study is available on the District website. *Board Member Vaglivelolo* added there has been chatter on social media that the Board should do a feasibility study. He noted that it has already been done.

Consent Agenda

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda

Motion: (J. Stevens)

Second: (C. Reinoso)

Discussion: Superintendent Battista announced there are seven teachers taking the early retirement incentive and three others taking retirement. He continued by noting that many are veteran staff members which will result in financial savings.

Motion passed 7 (Lane, King, Martinez, Monaco, Reinoso, Stevens and Vaglivello)-0
17-076

Reports of the Committees and Liaisons

Masuk Student Representatives - *Masuk Student Representative Santee* said veterans will be honored on Friday. There will be a group of veterans meeting in the library, and students will see an interview with *Mr. Sheehan*, a substitute teacher and a Korean War Veteran. *Greg Miller* and *Brianna Mulloy* are Masuk Students of the Month for October. Student Representative Santee added that Robotics has their first tournament on Saturday in Danbury, and previews of *Once Upon A Mattress* will be on November 14 with performances November 17-19. *Student Representative Brown* said there is no school tomorrow due to Voting Day, and Thursday is an early dismissal for parent conferences. Next Thursday, there will be Career Day which gives students the opportunity to meet with professionals, and DECA's fundraiser will benefit Homes for the Brave in Bridgeport. *Student Representative Winker* added that Wednesday is the Underage Drinking Forum for freshman and their parents. The Unified Sports Soccer Team won their final season tournament at Staples.

Finance Committee - *Board Member Vaglivello* said *Ms. DiBlasi* gave them an insurance update. Insurance is stabilizing a bit. The Stepney Roof Project is complete, and Administrators and School Staff are working on their budgets.

CES - *Board Member Reinoso* said the Representative Council met on Thursday. He noted the CES audit went well, and they are beginning to search for a replacement Executive Director due to retirement.

Public Participation

Dan Hunsberger, the Town Council liaison for Board of Education, said this was his last meeting, and he thanked the Board for welcoming him and for providing him with information to bring forward to Town Council. He continued he has a new appreciation of the time and dedication of the work the Board of Education does and recognized Superintendent *Battista* and *Assistant Superintendent Zmary* for their leadership. *Mr. Hunsberger* added there is no proposal forthcoming from Town Council regarding Plan X.

Report of the Superintendent

2018-19 Budget Update - The governor has signed a two year budget, and *Superintendent Battista*, *Assistant Superintendent Zmary*, *Chairman Lane*, and *Ms. DiBlasi* met with Board of representatives from the Town regarding the contingency that was put in the budget. *Superintendent Battista* said that they will attend the next Board of Finance meeting on November 14 and will address the technology refresh program and the K-5 District Coordinators. He noted that *Sheila Casinelli* will work with the K-5 Language Arts, so they are looking at reinstating the Math and Science Coordinators. Approval is needed from the Board of Finance and Town Council and should the

proposal be approved, there will be a plan to ensure for a smooth transition for the students.

Professional Development Day (November 7) - *Superintendent Battista* noted there are 82 offerings throughout the day, and the EdCamp model will be followed from 1:00-3:00 PM where teachers run the professional development. The model has not only saved money, because the District is not bringing in outside speakers, but it has been productive for the teachers.

Southern Fairfield County Superintendents Association - The combining of services has been well received and is expanding. Finance Directors met and they discussed transportation and electricity. The Special Education Directors will also be meeting to discuss cost saving measures.

Science Training - The US Department of Education has approved the State's waiver for science testing. Next year, there will not be a tenth grade science test. There will be a fifth and eighth grade pilot for the 2019 tests.

Feedback on the One to One Pilot at Masuk High School - *Assistant Superintendent Zmary* provided the Board with an update on the One to One Pilot Program at Masuk. The American Studies class, a combined English and Social Studies class with 39 juniors, is the Pilot class. In the Pilot, every student has one device to use 24/7; 45% chose a District Chromebook with insurance at an additional cost of \$50.00, 36% chose to bring their own device, and 18% opted for a District Chromebook without insurance.

Assistant Superintendent Zmary continued that 76% of the students responded that the One to One Pilot had a positive impact on their learning, and the majority noted that they use the devices in their other classes. He added that approximately 50% of students use the One to One devices for homework daily. *Assistant Superintendent Zmary* added that some Wi-Fi adjustments were necessary to accommodate all the various devices being used and that loaner devices are always needed. It was noted that only District owned devices can be used for State testing purposes. There are 2000 Chromebooks in the District that have been in use for approximately five years and, as the cost is considerably less than laptops, there is the potential for further savings if a One to One refresh is established. *Assistant Superintendent Zmary* concluded that they are looking at including questions on the One to One Pilot on the School Climate Surveys as well as asking more detailed questions of students and staff. An update will be presented at the February 8, 2018, Board of Education meeting.

Presentations

Board of Education Professional Development-Budget Building Process/Insurance Budget Development - *Ms. DiBlasi* provided the Board with a review of the Budget process.

Timeline:

September 2017-The budget process begins when the budget calendars are distributed to Administrators

October 2017-November 13, 2017-Budget Submissions are due from Administrators and *Superintendent Battista* reviews submissions from the school principals, Student Support Services, Technology, Facilities, Director of Curriculum and the Assistant Superintendent
November 21, 2017-The draft of the Budget is due

December 4, 2017-*Superintendent Battista* presents the budget at the regularly scheduled Board of Education meeting.

