

Manchester Essex Regional School District

School Committee Meeting Minutes January 11, 2022

Virtual Meeting via WebEx

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

Members Not Present: Matt Harrington

Staff Present: Pam Beaudoin, Superintendent, Avi Urbas, Director of Finance & Operations, and Gail Hunter, Secretary, Patricia Puglisi, High School Principal, Allison Collins, Director of Student Services

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

4) Consent Agenda

- Acceptance of Warrants – 1023. 1024. 1025 and 1026
- Minutes – October 19, 2021 and November 2, 2021

Ms. Wolf noted the warrants included salvaging the boiler from the Memorial School for Essex Elementary, significant amount of funding for technology and the new writing curriculum.

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

Mr. Bourke moved to approve the minutes; Ms. Koch-Sundquist seconded the motion. The motion passed by roll call vote with Mr. Warnock abstaining.

5) Sub-Committee Reports

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

Mr. Reed reported the Hyland Field replacement process is moving forward after having been delayed for two weeks. Bids are coming in and the expectation is that the committee will hear from the architect and start moving forward with the process.

- Finance Committee (Matt Harrington/Theresa Whitman)

Budget workshop with Essex to gather feedback has been held with the BOS and will be held with the Finance Committee next week. The BOS requested the District keep the spending low.

- Policy Committee (Eric Bourke/ Kare Koch-Sundquist) – No Report
- Negotiation Team (Sarah Wolf/Ken Warnock)

Mr. Warnock indicated the meetings with META have progressed into the Budget season and the District has a 2.5% COLA in the proposed budget. Conversations around the COLA will start soon. Mr. Warnock noted he appreciated everyone's work around the new surge in COVID and the work being done by the staff on behalf of the students.

6) Superintendent's Report

COVID Update

- Surge is impacting attendance but has been manageable to date
- Priority goal for the year remains maintaining in-person learning and minimizing risk to health and safety of all in attendance.
- Continue with Med/Bot as a first line of defense – works to keep symptomatic people at home.
Revision questions to reduce number of false flags
Reevaluate continues use end of January
Set calling hours for nurses
- Continued layered mitigation – masks, distancing, cleaning, ventilation
- Reorganization of large group events as needed

Questions

- Testing Pool, At-Home PCR, Rapid Test for Students – Test when sick/symptomatic remains the guiding principle
- Mandating KN95 Masks
- Received and distribute State provided masks/test kits

Covid Number Year to Date Absences – Students 94, Staff 22

Covid Positives – Students 45, Staff 16

The Committee discussed testing and the possibility of the District helping families by providing at home tests for families. Superintendent Beaudoin stated the District's tests are for in school and the District does not have the resources to provide testing for families at home. The Committee also discussed masking and the type of masks provided. At this time the District cannot move to providing KN95 masks for students.

Ms. Whitman asked about what the elementary school day looks like now that the students are indoors all day. Ms. Wolf thought it would be a good idea for the Principals to communicate with families about the students days inside to discuss mask breaks, lunch, and recess.

Ms. Whitman pointed out the contradiction of allowing spectators at sports events while cancelling in person professional development days. The Committee discussed with Principal Puglisi and reached no recommendations.

7) Continued Business

- SEPAC Update – No report
- High School Program of Studies – Principal Puglisi

Principal requested the School Committee's approval for the 2022-2023 Program of Studies and provided a summary of changes and updates to Programs:

Update: School Committee Member Names

Added: MERSD Mission, Vision and Core Values

Change: Due to AP change in registration process for testing, testing fees are now due on October 1

Visual Arts

- Moved Video and Graphic Design content into Digital Photo curriculum, Multiple sections of Digital Photo allows for better scheduling, Er will not run Video and Graphis Design during the 2022-2023 school year.

English

- Updated the description for the senior elective, British Literature

Languages

- Changed the title Foreign Language to World Language to align with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts description

Mathematics

- Updated calculator requirement to a graphing calculator for all students. Beverly Bootstraps has donated calculators for students with a need.
- Not running Quantitative Reasoning H. There have not been enough students to run the course over the past several years.
- Added Honors Statistics as an alternative to Quantitative Reasoning H. The course can be taken as a senior requires math class or an elective for grades 10-12.

