

**MONROE BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**Monroe, Connecticut**

**Meeting Minutes**  
**February 20, 2018**

**Present:** Chairman Donna Lane  
Secretary Shannon Reilly-Monaco  
Board Member Christine Cascella  
Board Member David Ferris  
Board Member Jeff Fulchino  
Board Member Jessica Katuska  
Board Member Jerry Stevens  
Board Member Alan Vaglivello

**Absent:** Vice-Chairman George King III  
Masuk Student Board Representative William Santee  
Masuk Student Board Representative Ryan Winkler

**Also present:** Superintendent John Battista  
Assistant Superintendent Jack Zamarly  
Finance Director Gabriella DiBlasi  
Masuk Student Board Representative Kevin Brown

**Call to Order**

*Chairman Lane* called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. and led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance. She asked for a moment of silence in remembrance of the 17 victims of the Parkland, Florida school shooting.

**Exemplary People**

The Board recognized *Al Cascella* and *Kevin Reid* for their gift of a handcrafted podium they made for Masuk. *Mr. Reid* said *Marvin Moss*, from the Historical Society, had approached him a few years ago regarding how to use material from the original Town Hall, and they incorporated a lot of that wood into the podium. It is a substantial piece that took over 60 volunteer hours to complete.

*Chairman Lane* noted that today was *Principal Kobza's* birthday.

**Report of the Chairman**

Acknowledgement of Donations

GE United Way Campaign to Masuk High School for \$266.17

*Superintendent Battista* said that GE Employees can earmark a non-profit to receive a percentage of their United Way donation, and three individuals opted to have Masuk receive the funds. There was an anonymous donation as well as donations from *Helen Cavanaugh* and *Robert Primorac*.

Meritage Group LP Technology Items System Wide

*Assistant Superintendent Zamarly* said that in the past, *Scott Pietro* has donated over 100 monitors in the past and his donation this year consists of the following:

1 Dell Precision

12 Dell Precision 790 Desktop CPUs

4 Lenovo Thinkpad T420s Laptops

1 HP 3005 Printer

1 HP 2420DN Printer

8 2007FPb Monitors

## **Consent Agenda**

### **Motion to approve the Consent Agenda**

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

**Second: (J. Stevens)**

Discussion: None

**Motion passed 8 (Lane, Reilly-Monaco, Cascella, Ferris, Fulchino, Katuska, Stevens and Vaglivello)-0**

18-007

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

Masuk Student Representatives

*Student Representative Brown* said *Student Representatives Santee* and *Winkler* are playing in the Boy's Basket game tonight. He added that the Rotary Students of the Month will be announced on Thursday at the Stone Barn. *Student Representative Brown* added that Music and Meatballs will take place on Saturday evening.

Pension Committee

*Superintendent Battista* said the non-certified pension plan is held by the Town and the Committee meets quarterly to review the accounts. He is a full member of the Committee, *Ms. DiBlasi* is a non-voting member and *Board Members Ferris* and *Katuska* are the Board of Education liaisons. *Superintendent Battista* noted this quarter was very positive and the Committee agreed to not to make changes to the account. The Committee also spent a lot of time talking about the QDRO procedures when an individual has a divorce decree. *Superintendent Battista* continued that the Committee got permission to hire an attorney to create a definitive QDRO policy. The work has been completed, and the results will be brought back to the Committee for their review.

Safety Committee

*Board Member Ferris* reported the Safety Committee met on January 18, and they discussed the flu and additional cleaning procedures. Representatives from Cigna as well as Brown & Brown were present and congratulated the District on the participation in the recent walking program. *Board Member Ferris* added there was an informative presentation on Internet and IT safety. *Superintendent Battista* said that more rigorous cleaning procedures have been implemented in the past month to help combat the flu and hand sanitizers has been distributed to every elementary and middle school classroom. In addition, hand sanitizers have been placed at the cafeteria entrance in every school.

## Public Participation

There was none at tonight's meeting.

## Report of the Superintendent

### Review of the Fund Activity Statement

*Ms. DiBlasi* said insurance was better in January due to a delay in billing over the holidays. There are four individuals who have hit stop loss as well as thirty-three claimants who have hit \$25,000. *Ms. DiBlasi* added that they are beginning to close purchase orders in March for the fiscal year, and they are waiting on the budget.

### Update on the 2018-19 Budget

*Superintendent Battista* said that the First Selectman has proposed a 1.37% reduction to the budget. Last year, the Board of Education built their budget around what the Governor told them they would receive though they actually received less, and the Town received more than anticipated. The District had a revenue shortfall and, since the Town received more, the Town gave the Board of Education the funds in the form of the contingency. *Superintendent Battista* continued the First Selectman's Budget shows a 2.75% increase, which includes a 1.15% increase for 2017/18 and a 1.59% increase for 2018/19. It is confusing because of the inability of the State of Connecticut to pass last year's budget in a timely manner. *First Selectman Kellogg* reduced the budget by 135,000. *Superintendent Battista* said that the \$55,000 plow truck and Technology hardware will be purchased using funds from the Capital Reserve.

