

MINUTES

**MEETING OF BOARD OF EDUCATION
January 19, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.**

**Board of Education Goal:
To engage in a cycle of continuous improvement to ensure all students are educated with
high standards and achieve at the highest levels of learning
in the Montville Public Schools.**

**Library Media Center
Electronic Zoom Meeting**

Item 1. Call to order/ Pledge of Allegiance

Board Chair Sandra Berardy called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

All participated in the pledge. Board members attending were: Bob Mitchell, James Wood, Carol Burgess, Dana Ladyga, Monica Pomazon, and Wills Pike. Board Members Sheelagh Lapinski and Joe Aquitante were absent.

Also participating were: Superintendent of Schools Laurie Pallin, Assistant Superintendent Dianne Vumback, Business Manager Kathy Lamoureux, and Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent Jennifer LeMay, Administrators M.J. Dix, Amy Espinoza, Jill Mazzalupo, Theresa Gouveia, Paula LaChance, Amanda Brown, Jason Daly, Rob Alves, David Gollsneider, and Heather Sangermano; Student Board Representatives David Baukus and Gigi Johnston; and Town Council Liaison Joe Jaskiewicz.

Secondary Principals shared the January Montville Marvels presentations as follows:

Leonard J. Tyl Middle School - For her hard-work, kindness and conscientiousness: Emily Wigfield.

For her conscientiousness, excellent communication, and consistently putting forth her best effort: Peyton Cook.

PBL Campus - For his dedication to his education, excellent attendance, and for the relationships he has built with both staff and students: Je'Shawn Holley.

Montville High School – For their creative and consistent effort to build our community: Tenzin Dadon, Wendy Chen, Cao Yi Ru, Kayleigh Bolanos, Ariana Seldon, and Advisor Joel Finnegan.

Item 2. Hearing of delegates and citizens (regarding agenda items only)

None

Item 3. Letters and communications

None

Item 4. Approval of the Consent Calendar

Motion: The Board moved to approve the consent calendar.

Moved by: Jim Wood

Seconded by: Bob Mitchell
Vote: Carried (7-0)

a. Budget update from Kathy Lamoureux; Business Manager

Since the last Board of Education meeting the CFR grant in the amount of \$525,343 has been spent. Approximately \$281,200 of the funding was used for salaries and employee benefits since the start of school through December 30, 2020 for long-term substitute coverage, security at the middle school, coverage for the medical monitoring rooms, along with custodial and computer support that were not budgeted for. This staffing became necessary as a result of the pandemic. Additionally, approximately \$57,800 was used for purchased services for storage, HVAC system, professional fitting for masks for the health care staff, and subcontracting transportation to and from school which became necessary as a result of driver shortages. These cost were necessary for the health and safety of staff and students and to comply with the social distancing guidance. The remainder of the grant, approximately \$186,300, was used to secure maintenance and custodial supplies and purchase to-go containers the food service program required due to the change in the way lunch is being served during this time.

We have started to review the ESSER grant so we can modify it to help offset some of the costs that the CFR grant paid for through December 30, 2020 for the remainder of the year.

Salaries:

We have started compiling the 2021-22 budget and are reviewing and projecting the salary accounts. This year it is extremely difficult to project salaries for staff who are not working their normal contracted hours.

The certified staffing, paraprofessionals, and non-certified staff who are working their normal schedules which allows for confidence in their projections. However, staff that are only working the school calendar make projections less reliable because the calendar has been, and will continue to be, subject to change.

At this point of the year the certified staffing object 111 still is projecting an overage. As previously discussed, the overage is a result of late retirements, late hires, a position not filled because of the hybrid and distance learning models, staff using the FFCRA to cover for children out of school, and long-term leaves that are occurring during the school year.

At this point of the year, there is a projected overage in object 112 non-certified staffing. This is the result of some positions not being filled due to the hybrid and distance learning models, having in-school instruction for only four out of five days, and driver shortages that we have experienced throughout the school year.

