

**Madison Public Schools  
Board of Education Regular Meeting  
March 06, 2018  
7:30 PM  
Town Campus Hammonasset Room**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**1. Call to Order / Attendance**

The public meeting of the Madison Board of Education was called to order by Chair Katie Stein at 7:30 p.m. Chairman Stein led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Jessica Bowler; Galen Cawley; Greg DeSantis; Seth Klaskin; Happy Marino; Violet McNerney; Matt Parthasarthy; Emily Rosenthal; Katie Stein

Also present: Thomas Scarice, Superintendent of Schools; Gail Dahling-Hench, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment; students; and community members.

**2. Introduction of new Board Member: Greg DeSantis**

Ms. Stein made the following comments:

On behalf of the Board, I would like to formally welcome Greg DeSantis to the table. Greg comes to us with a wealth of experience in the field of higher education and currently works for the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities System. In addition, to his experience in education, Greg also served as parliamentarian of college Senate and has generously agreed to be our Board's parliamentarian as well. We welcome you Greg, thank you for your service to Madison's Board of Education and look forward to working closely with you.

**3. School / Community Session - 7:30 p.m.**

**3.1. Recognition**

**3.1.1. Connecticut Board of Education Member Appreciation Month**

Superintendent Scarice made the following comments:

The Madison Public Schools is joining in a statewide celebration this month to acknowledge the efforts of the Madison school board members. March has been proclaimed School Board Member Appreciation Month in Connecticut.

The Madison Public Schools benefits every day from the energy and countless hours that the members of the Madison Board of Education devote to fulfilling the Board's responsibilities to the public school system and to the citizens who elected them. School board members contribute their time and talent toward the advancement of public education. Because

they are elected officials, they represent a continuing commitment to local citizen control and decision-making in education.

School board members are responsible for setting educational policies, employing school personnel, providing buildings and equipment, operating a transportation system and disbursing school funds. As community leaders, school board members serve as advocates for the children in local public schools and must study, evaluate and decide what actions are in the best interest of those students. On behalf of Madison Public Schools Superintendent Scarice thanked the Board.

Superintendent Scarice and Ms. Dahling-Hench presented the Board members with a token of appreciation.

### **3.2. Public Participation**

No comments were made.

### **4. Board of Education Student Representatives' Report**

Emily and Ryan did not attend the meeting. No report was given.

### **5. Superintendent's Report**

#### **5.1. Safety & Security Update**

Superintendent Scarice stated that he wanted to provide the Board and community with an overview of the District's commitment to the safety and security of our students.

The Safety Committee meets throughout the school year to monitor overall school safety, to initiate new actions where appropriate, and to recommend updates to the districts safety and security plan as needed. Through the commitment from the town and the Board of Education over the years, significant resources have been committed to our schools for advanced communication systems, security camera surveillance, door locking mechanisms and training for preventive and responsive measures. School-based personnel practice safety drills on a monthly basis, ranging from fire drill evacuation to shelter in place drills.

Processing the horrific events of February 14<sup>th</sup> can be challenging for most adults. Children process such events in different ways, particularly depending on their developmental stage, from pre-school right through high school. The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) has developed a very succinct set of tips to assist parents in helping their child feel safe, as well as suggesting what might be best to emphasize when talking with children about such events.

Three years ago a District wide Whole Child Wellness Committee was formed. This group of professionals is comprised of teachers, administrators, District mental health providers, and representatives from Madison Youth and Family Services. The District's proactive and responsive measures to address social/emotional and developmental well-being is monitored and initiated from this team.

Superintendent Scarice mentioned the growing movement among the Districts students regarding the February 14<sup>th</sup> event that took place in Parkland FL and their genuine desire to express themselves to effect change. The District will work with the students of MPS to create an opportunity for all school community members to be involved in expressing a message in a manner that represents our students well, and in a way that is heard beyond the borders of our campus. The Districts middle school students will be writing letters of support to student in Florida. Our high school students working closely with Principal Salutari will be working to develop programs to express their message to put an end to school violence.