### CT Next Generation Accountability

*Assistant Superintendent Zmary* said the State has issued the Next Generation Accountability Results. The system measures a lot of different indicators including:

Academic achievement

Academic growth

Assessment participation rate

Chronic absenteeism

Preparation for postsecondary and career readiness coursework

Preparation for postsecondary and career readiness exams

Graduation-on track in ninth grade

Graduation-four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate-all students

Graduation -six-year adjusted cohort graduation rate-all students

Postsecondary entrance rate-all students

Physical fitness

Arts access

*Assistant Superintendent Zmary* continued that the District received four School of Distinction Honors: Monroe Elementary earned Highest Performing and Stepney Elementary earned Highest Performing, Highest Growth for High Needs Students and Highest Growth for all students. Monroe ranked 42<sup>nd</sup> out of 202 districts and 16<sup>th</sup> out of 20 in DRG B.

There are many areas of success; the District achieved 100% of the state issued benchmark for:

- 6 year Graduation-High Needs Students
- 4 year Graduation-All Students
- On-track to High School Graduation
- Preparation for College and Career Readiness
- Chronic Absenteeism
- ELA Performance Index-All Students

In addition, the District achieved 97% in Math Performance Index.

*Assistant Superintendent Zmary* noted the areas of relative weakness are:

- Arts Access
- PE Fitness Rate
- Math Growth-High Needs Students
- ELA Growth-High Needs Students

*Board Member Vaglivo* asked *Assistant Superintendent Zmary* what the District's plans were going forward for Math and ELA. He replied that the Administrative team is creating draft materials on goals and action plans for the Board's review and the areas of needs will be included so it will be embedded in their work. *Superintendent Battista* added that the Reading Support staff in each of the elementary schools will be working with students in math as well. *Ms. Moser* is also looking at standard indicators with the IEPs to ensure the District is measuring against the same criteria.

#### High School Principal Hiring Process

*Superintendent Battista* said the Committee has been selected, and there is a process in place to streamline the hiring process. There is a paper screening for all applicants with the requirements the District is looking for such as administrative experience, secondary school experience, and building level experience in a high performing district. In addition, candidates will be asked to provide a writing sample. The top candidates will have a 45 minute formal interview and will visit Masuk to have the opportunity to interact with staff members; those who are selected to proceed to the next level will go to the schools for visitations, and the Committee will come back with their feedback. *Superintendent Battista* noted it is a lengthy, thoughtful process. To date, there are 38 applicants, and the posting closes on Friday, February 23.

*Superintendent Battista* said that last Friday, due to a leak that was discovered in the pool and due to the possibility of asbestos, the building was closed to all students. It was determined there was no asbestos, though the pipes that were leaking are now on the outside walls as it was the most efficient and cost effective means to resolve the issue.

*Superintendent Battista* continued that NESC (National England Association of Schools and Colleges) said the Masuk accreditation will be coming in 2021. He said there is a visiting committee that looks at every aspect of the high school; it is a huge undertaking that requires a lot of planning and coordination.

*Superintendent Battista* said there are groups looking to walk out in response to the shooting in Florida, and a Masuk student had planned a walk out for tomorrow. However, *Principal Kobza* spoke with the student who was organizing the walk-out, and it was rescheduled to March when there will be a nationwide event. *Superintendent Battista* continued the students want to have a voice and participate in discussions. So they can effectively be heard, *Principal Kobza* said that they will have a program in the auditorium on March 14 with microphones and Town and Board of Education representatives present to address their questions and concerns.

## **Presentations**

### Board of Education Professional Development-Non-Fiction Reading in Social Studies Classes

*Mr. Lowell* said they are emphasizing reading in Social Studies to embed reading across the curriculum. He noted the U.S. Department of Education has stated the single most important thing for a child's success is reading. Though the CT Core Standards suggest that a high school student should be reading 70% Nonfiction and 30% Fiction books, there are other factors, such as television, music and video games, which take significant time away from reading. *Mr. Lowell* continued that as screen time becomes more prevalent, there will be a greater challenge for students to read.

*Mr. Lowell* added that most of the reading in Social Studies comes from textbooks, primary documents and Scholastic Magazine, and there needs to be more engagement with history through Historical Fiction or Nonfiction. The goal is to embed Historical Fiction and Non-Fiction into the formal curriculum as it creates self-motivate readers, increases background knowledge and has a positive impact on the SBAC/SATs. He noted that while students score very well on the tests, the District is below the national average in analysis of words within or across text.

Currently, Sixth Grade students read *A Taste of Salt* and *Mr. Lowell* said he wants to bring in two books for seventh grade and two books for eighth grade. The books he is proposing are:

US History, Grade 8-*Chasing Lincoln's Killer*, by James L. Swanson

Geography, Grade 7-*Refugee*, by Alan Gratz

Geography, Grade 7-*The Unconquerable Soul*, by Nelson Mandela

*Mr. Lowell* has obtained grant funding to cover the cost of *The Unconquerable Soul*. The cost per title is \$1,600 and that would allow for classroom copies for every teacher.

## **Old Business**

There was none at tonight's meeting.

## **New Business**

### Curriculum-Non-Fiction Reading-Texts-First Review

The texts were reviewed during the presentation, and there was no further discussion.

**Adjournment**

**Motion to Adjourn at 8:30 p.m.**

**Motion: (J. Stevens)**

**Second: (C. Cascella)**

Discussion: None

**Motion passed 8 (Lane, Reilly-Monaco, Cascella, Ferris, Fulchino, Katuska, Stevens and Vaglivello)-0**

18-008

Respectfully submitted,



Shannon Reilly-Monaco  
Board of Education Secretary