

REGIONAL SCHOOL UNIT NO. 38
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Maranacook Community High School
March 25, 2015
Minutes of Meeting

Members present: Chair David Greenham, Vice Chair Melissa O’Neal, John Blouin (arrived 6:54), Gary Carr, Steve Hayes (arrived 6:54), Pia Holmes, Trish Jackson, Shawn Roderick (arrived 6:36), Bonnie Simcock, Terri Watson

Members absent: Michael Apolito, Russ Evans, one vacant position (Wayne)

Administrators: Superintendent Donna Wolfrom, Principals Jeff Boston, Dwayne Conway, Janet Delmar and Cathy Jacobs, Technology Director Diane MacGregor, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Nancy Harriman, Adult and Community Education Director Steve Vose, Special Education Director Ryan Meserve, Finance Manager Brigette Williams

1. Call to order: Chair Greenham called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.
2. Consent Agenda:
 - a. Approval of Minutes of March 18, 2015
MOTION by Carr, second by Jackson to approve the minutes of March 18, 2015 as presented. **Motion Carried:** 7 in favor, 0 opposed
3. Citizens’ Comments: none
4. Additions/Adjustments to the Agenda by Board and/or Superintendent: none
5. Action/Discussion/Informational Items
 - a. Appointment of High School Dean of Students (.5 FTE) – Kristen Levesque
MOTION by Carr, second by Simcock to accept the appointment of Kristen Levesque as Dean of Students for the 2015-2016 school year.
Superintendent Wolfrom provided an overview of the interview process, noting her memorandum of recommendation (5a). Ms. Levesque is currently one of the guidance counselors at the High School. She is the top candidate of the interview committee and is unanimously recommended for the position. She will also teach social studies.
Motion Carried: 8 in favor, 0 opposed.
 - b. Consideration of 2015-2016 School Calendar
Superintendent Wolfrom reported that this calendar was developed with the other superintendents whose students attend the Capital Area Technical Center (CATC). By law school districts can only have 5 dissimilar days in the calendar. Superintendent Wolfrom recommends adoption of the calendar as presented.
MOTION by Watson, second by Carr to adopt the 2015-2016 school calendar as presented. Discussion followed. **Motion Carried:** 8 in favor, 0 opposed.
6. Budget Workshop:
 - a. Updates:
Superintendent Wolfrom provided an overview of the following updates:
 - The Fifth Draft the General Fund Summary budget reflects a 4% budget to budget increase. Changes made to reflect this decrease includes reducing the health insurance rate down to 4% based on hearing from MEA that the rate would not be higher than 5% and also the District has

had a good experience rating for last year. Also studied the teacher retirements and thought the salary line could be reduced by \$25,000. As a result the expenditure budget is reduced to \$16,248,717, or a 4% budget to budget increase. This reduction influences the revenue sheet additional local dollars down to \$3,406,869. The local dollar calculation sheet is also reduced based on these reductions.

- Revised Summary of Budget Reductions to date.
- There were questions about the interventionist positions. Superintendent Wolfrom invited Janet Bertrand and Christine Mohlar, math interventionists to share information about their work in the elementary schools. A handout was provided outlining what the math interventionists do, examples of student assessment results and why there is a need for increasing staff.

Janet works at Manchester and Mt. Vernon, and Christine works at Readfield and Wayne. The additional position would allow for a full time interventionist at both Manchester and Readfield Elementary, and one person to share between Mt. Vernon and Wayne. They shared data depicting the difference in the progress students are making between Manchester and Mt. Vernon where time spent with students is drastically reduced for Mt. Vernon. They would also be able to serve more students with the additional position.

Principal Dwayne Conway spoke about the need for the two interventionists for the high school. He reported that by law, we are required to put interventions in place for students who are not meeting grade level benchmarks. The high school has the team and they have a plan in place but are lacking the interventionists. Focus Time allows staff to give kids the first tier of intervention, but teachers do not have enough time in their schedule to devote more time. The interventionist will also provide teachers with professional development. The threshold for students who qualify for intervention is set at the 21stile on the MEA, it is estimated that 20 students per grade level would benefit from these positions. Discussion followed about setting the threshold higher and other changes the high school has made to assist these students.

