

**MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
REGULAR MEETING
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2008**

MINUTES

Lincoln Center
7:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Crockett, Edwards, Hackett, Moran, Pohl, Rizzo, Small-Miller, Stafford

ALSO PRESENT: Assistant to the Superintendent for Finance & Management Brooks,
Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction Richardson

ABSENT: Board Member Marcano, Superintendent of Schools Ouellette

A. OPENING

A.1. Call to Order

Ms. Hackett called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m.

A.2. Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. Hackett led the Pledge of Allegiance.

A.3. Minutes of February 6, 2008 (Budget Workshop), February 6, 2008 (Special Meeting), February 11, 2008 (Regular Meeting)

MOTION: Pohl/Rizzo s.v. The Manchester Board of Education approved the minutes of the February 6, 2008 Budget Workshop with one abstention from Mr. Moran. 7/0/1.

MOTION: Pohl/Rizzo s.v. The Manchester Board of Education approved the minutes of the February 6, 2008 Special Meeting. Mr. Moran and Mr. Edwards abstained. 6/0/2.

MOTION: Pohl/Rizzo s.v. The Manchester Board of Education unanimously approved the minutes of the February 11, 2008 Regular Meeting. 8/0/0.

B. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – Part 1

B.1. Student Recognition Award

Ms. Hackett recognized April Saynganthone, a third grade student at Martin Elementary School, whose artwork was chosen for the cover of the Board of Education's Budget Book. Mrs. Brooks

presented April with a plaque containing the artwork that appeared on the 2008-2009 Budget Book. Ms. Hackett congratulated April and her family.

B.2. Verplanck Elementary School Highlight Presentation

Mrs. Mary Luce, Principal of Verplanck Elementary School, along with staff members, Mrs. Ann Johnston and Mrs. Jennifer Ojala, and many of her students, highlighted the book they wrote, Chuckles Goes to School.

Staff members and students presented a simulated classroom environment and took turns describing the many aspects involved in reading. The group covered areas such as objectives, predicting, the picture walk-through technique, vocabulary, the guided reading technique, and comprehension. Students quizzed Board members on their understanding of each area presented.

The Board of Education took a brief recess at 8:03 p.m. and returned at 8:09 p.m.

MOTION: Stafford/Edwards s.v. The Manchester Board of Education unanimously approved a motion to recess. 8/0/0.

C. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Stephanie Knybel, 138 Bobby Lane, announced that the correct date for the rescheduled “Mr. Monroe, Are You Listening?” at Illing Middle School is March 4, 2008.

Lee McKay, 70 Highland Street, requested support from the Board of Education for a spring referendum for like new construction at Highland Park School. She related that scheduling PTA and school events is difficult because of leaks in the roof of the gymnasium. There were days last year she was unable to send her child to school because of ventilation problems. The school can be fixed with band aids for only so long. Bringing the school to like new condition is the financially smart thing to do.

Theresa Hill, 99 Ashworth Street, asked the Board of Education to consider a spring referendum for this school. She has witnessed five buckets in the hallway catching drips from a leaky roof. These kinds of things are distracting and disruptive to the students.

Marnie Meek, 148-E Eldridge Street, stated that it is important that the school provide a safe environment and is up to date. This is not just a Highland Park issue; it is bigger than this one school. In the fall of 2006, her daughter began having coughing issues after being healthy up to that point. Over time, it was discovered that something in her daughter’s classroom was inducing asthma. Ms. Meek has had neighbors move away due to health issues; the school made their children sick.

Tara Arner, 22 Bolton Center Road, spoke in favor of renovations at Highland Park School. The school is aging, it is not accessible for handicap students, and the support staff is working in closet-sized rooms.

Paul Bolduc, 147 Ferguson Road, has noticed peeling paint, water leaks, and rust stains at Highland Park School. He noted two buckets in his son's classroom catching water and stated that if water is leaking, there has to be mold forming. There are problems with the heating and ventilation systems and he doesn't know how we can expect kids to learn in temperatures of 100 degrees in the spring and summer. Highland Park School has parking issues and heavy traffic. Mr. Bolduc is surprised nobody has been injured yet.

Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, mentioned a brochure available at Manchester Community College regarding gambling. February is Black History Month. Mr. Stringfellow recommended two books, Middle Passage by Charles Johnson and Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, by Harriet Jacobs and as well as an article in Time Magazine, February 25, 2008 edition, entitled "How to Make Better Teachers."

Marlene Walsh, 112 Pitkin Street, recently moved to Manchester and was attracted by the quality education offered. Now she is learning about the capital needs here. Her children have a quality principal, quality teachers and great support staff. They do not have the basic structure in which to be educated. She supports a spring referendum.

Liliana Polley, 100 Steephollow Lane, has no complaints about the teachers, they have been great. The building is awful and has a leaky roof, no music room, no handicap access. It needs a new library and a new gym. If she is paying taxes, she wants the money to go to the school system. Ms. Polley doesn't want to move out of town, she wants action.

Erik Fisher, 54 Case Mountain, has been extremely happy with the staff at Highland Park School. He is in full support of a referendum for total renovation. The school needs a new media center; the library does not support active internet research.

D. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT

Student Representative, Melissa Proano, was unable to attend due to illness.

E. CONSENT CALENDAR

E.1. Personnel Action

Details and supplemental information had been provided in the agenda packets.

E.2 Appropriation of Education Special Projects - \$78,043

School Security Grant Program, funded by the Connecticut State

Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security

Mr. Stafford asked what a portable security device is and also why Bowers is receiving more funding than other schools.

Mr. John Bishop, School Safety Officer, explained that a portable device refers to a wandering system. None have been purchased at this point and if one were to be purchased, he would need to come to the Board of Education before making that type of purchase.

