

MONROE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Monroe, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes
May 21, 2018

Present: Chairman Donna Lane
Vice-Chairman George King III
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 Vaglivelolo

Also present: Superintendent John Battista
Assistant Superintendent Jack Zamarly
Finance Director Gabriella DiBlasi
Masuk Student Board Representative Kevin Brown
Masuk Student Board Representative William Santee
Masuk Student Board Representative Molly Carriero

Call to Order

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

Exemplary People

National Merit Scholarship

The Board recognized the following National Merit Scholarship recipients: *Nisha Honnaya, Katherine Lee* and *Chloe Shawah*. *Principal Kobza* explained that the National Merit Scholarship Corporation recognizes the top 50,000 students who took the PSATs in October as Commended Students and the top 16,000 students as National Merit Scholarship Semi-Finalists. Masuk had 10 Commended Students and 5 Semi-Finalists. Of the 5 Semi-Finalists, 3 continued in the competition to become National Merit Scholarship recipients.

Seal of Biliteracy

The Board recognized the following students for earning the Seal of Biliteracy: *Kevin Brown, Sloane Burling, Katie DeGeorge, Gina Dragonette, Nisha Honnaya, Mitchell Hornak, Kyle Immel, Kathryn Jeliffe, Emily Lane, Katherine Lee, Wen-jay Lim, Kaitlyn Logan, Alex Massaro, Emily McMahan, Brianna Mulloy, Melinda Primorac,*

Caeley Raymond, Grace Richards-Hannigan, Gabriel Rodrigues, Karus Sabio, Mohammed Seif, Chloe Shawah, Jeffrey Stofko, and Anika Verraraghav.

Ms. Peterson said that it is a state recognition of those students who have achieved proficiency in both English and a second language. To qualify, the student must pass 4 exams: listening, writing, reading, and speaking. *Ms. Peterson* noted that as this is a new recognition, this will be the first class to be awarded.

Report of the Chairman

Chairman Lane welcomed *Molly Carriero*, a junior, as the new Student Board Representative.

Recognition of the Student Board Representatives

The Board recognized and thanked *Student Board Representative Kevin Brown* and *Student Board Representative William Santee*, for their service and contribution for the 2017-2018 school year.

Consent Agenda

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda

Motion: (S. Monaco)

Second: (C. Cascella)

Discussion: Superintendent Battista said that Jennifer Silva will join Stepney as the art teacher, Amanda Kirk will be the School Counselor at Jockey Hollow and Joseph Carrino will be Masuk's Technology Education Teacher. He noted that the three teachers have taught in other districts and they went through an extensive interview process that included demonstration lessons. Chairman Lane noted that Board Member Stevens will abstain from the vote as a relative is one of the individuals hired.

Motion passed 8 (Lane, King, Reilly-Monaco, Cascella, Ferris, Fulchino, Katuska, and Vaglivelo)-1 (Board Member Stevens abstained)

18-028

Reports of Committees and Liaisons

Masuk Student Representatives

Student Representative Brown said there will be a Chorus concert tomorrow, A PTC meeting on Wednesday, the senior trip is next Tuesday, Senior Awards will be next Wednesday and the Senior Banquet will be next Friday. *Student Representative Santee* said there will be Advisory on Wednesday and it will also be the make-up date for the AP exams for Language and Composition. Capstone presentations will be on Thursday and next Thursday, the Sports Awards will be presented followed by the High Honors Breakfast on Friday. *Student Board Representative Carriero* said that on Wednesday evening, the annual Walk for Hope will begin at 6:00 p.m. to raise substance abuse awareness. On Friday, the annual Spectagala will be held in the library and the theme is the 1940s. The Underclassman Awards will be next Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. to honor freshman, sophomores, and juniors for academic achievement.

Health, Safety, and School Security-*Board Member Ferris* said the committee met on May 10th and they were given updates on the school drills.

Public Participation

There was none at tonight's meeting.

Report of the Superintendent

Review of Fund Activity Statement

Ms. DiBlasi said April was better than recent months with 4 claims over stop loss and 48 claims over \$25,000 though they are still running behind last year. They have rolled the budget for next year so purchase orders can begin for next year. *Ms. DiBlasi* said that Eversource took care of the power failure that affected the AP Language test at no cost to the District and there haven't been any further emergency repairs since the last meeting.

Armed School Security Officer Update

Superintendent Battista said they hired *Mark Caulfield*, who is retiring from the Monroe Police Department at the end of the year, as the second Armed School Security Officer. He will start on June 4th and will be in the District through the end of this school year and will return full-time for the 2018-2019 school year. *Superintendent Battista* added that the partnership with the Police has been excellent and they have deployed another officer to cover for an officer on medical leave.

Plan for Power Outage

Superintendent Battista said the Administrative team discussed possible options on how to avoid losing more school days. Due to the storm, Stepney was the only school without power and during the meetings with the police, there was no definitive timeframe for restoring power. *Superintendent Battista* and *Assistant Superintendent Zmary* met with St. Jude's about the possibility of having classes there but due to the lack of space and teacher resources, they developed another plan. Stepney Grades K-2 would join their counterparts at Monroe Elementary and Grades 3-5 would attend Fawn Hollow. *Superintendent Battista* praised the staff for embracing the idea and for their commitment to students. The plan was not implemented as power was restored later that night and *Superintendent Battista* thanked *First Selectman Kellogg* for his persistence with Eversource. *Board Member Ferris* asked if using Chalk Hill was an option; it was noted it is totally closed. He also asked about the possibility of entering into an agreement with a generator company; *Superintendent Battista* said that as Stepney seems to be the school that always loses power, it is something to consider for the future. *Secretary Reilly-Monaco* said that she felt it was a creative solution.