- EPS ratio charts were revised adding the estimated 2015-2016 data.
- The Administrative Team was charged with developing a priority list. They met and came up with the list provided by asking, “How will this impact the district?” When considering the items on the list the Team discussed the number of students who would be impacted, whether it impacts academic growth and the strategic plan, and whether it benefits students. The first chart depicts budget items for consideration to be reduced; the top item being the first to be considered for elimination. The second chart depicts top priorities to keep, with the top item being most important to the Team. These are the recommendations of the A-Team.

b. Deliberations, follow-up and decision making

c. Board questions

Discussion ensued about the additional request for Pre-K in terms of providing transportation to all the Pre-K programs in the district. There is concern that it is being presented as an all or nothing proposal. Concern that to capture the entire Pre-K population transportation would be a major factor in capturing the entire Pre-K population. Parents are being asked whether they will utilize transportation as part of the screening process which is scheduled for April 9 and 10. We will not have those figures until after the Board votes on the budget. It was noted that when Manchester gave up the transportation piece it was so that more students could participate in the program, but we are not serving all our kids in the district. It was noted that Universal Pre-K and the transportation for the program is #1 on the A-Team’s list of important items to keep. D.Wolfrom added that they did discuss separating the Pre-K request into 2 items and decided it was our obligation to provide both.

Concern was also raised about eliminating one of the two high school interventionist positions in the original proposal. D.Wolfrom noted that this was a situation where the Administrators felt that they could start slow and hire one interventionist and then request another for the next year.

Question - How the middle school behavior interventionist position ended up on the budget reductions list when it was presented as a priority? D.Wolfrom - the decision was made based on the A-Team discussion and Dwayne and Cathy restructuring the alternative education programs so that the two programs will work more closely freeing up a middle school staff member to take on the responsibilities of the proposed behavior interventionist. This is an example of how the team looked at what is currently in place and how things can be changed to include some of the priorities requested.

d. Citizens

Superintendent Wolfrom reported that from the beginning of this budget season in January each of the principal's spoke about the needs and plans for their schools. She met with each of the principals to discuss staffing prior to the budget presentations. It has been the plan since January to combine the first grade classes at Manchester to one class as they enter second grade.

Chair Greenham asked Superintendent Wolfrom to respond to the correspondence they have received where concerns were raised about the class size and concerns that students would not receive the individual attention they need. D.Wolfrom responded that she thinks 21 in second grade is an acceptable number, and when quoting educational research it's important to know that no research is 100%. Frequently when talking class size they look at 30 as large, 15 as small.

Question – has any attention been given to developmental range of the students in the classroom? D.Wolfrom responded that she went over the data with Mrs. Delmar to see how students are progressing. A good percentage are meeting benchmarks; second grade is when you expect students to become more independent. The Brookings Institute states that smaller classes should be given to new teachers; both second grade teachers are very experienced and she is confident either teacher could handle a class of 21 students.

T.Watson added that she called a couple school districts where they invest a lot in their schools and are doing very well. Yarmouth has 5 second grades; 4 have 20 students and 1 has 21 students. Cape Elizabeth also has 5 second grades; 3 with 20 students and 2 with 21 students.

G.Carr – where do the ed techs appear? D.Wolfrom - Manchester does have one regular education ed tech and it is up to the principal on where to assign that staff member. She added that Chapter 125, basic approval standards in Maine states the following guidelines for instructional programs – grades 1-8 shall not exceed 25:1 and in no circumstances will they exceed 30:1.

Question - if we were to decide that we would like to advise you to add another teacher what would that cost? D.Wolfrom - about \$45,000.

Question – is there a classroom space issue? D.Wolfrom - not at Manchester

Several citizens requested to address the Board. Chair Greenham asked that they be concise and keep their comments to less than 3 minutes, and if what they are going to say has already been said it is perfectly fine to say you agree. He urged the citizens to avoid any kind of descriptive of the class as the whole and focus on the issues, respecting the privacy of the students.

Jessica West, representing the Manchester Local Advisory Committee requested the board put the second grade 2 classroom teacher in the budget, asking that they focus on the high level of need this class has. Combining the two classes to one would result in more behavior and interventions needs as well as the concern about picking up more students over the summer. She asked the Board to honor their goal of providing support for students in order to promote academic success.

Parents of current first grade students spoke in opposition of combining the two classes into one class for next year, stating it is not consistent with the district's mission, vision or guiding principles. They asked that the Board look at the dynamics that comprise this class and not just the number of students. Concern was raised not only for the students but also for the teacher. Currently with the two classes the teachers are able to provide the individual attention students need to

succeed, putting them into one class will deter from the individual attention the teachers are currently providing.

Concerns also include the increased distractions that will occur with a larger class. One parent commented that her child already struggles in a classroom of 10, receiving assistance in math and literacy, in a classroom of 21 he will be completely lost.

e. Board Discussion

The Board discussed the district's elementary class teacher:student ratios as well as the cost of a teacher versus the cost of an ed tech. Superintendent Wolfrom reiterated that there is a full time ed tech at Manchester Elementary and it would be up to the Principal to assign that person where she is needed. P.Holmes noted this is where a behavior analyst in regular education would be of tremendous assistance and noted the parents make a good point of looking at student needs versus student numbers.

M.O'Neal thanked the parents for attending the meeting; noting she has the utmost faith in our educators, and does not want the parents to think the board is being dismissive.