Computer Science and Technology

- Updated STEM pathways
- Not running Interactive Device Design. There have not been enough students to run the course over the past several years.
- Added Python as an advances technology elective.
- Changed name of Introduction to Computer Science to Physical Computing.
- Updated course description.

Social Studies

- Updated World History I and American History I descriptions to align to new Social Studies framework and to provide an expanded global lens to history.

- Offering 9/11 and war on Terror during 2022-2023 school year. This course rotates yearly with Facing History and Ourselves.
- Added Diverse American Stories as an elective. This course was added at the start of the 2021-2022 school year. The description has been added to the Program of Studies.

Ms. Koch-Sundquist asked Ms. Puglisi to explain the shift in the framework of Social Studies. Ms. Puglisi stated the Commonwealth of Massachusetts changed the grades 7-9 to include World I and II and added Civics in grade 8. Additionally, the Commonwealth requires a Civics project to be completed in grade 11.

Ms. Whitman moved to approve the High School Program of Studies; Ms. Koch-Sundquist seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

FY23 Budget Workshop



MERSD FY23 Budget 1.11.22.pdf

- **Special Education Review**

Dr. Collins' slides are included in the PDF. Her slides outline the Continuum of Special Education Programs and Services: Inclusion and/or Tutorials services provided for 147 students, Special In-District Programs services provided for 61 Students and Out-of-District Programs are provided for 22 Students. The slides outline savings by program in FY22 develop according to the formula OOD Net Cost less In-District Net Cost = Savings from In-District Programs. The In-District programs are SWING, SAIL/Transitions, IRWL, and Ace. The savings total \$1,757,426.

Mr. Warnock thank Dr. Collins and stated her efforts on behalf of the District are sincerely appreciated. He acknowledged her work is challenging and that she does an excellent job for students with special need in the District. Mr. Warnock asked about the expansion of Pre-K services. Dr. Collins reported the program is full and the District is no longer struggling with peer pals as they were prior to expansion.

Ms. Wolf noted Special needs teachers were the first teachers to return to in-school last September and asked Dr. Collins if they were feeling stressed. Dr. Collins replied everyone is feeling stressed but special needs teachers adapted to the challenge.

- **Public Hearing Feedback**

Public Hearing feedback strongly supported the District budget does not exceed an increase of 3.5%.

- **FY23 Planning Update**

Mr. Urbas summarized the FY23 Operating Budget Overview and FY23 Operating Budget Drivers pages 2 and 3 in the PDF. Noting the primary increase fall in three areas Compensation +4.08%, Insurance and Pensions +6.36% and OOD +28%.

Superintendent Beaudoin spoke to the Financial Reserves slide and Capital needs projected over the next 1-5 years noting reserves are for one time use and there is a comprehensive list of Capital needs for the District.

Mr. Urbas spoke to the slide Addressing the Gap:

- Retiree Health Care Increase (\$150K) suggesting the Committee vote to utilize OPEB to offset the disproportionate cost of the group
- PG OOD tuition (\$150K tuition and transportation commit reserves at time graduated (4 Years)
- Revise budget to actual OOD (\$344K)
- Considerations: Why using reserves is of concern?
 - Continued dependence until correction
 - Critical capital projects (boiler/fields) for Essex and Middle High School cannot be deferred planned funding source is reserves
 - Depletion of reserve over time weakens our borrowing position for EES and increases project costs

Ms. Whitman asked how many years until the District would need to ask for a correction. Superintendent Beaudoin stated the correction may need to happen next year.

Superintendent Beaudoin indicated she could put together a scenario where the District cut 12 FTE and saves \$900K. That will impact core programs and delete some of the Districts discretionary programming.

This year the District has managed to find savings, but it is important to indicate that next year is and override year to refund and stabilize the District budget. Superintendent Beaudoin noted that even at a 3.5% annual increase the District is suppressing the natural growth. The needs grow faster then 3.5%. Mr. Federspiel suggested a balloon override planned for every few years.

8) School Committee Comment

There was no School Committee comment this evening.

9) Adjourn

Mr. Warnock moved to adjourn the meeting; Mr. Reed 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.