Hiring Status

Superintendent Battista said there have been 14 retirements and a few resignations; as of today, they are waiting for the classroom observation/demonstration lessons for the Jockey Hollow math teacher and interviews are being held this week for the Stepney elementary teacher transferring to Fawn Hollow. The Security Guard position at Masuk

is on hold as there is a custodian who is on light duty and can act as a security guard. He added there are positions yet to be filled including a few paraprofessional positions and an Educational Technology Teacher. In addition, there are a few positions that are in the budget but they are waiting for enrollment figures before proceeding.

Presentations

Homework Presentation-Subcommittee members of Curriculum Council will highlight the work done this year, as they took an in-depth study of homework and updated the Board of Education policy on homework.

Assistant Superintendent Zmary said that the group presenting tonight represents the work done with the Curriculum Council this year. He said they took a new approach and wanted to delve into an area and they selected homework as their topic as staff, parents and administration expressed interest in improving the homework policy. *Principal Kobza* gave an outline of the process:

- All stakeholders involved
- Topic identified by staff and parents
- Current Research
- Survey Development
- Best Practices
- Synthesis
- Draft Policy

Ms. Casinelli added that the Curriculum Council has 42 members including parents, staff, a Board of Education representative and administration and noted that having a parent's perspective is an integral part of the process.

The process began in August when teachers had the opportunity to attend ED Camp, a new style of professional development where teachers bring their topics of interest and/or concern and present them to administrators. In September, the topic of homework was selected as the focus topic of the year. The group read and reviewed the article; "Special Topic/The Case For and Against Homework" which took the stance that talking away homework altogether was wasting an opportunity for extended learning. The article also addressed the drawbacks of homework such as the time away from family, sports and other activities, and the anxiety and struggles it can create. In October, the group made a list of both the benefits and challenges of homework and then ranked them as "most important", "somewhat important" and "less important." It was noted that they wanted to include parents, students and staff so they drafted questions for the climate survey. In November, the group examined their research and continued their work to create draft survey questions for the climate survey in December.

In February, the group examined and reviewed the results of the survey and it was determined that among parents and teachers there was agreement on the amount of time spent on homework and that the time reflected the ideal time. The idea of a homework free period was also discussed and there was a consensus within the subcommittees. It was noted that there were several take-aways regarding homework:

- Homework is differentiated by different levels
- Homework must be purposeful
- Reading is essential in our culture of building literacy
- Homework varies based on course selection

There will be homework free times during November, December, February and April breaks when reading will be stressed. The policy will recognize that high school students in AP classes may still have homework during the spring break. In addition, the policy will encourage students to attend homework help if necessary and address the consequences of not doing assigned work.

Ms. Casinelli reviewed the homework time for the Proposed Policy; Elementary Homework Time for Grades K & 1 is a maximum of 20 minutes, Grade 2 has a maximum of 30 minutes, Grade 3 is a maximum of 45 minutes and 60 minutes maximum for Grades 4 & 5. The Proposed Policy for Middle School is a maximum of 90 minutes for Grade 6 and 120 minutes for Grades 7 & 8. The Maximum Homework Time for High School will be course dependent with homework expectations based on course levels. If a child is spending an exorbitant amount of time, there may be an issue with understanding and the child's teacher should be contacted. The proposed policy falls in line with the recommendation.

In March, the Subcommittee met to draft the policy and it was noted that the policy makes a Statement of Belief in the importance of homework and establishes clear objectives. It was noted that the proposed policy recognizes family time, encourages students to explore their own interests and addresses homework free time. In addition, the homework guidelines were streamlined with teacher and student responsibilities clearly stated.

Assistant Superintendent Zmary said that homework can be a challenging topic to gain consensus on but the group was very cohesive and satisfied with the results; he thanked the members for their efforts and participation. *Vice-Chairman King* said that he and *Board Member Stevens* reviewed the proposed policy and they felt the goals are attainable and purposeful but he wanted the Board members to review it, discuss it and revise it if there were any questions or concerns. *Superintendent Battista* noted the efforts of the Committee continue to illustrate the commitment to the District and their work moves the committee forward.

Old Business

There was none at tonight's meeting.

New Business

Policies-First Review

5142-Student Safety

6154-Homework

These policies will be reviewed and voted on at the next meeting.

2017-2018 School Calendar

Superintendent Battista said that the State is not waiving the 180 day requirement. There were 9 school closings for the year and at a previous meeting, the Board voted to go 181 days rather than the scheduled 182 days. The options are now to either go 181 days with the last day of school being June 25 or to go with 180 and have the last day of school be June 22. It was noted the teachers will have 2 make-up days. The state requirement of the hours will be met if the last day is Friday, June 22 and the Graduation date of June 21st does not change as the date was set in April.

Motion to approve the 2017-2018 School Calendars with 180 days

Motion: (S. Reilly-Monaco)

Second: (D. Ferris)

Discussion: None

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

18-029

Chairman Lane said last Monday's Board of Education Goal Workshop was very productive and a wonderful opportunity to work in small groups.

Adjournment

Motion to Adjourn at 8:40 p.m.

Motion: (J. Stevens)

Second: (C. Cascella)

Discussion: None

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

18-030

Respectfully submitted,



Shannon Reilly-Monaco
Board of Education Secretary