National Walk Out will take place on March 14<sup>th</sup> in the dinning hall of DHHS. This will be a 17 minute walk out a minute for each life lost in the Parkland, FL school shooting. The event will be taped and available to be viewed by the entire student body. Students are not encouraged to leave the building for safety and security purposes. The students will also take part in a 3 minute lay down which is the time it takes an individual to purchase a gun. Students who wish to not participate may go to the library etc. to study, read etc.

## **5.2. Other Matters**

Superintendent Scarice noted that he attended a great meeting for DHHS PTO – Gay and Straight People (GASP). Superintendent stated that there were a couple of students that presented. There was a conversation that took place regarding the security and safety at MPS and the March 14<sup>th</sup> walk out.

## **6. Board Members' Comments**

Ms. Marino commented that there should be an overview of the safety/security plan (i.e. 3, 4, 5 etc. year plan). Superintendent Scarice noted that all safety/security plan discussions would take place during executive sessions.

Mr. Klaskin stated that the Connecticut Classic Show Choir fundraiser to raise money for the VIBE trip to Nashville was sold out and it was a huge success.

## **7. Board Committees / Liaison Updates (Ref. Bylaw #9450)**

### **7.1. Planning Committee**

Members: Jessica Bowler, Chair; Emily Rosenthal, Happy Marino

Ms. Bowler reported on the following:

1 – Science Update – Community Connections – Sarah Sandora

Sarah came to give new updates with the science curriculum she is working on with a focus on Community Connections. Looking at authentic and performance based activities that are relevant and meaningful to the students. How can we use data to grow our understanding and can it be interdisciplinary?

The first example is with Field House Farm and Stephanie Lesnik with grade 2, their first unit which will be on Plants and Animals. The classes will visit the farm the 3<sup>rd</sup> week in September. They will get a tour of the farm – visit the animals and learn and see the plants they are growing. Then Stephanie will give

the kids a challenge – she is looking to save land for animals because she wants to acquire more of them and therefore wants to start growing some plants inside. The children will then go back to their classroom and plant radishes (they were proposed by Stephanie because they have a 20 day growth period). This will be interdisciplinary project covering Science and Math. Through this process the children will gather data, put the data in a table, interpret the data and analyze the conditions – sun, water, compost type. After the children grow their radishes and remove them from the soil, they will use that soil to move into unit 2 – Soil Erosion.

The second example is for grade 6 with Dr. Stuart Campbell – Associate Professor of Biomedical Engineering and Cellular and Molecular Physiology at Yale. He has a grant with Madison will have for the next 2 years. It includes his time, his equipment and his demonstrations. This would be for the Cells and Body systems unit. Essential questions – How does structure relate to function? How do systems work together in the body? How can cause and effect relationships be used to understand and predict how our bodies work? In what ways have engineers worked to improve our health and well-being? The kids will look at cardiac cells under a microscope with and without electricity. The kids will also look at their heartbeats and muscle fatigue using grip and strength equipment and then they will graph the results and interpret.

The third example is for grade 7, unit 2, Water and Ecosystems with Robert Russo a Civil Engineer who works for the Town of Madison. They will look at local water sampling from Bauer and other ponds in town. They will compare two samples in their classroom one with Algae that has been created by adding some fertilizer to it and one straight from the pond and have to decide which is healthier – A or B and casts votes in their class. As they learn more about nitrogen and phosphates in our local waters, they can change their votes. The PBA at the end of the unit is to create a video of which we saw one example where they talk about keeping Long Island Sound clean. The discuss less pollution and recycling but also working on trying to mitigate nitrogen and phosphates from getting into the Sound by teaching people about the side effects of fertilizers, soaps, oil and gas leaking into our bodies of water and offering alternative brands they can use and ways of disposal that can occur to try to help with this in our community.

Overall there has been a large shift in the teaching approach and the new curriculum we are putting in place as a result of the new science standards. These community connections will allow kids to have local connections and a local feel for the community they live in while incorporating science and math learnings.