Ms. Lisa Conde, Grants Writer, explained that the funding for Bowers includes the purchase of a camera based video surveillance system, entry buzzer, and intrusion alarm.

Mr. Bishop added that the camera system is needed because of activities in the neighborhood and damage to the portable buildings. Cameras have proven useful in prevention, referrals, and arrests.

Mr. Rizzo asked if all schools are being equally serviced. He assumes that some schools may already have security in place, which would account for the varying dollar amounts listed.

Mr. Bishop stated that some schools already have necessary equipment. This grant will bring all schools up to the desired level of security.

Mr. Edwards noted that Bennet is not included in the list. Ms. Conde explained that only existing facilities could be included.

MOTION: Marcano /Rizzo s.v. The Manchester Board of Education unanimously approved the Consent Calendar, as presented by Dr. Ouellette. 9/0/0.

F. SUPERINTDENT'S REPORT – PART II

F.1. Transition to Kindergarten Proposal

Ms. Kate England, Chair of the Manchester School Readiness Council, stated that the primary goal of the School Readiness Council is to ease the transition process to kindergarten. The Head Start data received by Dr. Reisman helps with placing the children. Unfortunately, data is not always available from private preschools. Currently, kindergarten registration takes place at Central Office only. Many families are unaware of the location or unable to obtain transportation. The School Readiness Council is proposing to hold registration at each school during the regular school day for a week in April. It would also like to increase communication with the private preschools and proposed a mobile registration. Registration would also take place at Central Office two weeknights at minimal cost.

Ms. Sharon Kozey envisions outreach and building school/community partnerships. The mobile registration would be a great tool. She would like to provide parents with packets containing parenting tips, information on the Husky program, and other resources. Snacks and books would

be provided as well. Ms. Kozey has compiled a Kindergarten Transition Card to distribute to all preschools which will provide information that will be helpful in developing heterogeneous classrooms.

Ms. England explained that the School Readiness Council is looking for the donation of a recreational vehicle for one week. She emphasized that the group is not looking to buy a recreational vehicle, simply borrow one.

The consensus among Board members was very positive.

F.2. Recreation Use of Bennet Academy

Mr. Scott Sprague, Director of Parks and Recreation, reviewed a proposal to reopen East Side Rec as the Bennet Leisure Center. He reviewed the layout of the renovated facility and the proposed expanded hours. The proposal expands opportunities for people ages 11-16 years as well as adults.

Mr. Chris Silver, Assistant Recreation Director, reviewed the proposed Sixth Grade Rocks program, which would harness the connection between education and recreation. It would include intramural sports, a living well program, and a creative lab series.

Board members were in agreement that this is a great proposal. They inquired about late buses, budgeting for utilities, funding for school vacation and leadership programs, computer installation, and areas for collaboration.

MOTION: Pohl/Edwards s.v. The Manchester Board of Education unanimously approved the motion to send this item to the Building and Sites Committee for further exploration. 8/0/0.

F.3. Bennet Academy Update

Mr. Keith Epstein, Facilities Project Manager, stated that Bennet will be opening this fall, with construction finished in early summer.

John Abbott, Project Manager, updated the Board on the construction project at Bennet. The bridge will be completed within a couple weeks, the final touches are being completed on the brickwork and new stonework is being installed. Along Main Street, quite a bit of construction materials have been cleaned up in front of the Franklin Building and site work will begin shortly. Internally, 95-110 people per day are working on the finishing stages, which includes painting, putting in ceilings, and installation of case work. Construction is on track for completion in July.

Mr. Epstein stated that he is meeting with staff, defining furniture and equipment needs. That should be complete within the next three weeks. Furniture should be arriving in May and June.

Dr. Ann Richardson, Assistant to the Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, reviewed programming highlights at Bennet. There will be small teaching clusters, with three classes per team. Classes will be in session from 8:20 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. Programming includes art, music, and physical education, with band and chorus after school. Dr. Richardson reviewed the proposed schedule of classes, enrichment programs, bus schedules, and dress code. Board members asked questions about the dress code, transition time, alignment of curriculum, and retention of students in the public school system.

G. OLD BUSINESS

G.1. School Calendars – 2008-2009 and 2009-2010

MOTION: Pohl/Moran s.v. The Manchester Board of Education unanimously adopted school calendars for 2008-2009 and 2009-2010. 8/0/0.

H. NEW BUSINESS

H.1. Highland Park Elementary School Renovations

Mr. Anwar Hossain presented a report on Highland Park School renovations which includes financial information on code work, code work plus extras, and full scope work. Included in his report is the bottom line, reimbursement rates, and costs to the Town for all three situations. He also included a comparison with a brand new school building, which will be needed when submitting a reimbursement request to the State.

After some discussion among Board members regarding the fine points of the presentation, Mrs. Brooks announced that Mr. Epstein will be leaving the Town of Manchester and wished him good luck in his future endeavors.

This item will appear on the March 10, 2008 agenda as an item under Old Business.

I. COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Pohl received one communication from a citizen who is concerned with Deputy Mayor Matt Peak conducting a poll regarding Manchester's Racial Balance Plan. The citizen is specifically concerned that the public may be getting mis-information and asked the administration to address this issue at the next meeting.

J. COMMITTEE REPORTS

There were no committee reports.

K. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Stephanie Knybel, 138 Bobby Lane, supports the Recreation Department's Leisure Center. She asked where the traffic light will be going at Illing Middle School and stated that it will be interesting to see what the results of the CMT and CAPT testing will be.

L. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

There were no items discussed for future agendas.

M. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Pohl/Moran s.v. The Manchester Board of Education approved the motion to adjourn at 11:31 p.m. Ms. Small-Miller was no longer present. 7/0/0.

Respectfully submitted,

Enrique Marcano, Sr., Secretary
Manchester Board of Education