

Manchester Essex Regional School District

School Committee Meeting Minutes December 7, 2021

Virtual Meeting via WebEx

Members Present: Sarah Wolf, Chair, Theresa Whitman, Matt Harrington, Kate Koch-Sundquist, Chris Reed, and Ken Warnock.

Members Not Present: Eric Bourke

Staff Present: Pam Beaudoin, Superintendent, Avi Urbas, Director of Finance & Operations, and Gail Hunter, Secretary

A. Call to Order: Ms. Wolf called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.

B. Business Meeting Open Session

1) Public Comment

There was no public comment this evening.

2) Student Report

There was no student report this evening.

3) Chair's Report

Ms. Wolf stated a few weeks ago, some concerning Instagram accounts were brought to the attention of the school district. Incidents such as this are handled by the school administration and public safety agencies and are outside of the scope of the School Committee. However, I do want to take a minute to address this issue, because these posts negatively targeted both students and faculty members, and therefore have had an impact on our entire community.

Posting negative or threatening comments about people on social media is never OK. Incidents like this undermine the comfort and safety of our community. We all make mistakes, and it is important that when we hurt someone, intentionally or unintentionally, we take ownership of our actions and face the consequences. Our community is small, and we need to support each other during difficult times. I know that we will work together to move past this, and I am glad that **social emotional learning** and **the celebration of an inclusive and diverse school culture** are two of the priorities in our strategic plan.

The days are short, the nights are long. Many people are finding ways to share light in the world during these dark days. There are opportunities to collect food, toys, and clothing for others, to care for elderly neighbors, to bring a smile to someone's face by sharing an act of kindness. These are the times when we reach out to build community.

As the Dalai Lama said: “If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.”

Thanks for joining us tonight, and for continuing to participate in the conversations with your school committee in a kind a respectful manner.

4) Consent Agenda

- Acceptance of Warrants – 1019
- Minutes – November 2, 2021
- Establishment of ACAR Student Activity Account

Superintendent Beaudoin clarified Student Activity Accounts are for non-curricular activities and are approved by the School Committee.

Ms. Koch-Sundquist moved to approve the consent agenda; Ms. Whitman seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

5) Sub-Committee Reports

- Elementary Facilities/MSBC (Theresa Whitman/Chris Reed)

The Facilities Committee will help work with the design and contracting for the new Hyland Field. The goal is to get the replacement RFP out by mid-March. Additionally, the sub-committee will also work with the Town of Manchester around the replacement of the Brook Street field.

- Finance Committee (Matt Harrington/Theresa Whitman)

Superintendent Beaudoin and Mr. Urbas will cover discussions related to the Finance Committee in the Budget Presentation.

- Policy Committee (Eric Bourke/ Kare Koch-Sundquist)

The Policy Committee is requesting public input around Food Service with a survey. The Food Service contract is scheduled for renewal in early January 2022 and feedback from the survey will be utilized in discussions with the vendor.

- Negotiation Team (Sarah Wolf/Ken Warnock)

Ms. Wolf stated the Negotiation Team will be meeting with META on Thursday.

6) Superintendent’s Report

Memorial School ribbon cutting with student speakers took place this morning. The new Memorial School was accomplished through a community effort of both Towns.

Winter Concert will take place with social distancing by household tomorrow evening.

Superintendent Beaudoin indicated Covid is emerging on Cape Ann. There is a Clinic schedule at Sacred Heart Church with Conley’s on Monday from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. and the State mobile van will be on site at the MHS next week. She noted 50% of students ages 5-12 are vaccinated. The mask mandate remains

in place through January 15, 2022. Superintendent Beaudoin encouraged the communities to stay strong to keep kids in school.