2 –Future Meeting Discussion - We discussed the day and time for future planning meetings and we will be keeping the Tuesday morning time slot of 8:45 and two meetings a month at least through this school year.

3 – Future Agenda Items – We discussed a list of items we would like to review and cover at future planning meetings and Ms. Dahling-Hench will help us manage the agendas and assist in including these items in addition to items she has listed to discuss.

4 – Reconfiguration Update for Brown and Polson and Timeline for Redistricting – Ms. Dahling-Hench discussed the process they are looking at for Building

Reconfiguration Considerations along with the Developmental Considerations for Programming Recommendations. They are currently working on the model for 4/5 at Brown looking at all of these considerations as well as number of hours of instructions time over a several year period. Once they have the 4/5 model finalized the team can move forward with the 6-8 model at Polson. The Redistricting modeling will most likely begin this summer with the hopes of completing that this Fall so that families and staff have time to think about their transition plans and we can also have PTOs and Arts Barn etc. assist with getting groups of kids together who will be together for the first time in the 2019-2020 school year like for example the ice cream social that currently happens at the end of 4<sup>th</sup> grade for all 5<sup>th</sup> graders.

**7.2. Personnel Committee**

Members: Matt Parthasarthy, Chair; Violet McNerney, Greg DeSantis

No report was given. First meeting is scheduled for March 21, 2018 with Teamsters.

**7.3. Policy Committee**

Members: Emily Rosenthal, Chair; Violet McNerney, Seth Klaskin

**7.3.1 Policy #4141 – Social Networking (First Reading)**

Policy #4141 is being presented as 1<sup>st</sup> Reading.

**7.4. Finance Committee**

Members: Happy Marino, Chair; Galen Cawley, Matt Parthasarthy

The Finance Committee has not met since the last BOE meeting. No report was given.

**7.5. LEARN Liaison**

Emily Rosenthal

Next meeting is scheduled for March 8, 2018.

**8. Audience Response to Information Presented (Ref. Bylaw #9540.10)**

Christine Cewe of Tuxis Road stated her concerns regarding the facilities at Madison Public Schools and their safety. Ms. Cewe stated that her family had recently moved to Madison from Florida.

Mr. Klaskin informed Ms. Cewe of the upcoming facilities committee meetings and encouraged her to attend.

**9. Consent Agenda (Ref. Bylaw #9540.2 and #9540.8)**

**9.1. Bills Payable:** 2017-2018 Budget: \$884,666.89; 2016-2017 Budget: \$12,350.00

**9.2. Line Transfers:** \$9,149.71

**9.3. Budget Expenditure as of February 28, 2018**

**9.4.** Donation: \$1,114 from VIBE Supporters to fund needs for students trip to Nashville.

**9.5.** Donation: \$6,500.00 from DHHS Class of 2017 for purchase of water cooler/water bottle filter.

MOTION: by DeSantis seconded by Klaskin to approve the Consent Agenda.

AYES: Bowler; Cawley; DeSantis; Klaskin; Marino; McNerney; Parthasarthy; Rosenthal; Stein

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN:

MOTION CARRIED: 9-0

Mr. Klaskin thanked the DHHS Class of 2017 and VIBE Supporters for their generous donations.

- 10.** Discussion and Possible Action: Confirmation of February 21, 2018 Special Meeting vote to request from Town of Madison assignment and/or appropriation of \$120,000.00 from the undesignated funds the Board anticipates returning to the Town at the close of the 2017-2018 fiscal year for the purpose of Effective School Solutions funding during the 2018-2019 fiscal year and to authorize the Board Chair to submit such request to the Town of Madison Boards of Finance and Selectmen on behalf of the Board of Education.

Ms. Stein made the following comments:

As the Board members know, at our February 21, 2018 Special Meeting, we unanimously voted in favor of requesting from the Town of Madison for the 2018-2019 fiscal year an assignment and/or appropriation of \$120,000.00 for the purpose of funding the Effective School Solutions program at Polson Middle School. The Board anticipated this appropriation being drawn from the undesignated funds that the Board expects to return to the Town at the close of the 2017-2018 fiscal year. This cooperative approach was initiated by Jean Fitzgerald, our former chair and current chair of the Board of finance. In essence, the Board was requesting that the Town assign to the Board funds that had previously been appropriated to the Board but which the Board, through its prudent financial management of the Madison Public Schools, had not expended.