At this point of the year, monitors object 113 are projected to have an overage based on only having in-school instruction for 4 out of the 5 days a week. The account as of 12/30 reflects that out of \$241,375 budgeted, there is \$166,713 remaining or 69.07%. There are some schools that needed to increase coverage for the in-school instruction and others who have had vacancies that they have not filled because of the lower number of students in school.

As you are aware, the salary object accounts are comprised of objects 111 through 130, therefore, the other objects still need to be reviewed to determine if there will be an overage projected at year

end. Additionally the projected enrollment has been reviewed for any staffing changes from the 20-21 to the 21-22 school year.

Health Insurance:

Laurie, myself and the Town met with the insurance broker, MDG Benefit Solutions for the first renewal on the health insurance for next year. They stressed to us that because of the pandemic, projecting future claims has become more difficult. Therefore, they reviewed 24 months of claims and adjusted the claims to reflect a COVID load and this resulted in a 7% increase. They also reviewed 12 months of claims and adjusted for a COVID load which yielded a 4.9% increase. This will be reviewed over the next couple of months with actual claims to determine the increase needed for the 21-22 budget. Again these rates do not account for the fact that the Board is currently not using the fully indemnified rates, therefore we will have to adjust the rates higher to account for this. We also have another meeting scheduled to review utilization of the plan to see if there are other steps we can take to reduce costs.

Property, Liability and Workers Compensation:

HD Segur recommends that we budget an increase of 10% for the liability and workers compensation policies which they consider to be conservative. They stated they meet with Travelers in February to review the policies and this will give them more time to review any COVID issues.

Item 5. Unfinished Business

a. Discussion regarding health data and instructional model

At our Dec. meeting the most recent Uncas data showed increasing COVID-19 case rates with 309 positive cases for the previous week. Last week's data reflects more than double that with 769 positive cases. There were 115 new cases in Montville for the two weeks preceding our Dec. Board meeting. In the past two weeks (Dec. 27-Jan 9), there were 252 cases and a positivity rate of 12.1%. These numbers reflect what we were seeing in district and led to our decision last Tuesday afternoon to move to a week of fully remote learning. I am seeing a decrease in the case rate in MPS over the past several days. Where we had 12 cases in three days last Sunday-Tuesday, from Wednesday-yesterday, I saw 5 new cases. Looking at our staffing and the decrease in cases, I believe we will be able to reopen to students in our hybrid model on Thursday as planned. If the rates continue to decline, I am hoping we can continue to phase more students in to the four day program and the Board can revisit the feasibility of a full return at its February meeting.

Monica Pomazon: Where are we with teachers receiving their vaccinations? Laurie: The vaccination process has been less than smooth. As you may have read, the DPH website incorrectly opened vaccinations up to all phase 1b individuals and districts immediately uploaded all employees into the VAMS portal. We were told later that day that all staff needed to cancel their appointments which we put out to employees. Then we were told they could keep the appointments but no new appointments could be scheduled. Finally today, I was told that all public school employee appointments need to be canceled unless they were scheduled for this Wed. or Thurs.

b. NEASC Letter

At the end of Dec., we received a letter from the NEASC accrediting body that the

MHS 2 year report had been received and the high school was commended for a number of changes which they had made. The next step in this process is to submit a five year report demonstrating continued progress on a small group of action items.

c. Presentation and discussion regarding results of Technology Study

Motion: To approve taking the first step in addressing district technology issues at a total cost of \$8,400.

Moved by: Monica Pomazon
Seconded by: Jim Wood
Roll Call Vote: Carried (7-0)

At this time, I would like to move forward with Phase 1 of the remediation plan suggested which would be reconfiguration of our wireless equipment to address reliability and security. The total cost for this would be \$8,400 for consulting services and about 14 hours of overtime for district IT workers. As you can see the total cost for the items in the NOVUS study is over \$400,000. Nic and his staff will review to see if we can discover any savings, but we are also faced with replacement of the MHS server for another \$130,000.

d. Discussion regarding format and dates for Budget Forums

Monica Pomazon; The communications committee has decided to hold facilitated Zoom discussions around four focus areas. Community members would be asked what they would like the district to consider when planning the budget in the areas of class size, changes to the curriculum and instructional programming, safety and social emotional learning, and technology. They can also offer any other priorities they would like the Board to consider when planning for the 2021-2022 budget. We would like to hold these Zoom forums at 6 p.m. on Jan. 28th and Feb. 2nd.

