

**MONROE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Monroe, Connecticut**

**Meeting Minutes  
July 17, 2017**

**Present:** Chairman Donna Lane  
Board Member Christine Cascella  
Board Member David Ferris  
Board Member Jerry Stevens  
Board Member Alan Vaglivello

**Also present:** Superintendent John Battista  
Assistant Superintendent Jack Zamar  
Finance Director Gabriella DiBlasi

**Absent:** Vice-Chairman George King III  
Secretary Shannon Reilly-Monaco  
Board Member James Martinez  
Board Member Carlos Reinoso, Jr.

**Call to Order**

*Chairman Lane* called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. and led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Report of the Chairman**

*Chairman Lane* acknowledged the personnel changes and introduced *John Battista* as the Interim Superintendent and *Jack Zamar* as Assistant Superintendent.

**Acknowledgement of Donation-Shelton-Monroe Swim Team-Rapids**

*Superintendent Battista* and *Chairman Lane* accepted the Rapids' donation of six new starting platforms for the Masuk Swim Team. *Superintendent Battista* said that they have always had a good relationship with the Rapids and thanked them for their support of the schools.

*Chairman Lane* added that she received three thank-you cards and an email from retired staff members thanking the Board for the recognition ceremony on June 5 and for the opportunity to be a part of our District.

**Consent Agenda**

**Motion to approve the Consent Agenda**

**Motion: (D. Ferris)**

**Second: (C. Cascella)**

Discussion: *Superintendent Battista* noted there were a few late resignations, and the District was very fortunate in finding these new hires.

**Motion passed 5 (Lane, Cascella, Ferris, Stevens and Vaglivello)-0**

17-051

## **Reports of the Committee and Liaisons**

### Finance Committee

*Chairman Lane* said the Committee met this evening, and they discussed insurance. She noted insurance is an area of concern, and the new broker is working with Cigna to resolve some issues.

The Stepney Roof Project is a week ahead of schedule, and the progress is posted on the District website under Town Council Rule 27 Resource-School Project.

*Chairman Lane* added there is no further information on the budget from Hartford, and they are moving along with what was approved by the voters. They have spoken numerous times with the Town's Board of Finance.

*Chairman Lane* continued that the negotiations update will be discussed later in the evening. All the union contracts that were up for negotiations this year were resolved, and three of the four will be voted on tonight.

*Chairman Lane* stated there will be approximately \$200,000 left at the end of the fiscal year due to the spending freeze, and they are working with the Town Board of Finance to put those funds into the Insurance Reserve.

## **Public Participation**

There was none at tonight's meeting.

## **Report of the Superintendent**

### Fund Statement

*Ms. DiBlasi* said there were \$1 million in claims for the month of June. She said that one of the issues with Cigna is they are supposed to advise us about spiked claims, and there is a meeting with Cigna on Wednesday. She added that the District has been with Cigna since March 2010, and they have had a good partnership. *Ms. DiBlasi* said they cut a check from the Operating Budget to frontload the insurance so the District is okay at the moment.

There are 20 purchase orders left to close for the 2016-17 school year, and it appears they will be returning approximately \$200,000 to the Town. *Ms. DiBlasi* noted that most of the savings resulted from not hiring a replacement Intervention Tutor, an office personnel retirement, savings in Extra Work Certified, conference courses, and IT maintenance and repair. *Interim Superintendent Battista* noted that the spending freeze came at a cost though, as the District did very little professional development at the end of the year. *Ms. DiBlasi* also stated that they want to ensure that some funds go to the Capital Reserve Account, as the turf field carpet will need to be replaced in the future. There is also a tractor at Masuk that needs to be replaced and was part of the Capital Plan.

### Staffing

*Assistant Superintendent Zmary* said that seven of the nine vacancies at the end of the year have been filled. The remaining open positions are Special Education, at Masuk, and middle school Chorus.

*Superintendent Battista* added that they examined the stipends. This year they did not run regular education summer school at the high school, and there is no longer a Climate Coordinator. He wants to use the money they saved above and beyond the \$5,000 to give to the K-5 Coordinators, now in the classrooms, so they continue with the State in Math and Science. *Interim Superintendent Battista* said the Coordinators will do professional development and run the weekly curriculum meetings. The Board Members agreed to provide the stipends to the District Coordinators.

*Superintendent Battista* stated that Stepney's Kindergarten numbers are still low, and the District needs to look at the increased need for Special Education services at Monroe Elementary. *Superintendent Battista* said that they want to take the Kindergarten teacher and move the position to Special Education at Monroe Elementary. *Board Member Vaglivello* asked how many Special Education teachers are currently at Monroe Elementary. The response was three.

### **CABE Awards Presented-CABE Awards of Excellence and Honorable Mention for Education Communication**

*Interim Superintendent Battista* said that the District received two CABE Awards:

- Award of Excellence for the Superintendent's newsletter and the 2016 Budget Book
- Honorable Mention for the District's website

He said the newsletter will now be called The Monroe Public Schools Community Newsletter, and it will be published three times a year. *Superintendent Battista* noted there was some discussion on whether to continue the publication, due the budget constraints, but it was determined that it is an important communication tool for the community. *Superintendent Battista* congratulated *Assistant Superintendent Zmary, Ms. DiBlasi*, and their teams for their efforts.