COVID Management

- Numbers remain appear to be going up
- Reporting – Post Weekly Report, updated on Wednesday afternoon, Email communication in cases of outbreaks 9ex. Class/Team)
- Testing Program available if needed
- DESE Masking Mandate Extended to 1/15/22 – Expected to be Extended
- Close Contact Quarantine

7) Continued Business

- SEPAC Update – No report
- Safe Route to School Presentation



SRTS PPT for
MERSD School Comi

Ms. Crocker’s presentation provided an historical context of the program with Memorial School and Middle School. The Safe Routes to School program is a State program and was developed in Manchester with participation of the Manchester Bike and Ped Committee and in conjunction of the Town’s engagement in the State Complete Streets efforts.

The program encourages participation and provides education for students and parents around safe walking and bicycling to school. The program is supported by DESE and gym teachers are certified through the program.

Ms. Wolf stated she loved everything about the program and Mr. Warnock indicated Ms. Crocker’s availability to assist is a big thing in a small community. Ms. Whitman thanked Ms. Crocker for her great work and indicated the District has two elementary schools and asked how Essex could get the ball rolling.

Superintendent Beaudoin stated much of the work in Manchester was accomplished through the partnership with the Bike and Ped Committee but believes the program can easily be extended to Essex with the addition of a Town Task force and the program will be discussed with the Collaboration Group.

FY23 Tentative Budget

- **Timeline**

December 15, 2021 Public Hearing on Tentative Budget

January 11, 2022 – School Committee Budget Discussion

January 25, 2022 – 2nd Public Hearing

February 1, 2022 – Adoption of FY23 Budget

- **Budget Process Overview/History**

MERSD Budget

- Operational budget is managed to deliver a stable and predictable spending and assessment growth rate from which apportionment is factored.
- MERSD managed key drivers and wild cards to maintain the agree upon target of 3.5% spending/assessment growth.
- The mechanics of apportionment can inflate or deflate the apportionment growth rate as Town enrollments fluctuate.
- The operational budget has been historically developed to provide level services.

Key Terms

- Spending Growth: percentage/\$ increase in spending approved by School Committee from one year to the next
- Assessment: percentage/\$ increase in annual; charge to Essex & Manchester based on formula defined in the Regional Agreement.

Spending

- MERSD operational budget is managed to deliver a stable and predictable spending and assessment growth rate from which apportionment is factored.
- Revenue Sources 86% Town Assessment and 14% State Funding
- Two types of Budgets – Operational and Capital
- MERSD maintains a stable and predictable spending and assessment growth. Reserve funds provide temporary bridge prior to eventual correction.
- Key Drivers – Personnel is 65% of spending
- Insurance and OPEB is 20% of spending
- Out of District Tuition and Transportation – 5.2% of Budget

Assessment – MERSD managed key drivers and wild card to maintain the agreed upon target of 3.5% spending/assessment growth.

Apportionment – The mechanics of apportionment can inflate or deflate the apportionment rate as Town enrollments fluctuate.

The Committee also reviewed the use of reserves on the budget. Mr. Urbas stated reserves are not recurring revenue and when used to support the operation budget there needs to be an exit strategy.

- **FY23 Outlook**



FY-23 Tentative
Budget Discussion 1



FY23 Tentative
Budget.pdf

Superintendent Beaudoin and Mr. Urbas presented the FY23 Budget. The comprehensive presentation focuses on a Budget the District has worked to keep at a 3.5% growth and currently includes a \$640K deficit. The District will need to develop a strategy to manage the deficit. Superintendent Beaudoin

indicated the 3.5% increase is slightly below the FY22 budget. She also mentioned the apportionment formula has Essex experiencing a higher portion of the increase.

The District is carrying forward \$335K from FY21 and FY22 in the Budget. Main drivers in FY23 are OOD tuition and transportation and Health Insurance. The full presentation is above in the PDF's.

8) School Committee Comment

Ms. Wolf stated the School Committee will be conducting a walk-through at Essex Elementary School and would like to schedule at the Committee's convenience. She will follow up to define a good date for all members.

9) Adjourn

Ms. Whitman moved to adjourn the meeting; Mr. Warnock seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

WebEx call-In information available at <http://www/mersd.org/domain/818>

MERSD Mission Statement

Education all students, instilling a passion for life-long learning and encouraging local and global citizenship.