Item 6. New Business

a. Consideration and action to approve the agreement between The Montville Board of Education and the Montville Education Association for the period of September 1, 2021 – August 31, 2024

Motion: To approve the agreement between the Montville Board of Education and the Montville Education Association for the period of September 1, 2021 – August 31, 2024

Moved by: Bob Mitchell
Seconded by: Monica Pomazon
Roll Call Vote: Carried (7-0)

b. Consideration and action to request that the Montville Town Council deposit unexpended funds from FY 2020 into a dedicated, non-lapsing account in an amount that does not exceed 2% of the total budgeted appropriation for fiscal

year 2019-20, as allowed under CT State Statute Sec. 10-248a, based upon the unexpended educational appropriation which is reflected in the auditor's report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2020

Motion: To approve the sending of a letter to request that the Montville Town Council deposit unexpended funds from FY 2020 into a dedicated, non-lapsing account in an amount that does not exceed 2% of the total budgeted appropriation for fiscal year 2019-20, as allowed under CT State Statute Sec. 10-248a, based upon the unexpended educational appropriation which is reflected in the auditor's report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2020

Moved by: Bob Mitchell
Seconded by: Monica Pomazon
Roll Call Vote: Carried (7-0)

2% of last year's budget is \$773,829. The auditors reported that our unexpended funds were \$605,360. We currently have \$332,849 in the undesignated fund balance. We can request that the town move the full \$605,360 to this fund or a portion of it. The total balance would be \$930,209 if it the full amount was deposited. In the past this fund has been used to pay for buses and to cover an unexpected increase in the MHS / Tyl well project. As you can see from tonight's report, we have a sizeable expense to fully upgrade our technology, we are uncertain what our spring staffing needs will be, and as always we may have unanticipated costs for new special education outplacements, building issues, etc.

7. Committee and Liaison reports:

- a. **Policy Committee** – Jim Wood; No meeting was held
- b. **E&E Committee** – Bob; No meeting was held
- c. **Communications Committee** – Monica; covered earlier in the meeting
- d. **Principal Reports** – SEL Principals Amy Espinoza and MJ Dix shared the SEL practices currently in place districtwide. Sandra: How are you managing during remote learning? Amy: Connections are certainly more difficult to make during our adjusted school days, but the new social worker is amazing as are the teachers.
- e. **Montville Education Foundation** – Laurie- Met on Jan. 11. They are beginning the spring grant cycle and will award grants up to \$10,000. Applications are due April 30th. Luckily their investments are doing very well so they are able to continue their grant awards despite the lack of fundraisers including the summer golf tournament. They are moving forward with plans for a golf tournament for the third Monday in August. The next meeting will be a Zoom meeting on Feb. 1.
- f. **LEARN** Bob- nothing to report
- g. **CABE/NSBA** – Bob, nothing to report
- h. **Montville Youth Services Bureau** – Sheelagh- Absent, no report
- i. **Student Board Representatives**

Senior, David Baukus

Student government has been hard at work this past month in scheduling a blood drive for seniors and older juniors to participate in. The entire body was able to settle on a date in April to host it. It will occur on a Wednesday, so both cohorts can participate on the same day, but at different scheduled times to keep everyone safe. I personally am very excited about this, and I know that several of my peers are as well. There is a big desire to give back to the community, especially during such a time when there is a crucial need for blood donations.

Beyond that, the government held spirit week for cohort two, as theirs was postponed until after the break due to the two snow days. There was a large turnout for both spirit and during the games, and I know that it was a good time to have fun and relax. I had fun playing, and even though the seniors didn't win, it was still a good time.

The high school game committee also ran another round of Scribblio this past Friday, and even though I wasn't able to personally be there in the Zoom, I heard that it was still a lot of fun and just as successful as the last time. There were both returning kids and newcomers as well.