Unfortunately, at a subsequent Board of Selectmen meeting, a member of that Board claimed that the February 21 vote had not been in compliance with the Connecticut Freedom of Information Act and was therefore invalid. I believe I speak for the entire Board in respectfully disagreeing with that characterization of our vote. Now, the Board could pursue that conversation with the Board of Selectmen. At the same time, that course of action would, at least in my opinion, simply draw everyone's focus away from what is really important here, and that is our students.

This Board unanimously voted in favor of requesting this appropriation because we recognize that Effective School Solutions is a critical and cost-effective means of helping children who may be struggling with issues -- assistance that would be provided within the welcoming environment of their own neighborhood school -- and helping the children whom parents have entrusted to the Madison Public Schools is the single most important mission that we as a Board have.

Therefore, rather than engage in a back-and-forth over the correct interpretation and application of the Freedom of Information Act, I am asking that the Board simply vote to confirm its February 21 vote so that we can move forward in our quest to help these children. Thank you.

- 11. Action Item:** To approve confirmation of February 21, 2018 Special Meeting vote to request from Town of Madison assignment and/or appropriation of \$120,000.00 from the undesignated funds the Board anticipates returning to the Town at the close of the 2017-2018 fiscal year for the purpose of Effective School Solutions funding during the 2018-2019 fiscal year and to authorize the Board Chair to submit such request to the Town of Madison Boards of Finance and Selectmen on behalf of the Board of Education.

MOTION: by DeSantis seconded by Parthasarthy to approve that the Board of Education request that the Town of Madison's Board of Finance and Board of Selectmen create and commit to as assignment of \$120,000 from the undesignated fund balance, which amount shall be assigned to the Board of Education for the purpose of funding during the 2018-2019 budget year the Effective School Solutions program providing the Board of Education first utilize unspent funds at the end of Fiscal Year 2017-2018 to return the same amount (\$120,000) to the town. I further move to authorize the Board Chair, in conjunction with the Superintendent of Schools and/or the Director of Special Education to draft and to submit such request to the Board of Finance and Selectmen, specifying therein the purpose and parameters of this proposed appropriation.

AYES: Bowler; Cawley; DeSantis; Klaskin; McNerney; Parthasarthy; Rosenthal; Stein

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: Marino

MOTION CARRIED: 8-0

- 12. Action Item:** Minutes of the February 13, 2018 Board of Education Meeting (Ref. Bylaw #9540.9)

MOTION: by Rosenthal seconded by Bowler to approve the minutes of the February 13, 2018 Board of Education Meeting.

AYES: Bowler; Cawley; Klaskin; Marino; Parthasarthy; Rosenthal; Stein

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: DeSantis, McNerney

MOTION CARRIED: 7-0

**13. Action Item: Minutes of the February 21, 2018 Board of Education Special Meeting**

MOTION: by Klaskin seconded by DeSantis to approve the minutes of the February 21, 2018 Board of Education Special Meeting.  
AYES: Bowler; Cawley; DeSantis; Klaskin; McNerney; Parthasarthy; Rosenthal; Stein  
NAYS: None  
ABSTAIN: Marino  
MOTION CARRIED: 8-0

**14. Old Business**

No old business was discussed

**15. Future Agenda Items**

No new business was discussed.

**16. Meetings / Dates of Importance (see attached)**

March/April 2018

**17. Adjournment**

MOTION: by Marino seconded Klaskin to adjourn the meeting at 8:36 p.m.  
AYES: Bowler; Cawley; DeSantis; Klaskin; Marino; McNerney; Parthasarthy; Rosenthal; Stein  
NAYS: None  
ABSTAIN:  
MOTION CARRIED: 9-0.

Approved at the March 20, 2018 BOE Meeting.