### **Stepney Roof Update**

*Superintendent Battista* said that the project is a week ahead of schedule, and *Steve Botelho* has updated the website on an almost daily basis. He continued that they are confident that the building will be safe and clean after the roof project.

### **Old Business**

Approval of Bus Contract with All-Star Transportation

*Interim Superintendent Battista* said that though the discussion at the last meeting was favorable, a formal vote needed to be taken.

### **Motion to approve the Bus Contract with All-Star Transportation as presented**

**Motion: (D. Ferris)**

**Second: (A. Vaglivello)**

Discussion: Board Member Ferris asked if the budget included the elimination of a bus; the response was that it did.

**Motion passed 5 (Lane, Cascella, Ferris, Stevens and Vaglivello)-0**

17-052

Board of Education 2017-18 Professional Development Calendar  
Assistant Superintendent Zamary provided the Board Members with the Professional Development Calendar - topics to be discussed include Student Data, Budgeting, Communications, Goals and Action Plans, Instructional Models, Next Generation Science Standards, Special Education, and Technology.

#### Fifth Grade Band and Strings

*Chairman Lane* said that at the last meeting, the Board had voted to eliminate the Fifth Grade Band and Strings Program. Since then, they did a survey to assess interest and support. *Assistant Superintendent Zamary* said they put together a survey for incoming fifth grade families, and they received 110 responses in total. Of those respondents, 85% said their child would participate if the program was fully funded, and 71% responded they wanted their child to participate even if there was a surcharge of approximately \$175.

*Superintendent Battista* added that they looked at a way not to have to charge a pay to play fee, and they looked at the savings generated from the negotiations. There is approximately \$45,000-\$48,000 in savings from what they budgeted for the contracts and an additional \$20,000 savings from the retirement of the Monroe Library Media Specialist. With these savings, he said the District can put together a Fifth Grade Strings and Band Program and, though it will be different from what the previous program was, they will be able to offer instruction.

*Superintendent Battista* continued that Both *Assistant Superintendent Zamary* and *Principal Ceccolini* are former band teachers and know music very well. They have met numerous times to work out a plan. *Superintendent Battista* said if the Board approves the District to hire a music instructor to help with Fifth Grade Band and Strings, there will be a K-12 program for the students. He continued that they will schedule the elementary music teachers with staggered hours, so they can do the before school strings program which would eliminate stipends. *Chairman Lane* said that as they said at the last meeting, the music program was important, and this is a good way to show their support

#### **Motion to proceed with a plan for Fifth Grade Band and Strings Program**

**Motion: (A. Vaglivo)**

**Second: (J. Stevens)**

Discussion: *Board Member Ferris* asked if the District could charge a “pay to play” fee similar to athletic programs. *Superintendent Battista* said that the District wants to do this without a surcharge. The consensus was that the music program was a priority.

**Motion passed 5 (Lane, Casella, Ferris, Stevens and Vaglivo)-0**

17-053

#### **New Business**

CABE/CAPSS Conference, November 17-18, 2017

*Chairman Lane* said this is a two day conference and the pre-registration deadline is August 28, 2017. *Interim Superintendent Battista* asked them to let Ms. Balas know if they will be attending. In the past, they have attended the Friday session.

**Discussion of documents pertaining to negotiation strategies for the Secretaries, Administrators, and Custodians Contracts**

**Motion to enter into Executive Session to discuss the Secretaries, Administrators and Custodians Contracts inviting Interim Superintendent Battista, Assistant Superintendent Zamar and Ms. DiBlasi**

**Motion: (J. Stevens)**

**Second: (C. Cascella)**

Discussion: None

**Motion passed 5 (Lane, Cascella, Ferris, Stevens and Vaglivo)-0**

17-054

**Ratification of Secretaries, Administrators, and Custodians Contracts**

**Motion to ratify the Secretaries, Administrators, and Custodians Contracts as presented**

**Motion: (D. Ferris)**

**Second: (J. Stevens)**

Discussion: *Superintendent Battista* noted that all the unions gave concessions including increased medical insurance co-shares, and some of the post retirement benefits have been sunsetted.

He added that the Administrators contract, which starts next year, includes a Memorandum of Understanding that they will take a 0% increase and move the contract out a year if the State makes drastic cuts to the Town budget.

*Chairman Lane* added that all parties were very reasonable during the negotiations, and Interim Superintendent Battista noted there is a "good partnership. He added that the Paraeducator Contract will be voted on at the next meeting.

**Motion passed 5 (Lane, Cascella, Ferris, Stevens and Vaglivo)-0**

17-055

**Adjournment**

**Motion to Adjourn at 8:45 p.m.**

**Motion: (J. Stevens)**

**Second: (C. Cascella)**

Discussion: None

**Motion passed 5 (Lane, Cascella, Ferris, Stevens and Vaglivo)-0**

17-056

Respectfully submitted,

*Shannon Reilly Monaco*

~~Diane Behringer~~  
Board of Education Clerk

*Shannon Reilly Monaco*  
*Board of Education Secretary*