Also, another event that happened right after the break was something that we haven't done here before in Montville. Mr. Romano had a professional photographer taken in and a representative from each of the sports teams here at Montville had their picture taken. And these pictures will then be used in a collage that is on display in the main building to represent the high school.

Junior, Gigi Johnston

Since the last meeting, we've had winter break, which was a well-deserved rest for both the students and the staff. It was nice to be able to put our computers down for a little and take some time off from the technology that we have been on a lot lately. Since then, thankfully, we were able to start the New Year off back in the hybrid model of learning, and hopefully really soon get back into it instead of being in fully distance learning.

This year's winter break was the first break for most students and staff without sports going on at the same time. This allowed for more of a relaxing vacation, however for some, it took away some of the joy and entertainment that goes along with the winter school activities. Although there weren't any sports or activities occurring during the break as they normally would, fortunately, the winter sports season will tentatively start February 1st. Unfortunately, the only sports that are allowed to happen this season are boys' and girls' basketball. Because of the different circumstances this year with the pandemic, there are some things that have to be altered and changed to keep everyone safe. To start, instead of normally having the opposing team sit on the same side of the gym on the set of bleachers that are next to the ones that the Montville team sits on, the opposing team will be seated across the gym, on the bleachers that are facing the Montville team. By splitting up the gym like this, it will reduce the amount of contact from the players and coaches on the different teams in the game. This also means that pregame and postgame handshakes with the other team will not occur, rather there will be more of a non-contact "thank you" and "good game." Every time-out and every time there is a change of possession, the basketball will be disinfected, as well as chairs/ bleachers being cleaned after every game. Masks will be worn at all times by players, coaches, staff, and everyone who is present there. No spectators will be allowed to watch any games, but there will be a way to livestream the games so the teams can still be supported by fans. Locker rooms will only be used by players who went to school in person that day, so they can get ready and get changed, but all other players must come to the

game already prepared. Before all practices and games, players, coaches, and officials will have to fill out a daily log sheet to record how their health has been, in addition to getting a temperature check.

While it is unfortunate that athletes who participate in wrestling, indoor track, and cheerleading don't get to experience a season this year, there is another after school program that is opening soon. A strength and conditioning program is scheduled to start February 8th, and it is not limited to students that participate in one specific sport; any student is able to join. There will be groups of 10-12 students that will be split up and will be assigned to a specific coach. These groups will stay together and work on the same activities. These activities are centered on weight training, yoga, sprint work, and endurance. Each day, a group will complete two of these activities, and this will serve as a great way to get in shape for upcoming sports or to replace sports that are not happening this year. To add, the upcoming spring sports season is projected to start the usual time, with all sports being included and able to experience a full season.

- j. Board Chair Remarks – Sandra:** *Board members should have received the 2020-21 state agenda sent by CABE. I think we should review this document for an idea on what other local Boards of Education are working on so we can discuss this as a Board to ensure that we are up to date with the thinking that goes on at the state level.*

Item 8. Superintendent's Report

a. Report from the Director of Special Services – Ms. Paula LaChance

In preparation for the budget I have been working closely with my Supervisors looking at movement within our specialized programs to analyze our staffing and program needs. We will have a very large number of students slotted to attend Mohegan's Intensive Instruction Classroom (IIC). So are looking at ways to provide the appropriate staff and supports there.

As part of our planning Amanda and I watched a tutorial on a program currently in place at MHS and Palmer called Virtual Job Shadow. We found this to be a comprehensive program. We hope to implement this for TA and eventually Tyl.

Additionally Theresa, Amanda and I have been collaborating and fine tuning the services and writing of IEP's to be consistent across all 6 schools.

This month I attended a variety of meetings one being the LEARN Regional Transition Meeting on Legal Updates. There was a lot of discussion around the impact of the updated guidance regarding eligibility for services until age 22.