Chair Greenham noted that the Board has been given a reductions sheet that totals \$159,300; and as a result of the discussion tonight has heard the request of adding either a teacher or an ed tech in the amount of \$30,000-45,000; as well as some comments of a possibility of removing transportation from the Pre-K plan which is approx. \$60,000. He asked if the Board would like to give any guidance to the A-Team this evening; noting that the board has to take the final vote on the budget at the April 15th meeting.

Superintendent Wolfrom stated that the A-Team has provided a list, so it is in the board's decision at this time.

Discussion followed about the percent increase, whether the board should take straw votes on various items to see if there is agreement on some items, or discuss what plan b or plan c will be, whether to ask the Town of Manchester to support additional classroom support for the Manchester grade 2.

Question - Are there some assessments that have not been done? D.Wolfrom - Staff does all types of assessments and students who have been referred have been given the appropriate assessments. Teachers teach, assessments are given, we have benchmarks and we look at students who meet the benchmarks and those who don't. We offer supports - Reading Recovery, Title I, Common Assessments in math. In the case of special education parents and teachers they can always ask for referrals. Meanwhile the teachers are working in the classroom to address the issues as well.

Question – does it make sense to have the Superintendent talk with teachers, Special Education Director, etc. and comeback to the Board with a recommendation? D.Wolfrom responded that she was in Manchester today and went into the classrooms and talked with Mrs. Delmar and the reading recovery teacher and the students are making progress.

Question - is it possible to make additional resources available to the school to be available for the classroom when needed. D.Wolfrom responded there is a regular education ed tech at the school and it is the principal's decision on the best place to assign that position.

MOTION by Carr to remove the three lowest priority items on the Budget Priorities sheet under budget reductions: fix lower athletic field - \$6,000; Promethean Boards - \$16,800; Elementary Nurse (.44 FTE) - \$16,500, second by Hayes.

Request for a brief recess at 8:48. Chair called the meeting back to order at 8:54 p.m.

Discussion on the motion. **Motion Carried:** 10 in favor 0 opposed.

MOTION by Holmes to remove MS Behavior Interventionist - \$45,000 from the proposed budget, second by Hayes. Discussion followed, noting this motion is made based on Principal

Jacobs' comments about positions being reassigned at the middle school that will allow these services to be available to students. **Motion Carried:** 9 in favor, 1 opposed (Carr)

MOTION by O'Neal to remove one High School Interventionist - \$45,000 position, the Wayne Elementary School Literacy Specialist (.5 FTE) - \$25,000, and the Technology Supplies/Equipment - \$5,000 from the proposed budget, second by Simcock.

Discussion followed. Objection was raised to taking both of the positions out of the budget. D.Wolfrom noted that when the Administrators decided to add this to the list of possible budget reductions they felt the full time literacy specialist at Mt. Vernon Elementary may be able to split her time with Wayne Elementary School. S.Hayes noted that procedurally these items could be separated, adding that at the high school level, the students don't have a lot of time to master the Common Core and he would support having both interventionists for the high school.

Motion Carried: 6 in favor, 3 opposed (Hayes, Carr, Watson)

MOTION by Hayes to remove the transportation piece from the Pre-K proposal for a total reduction of \$60,000, second by Roderick.

Discussion followed noting that this means no expansion in the bussing for Pre-K students. It was noted that this would exclude Wayne children if parents could not transport. The Board heard from 2 families tonight who indicated they would not use transportation for their Pre-K students. It was noted that the Committee took 3 months to study the topic of Universal Pre-K. This is one area where the Board has heard no complaints from the Select Boards or community members. G.Carr noted that the people in Wayne think there will be a program there, so we need to at least provide busing for the Wayne families.

Motion Failed: 4 in favor, 6 opposed (Simcock, Watson, Holmes, Jackson, Greenham, Carr)

Question - What would it take to get the budget down to a 2.5-2.75% increase? We are now at about 3%. B.Williams responded another \$78,000. Health Insurance could save another \$30,000 if it comes in at 2%, and if we can take the Charter School out of the budget that would be another \$23,700.

B.Williams noted that the Board is talking a 3% increase budget to budget, but the local dollar increase to the towns is 6%. Of the \$675,760, \$400,000 is due to the required local match increase and subsidy reduction.

Question - Brigitte – can get figures from towns and project what the increase may be.

Requests for next week:

Update everything based on this evening's votes.

Try to get figures from towns and project what the increase may be in terms of taxes.

Show the true teacher:student ratios because the EPS formula includes all specialists and isn't a true picture of class sizes, by district.

Question – should action be taken on the request for the second grade tonight? There is another meeting scheduled for next week; Chair Greenham asked the Board to think about what has been done tonight and the Board can revisit the request next week.

7. Adjournment: **MOTION** and second to adjourn the meeting at 9:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna H. Wolfrom, Superintendent/Secretary
Recorded by: D. Foster