December 11, 2017-Proposed budget workshops on Curriculum & Instruction, Human Resources, and Facilities & Resources

January 2, 2018-Board of Education Budget recommendations to the Town of Monroe

January 9, 2018-Board of Education Budget submitted to the First Selectman

February 8, 2018-First Selectman Budget submitted to Town Council

February 28, 2018-Town Council budget submitted to Board of Finance

March 21, 2018-The Board of Finance sets the mill rate and the budget is submitted to the First Selectman and Town Clerk for Referendum

April 3, 2018-Budget Referendum

Steps to the Budget:

Payroll Budget - *Ms. DiBlasi* said that they roll all employees to next year on salary schedules and make adjustments for retirements. In addition, they work with Human Resources to ensure all employees are captured accurately in current year including determining and quantifying any lane changes for teachers.

Utilities - *Ms. DiBlasi* said that they determine average electrical, natural gas, oil, water, and propane usage over the last three years, calculate estimated use for next year, and determine the cost based on existing contracts or estimate cost based on market conditions. Stepney Elementary is the only school using oil not natural gas as natural gas is not an option at this time. She added that the District is currently locked in for the electric rates through June 2022 with the consortium.

Transportation - *Ms. DiBlasi* said that they determine an estimated cost based upon current vehicle allocation and next year's contractual rates. In addition, they work with Special Education on any potential service changes. She added that Charters and Athletics are budgeted by the Athletics Department and Schools.

Special Education - *Ms. DiBlasi* said they collect information on student programming, determine if they may meet Excess Cost Qualifications this year based on Per Pupil Cost given by the State of Connecticut estimate tuition increases, transportation, and estimate if student programming will continue to meet or not meet Excess Cost threshold.

School Based Costs - *Ms. DiBlasi* continued that the school principals have very little discretionary spending - less than one percent of the budget. Budgeting is based on the number of students at elementary levels to ensure equitable spending. She said they gain input from Secondary Instructional Leaders, Teachers, and the Superintendent's office.

Insurance - *Ms. DiBlasi* noted there are many factors that affect this budget including the cost of claims, cost of care and the potential to move carriers, bid out stop loss insurance, and prescription rebates. She continued that they look at claims trend for the past three years and the cyclical nature of claims. *Ms. DiBlasi* continued that they review active

claims with Brown & Brown as well as Cigna and determine if the estimated medical reserve balance at the end of the year will be adequate.

Internal Review Process:

The Budget is reviewed multiple times on a line item basis by the Superintendent's office, Directors, and the Administrative Team. The review includes employee level detail - who is buying what and why and a review of athletic participation rates and Special Education costs.

Putting it All Together:

Ms. DiBlasi noted that the budget book is built simultaneously, and nearly every section relates to another. It goes through multiple edits, and CABE awarded the budget book's current format as "Best Budget Book" for transparency. In addition, the budget book is publicly shared, and they are always open to suggestions for improvement.

Superintendent Battista reiterated that the budget process is a very involved and lengthy one, but they are confident with the final product.

Old Business

Policy-Second Review-Vote Anticipated

Motion to approve Policy #6146-Graduating Requirements as presented

Motion: (J. Stevens)

Second: (J. Martinez)

Discussion: None

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

17-077

New Business

Curriculum Proposal-Instructional Materials and Resources Proposal for

History/Social Studies, Child Development Course, Grades 10-12 - Mr. Lowell and

Ms. Sherry presented a proposal to purchase 30 copies of "Brain Rules for Baby: How to Raise a Smart and Happy Child from Zero to Five" for the Child Development Course.

The rationale for the requested resource is to incorporate non-fiction reading into the course and as an additional supplement to the current textbook which is dated. *Ms.*

Sherry obtained financing for the book through the Weller Grant so there is no additional cost to the District.

International High School Trip - The Masuk Music Department is requesting the Board's approval to offer students a travel and performance opportunity in Iceland from April 11 through April 17, 2019. This is the first International Field Trip request since travel abroad was reinstated.

Superintendent Battista, Assistant Superintendent Zmary, and Principal Kobza attended a CABE workshop to learn how to minimize liability on field trips. *Ms. Strong* said that the trip was well researched, and Iceland has no travel advisories. Trip insurance "cancel for any reason" is mandatory and if an individual opts not to attend, they will get 75% of their money returned. *Ms. Strong*, representing the Music Department, gave the Board

an overview of the trip's itinerary and noted they planned it with WorldStrides International Concert Tours. She stated that international travel is an opportunity to extend student learning and the trip to Iceland will be during an international music festival. The students will perform with vocalists and instrumentalists from around the world. *Ms. Strong* continued that sheet music will be shipped to students in advance for preparation and all the students will have the opportunity to learn and perform the music whether they go on the trip or not. In Iceland, students will perform in a large multinational ensemble at Eldborg Home, home of the National Symphony Orchestra of Iceland. She continued that *Masuk's* ensembles will also be paired with a local high school in Reykjavik for a shared performance at the Cathedral.

The cost of the trip is approximately \$3,598 including the tour fee, the mandatory "cancel for any reason" travel insurance, and transfers and group meals. *Ms. Strong* said that the travel company has a scholarship program, and a family making less than \$85,000 can apply for financial aid. She added that to offer affordable travel opportunities for all students, this type of trip will be offered once every three years with more local trips being offered in the off years. *Superintendent Battista* thanked *Ms. Strong* for the presentation and noted that it was well planned out by the department.

Board Member Reinoso noted it has been a pleasure to be a member of the Board and stated that they all worked well together to accomplish a great deal.

Adjournment

Motion to Adjourn at 8:55 p.m.

Motion: (S. Monaco)

Second: (C. Reinoso)

Discussion: None

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

17-078

Respectfully submitted,

Shannon Reilly Monaco

A ~~Shannon Monaco~~ *Shannon Reilly Monaco*
Board of Education Secretary