I also attended a Directors and Administrator Assistance group that is a new this year and developed to support Special Education Administrative Assistants. This month the topic of discussion was on the new data management system that is in the works. In September, (CSDE) partnered with the Public Consulting Group (PCG) to develop a comprehensive statewide Special Education Data System (CT-SEDS). CT SEDS is a web-based special education data management system designed to support the IEP document. It will eliminate the need for any local data uploading or collections such as SEDAC, EVAL Timeline, ECO and Restraint and Seclusions. The new system will also include a parent portal for families to access their student's IEP and other

important information as well as a language translation feature to ensure that parents receive information in their native language. They will pilot the program in a number of districts during the winter/spring of 2022 with a statewide implementation beginning July 1, 2022

b. Report from Assistant Superintendent – Mrs. Dianne Vumback

Attendance

We continue to track our attendance data across all schools in the district. Our emphasis has been on concerns of what they are calling the COVID-slide which includes inability to retain learning, lost learning time and lack of student engagement.

Across the state, at-risk and marginalized students are the most impacted at this time, with the majority of our absent students being those that are identified as high needs – Els and Special education students. Our largest increase in chronic rates are coming from the elementary schools, with kindergarten leading the rate.

For students struggling with attendance, we are finding they are attending school on their in person days but on their remote days they are not meeting the attendance threshold. The state has seen that all high need groups exhibit lower attendance rates on their remote days than on their in person days.

I have sat in on several schools' attendance meetings, and I am impressed with how well the teams know their students. These teams have teachers, secretaries, counselors, social workers on the team so they are not just reporting out data – they are sharing information on the whole child and discussing strategies to support the student and their families.

Montville's attendance data reflects what is occurring in school communities across the state.

I will be participating in a community of practice with the state department of education to help build a system of supports for districts that will bring together the latest research, national experts and promising practices.

Assessments

As you know, the state is committed to school districts administering the state assessments this year to all students. However, the state is looking for federal approval to not use the results of the assessments for the accountability index purposes.

We have begun LAS links testing with our EL students. LAS Links monitors the progress of English learners and is used to identify appropriate programming for students. We are also identifying students that are in need of special accommodations for the Smarter Balance assessments that will be given later in the school year.

c. Report from the Superintendent – Mrs. Pallin

Sports – *Our tentative plan is to begin practices for winter sports on Feb. 1. Games would begin Feb. 12. Basketball will be the only team sport. Players will wear masks at all times and there will be no spectators. In lieu of other high risk sports, we are planning a strength and conditioning program by cohort for interested students. I am working with the MEA on an MOU for coaches*

for this new activity.

FFCRA Leave - *The Federal FFCRA leave plan expired on Dec. 31, 2020, and it has not been extended by the federal government. Kathy and I discussed the impact this change will have on district employees and determined that the district will continue to offer two weeks of additional paid leave to an employee at their regular rate of pay if an employee is required to quarantine because of a possible work-related exposure (unless remote work is available) and to employees who are sick or have a child who is sick with COVID-related symptoms. The extension of this leave will run until March 31st at which time it will be re-evaluated. FFCRA leave provisions were extended through the end of this week (1/15/21), and this change became effective today. As is our normal practice, any other leave requests will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis consistent with BOE policies, contractual leave provisions, and FMLA.*

Round 2 SVC Surveys - *Our last round of surveys resulted in a number of adjustments to our programs and practices. In efforts to foster continued growth, we have asked teachers, students, and families to complete a second survey by Jan. 26th.*

2021-2022 Budget – *We will present the budget to the Board at our regular meeting on Feb. 23. Please hold March 2 and March 9 for workshops as we would like Board approval to send the budget to the town no later than the March 16th regular BOE meeting*

Item 9. Information Items

None

Item 10. Citizen's Comments

Tara Jones, Oakdale parent asked how close contacts are identified. Superintendent Pallin explained that a close contact is anyone within six feet of a positive person for fifteen minutes or more, with or without a mask.

Item 11. Future Agenda Items

None

Item 9. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn.

Moved by: Bob Mitchell

Seconded by: Jim Wood

Vote: Carried (6-0)

The meeting adjourned at 7:59 P.M.

Respectfully submitted by,

Sandra Berardy, Chair
Montville Board of Education
Minutes Approved: _____

Monica Pomazon, Secretary
Montville Board of Education