

**MEETING OF BOARD OF EDUCATION
November 17, 2020 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 stood and pledged the flag. Board members participating were: Bob Mitchell, James Wood, Carol Burgess, Dana Ladyga, Sheelagh Lapinski, Monica Pomazon and Wills Pike.

Also present were: Superintendent of Schools Laurie Pallin, Assistant Superintendent Dianne Vumback, Business Manager Kathy Lamoureux, M.J. Dix, Amy Espinoza, Jill Mazzalupo, Will Klinefelter, Theresa Gouveia and Heather Sangermano; Student Board Representatives David Baukus and Gigi Johnston and Town Council Liaison Joe Jaskiewicz.

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: Dana Ladyga
Seconded by: Bob Mitchell
Vote: Carried (8-0)

Sandra moved to have a motion to add item 4c. to recommend a bid waiver

Motion: The Board moved to add item 4c as recommended.

Moved by: Dana Ladyga
Seconded by: Bob Mitchell
Vote by Roll Call: Carried (8-0)

a. Budget update from Kathy Lamoureux; Business Manager

The accountants are scheduled to return this week to review the state reports for expenditures along with the excess cost grant for student placement during the fiscal year

2019-20 so they can finish their audit and file the report required by the State by the due date of 12/31.

Since the last Board meeting, we just received notification that Montville's grant for approximately five hundred twenty five thousand under the Coronavirus Relief funding has been approved. The grant application requested funding for additional costs required to cover staff unable to return to work due to the pandemic from the start of school until 12/30/2020. Additionally, the grant application indicated it would fund increases to the cost of permanent substitutes, monitors covering the medical rooms, the security officer at Tyl, and some of the additional custodial staffing.

As we previously indicated once this grant was approved, some of the supply costs that were originally written into the CARES grant will be modified to this grant.

Therefore with the approval of the grant, this next month we will be reviewing the Boards expenditures and will reallocate some of the costs to the grant and determine what modification to the CARES grant will be needed.

Unfortunately, this will need to occur prior to projecting the budget for the 20-21 fiscal year for the non-certified staffing cost.

Therefore I thought it would be a good time to report on the Capital Plan.

The Murphy Roof project which was funded in both the 2020 and 2021 budgets in the amount of \$195,000 has been completed. Currently it is projected this project will close with approximately \$5,000 being returned to the Town.

The replacement of the gym floor and bleachers at Mohegan Elementary was funded with an anticipated cost of \$195,000. This has been completed and with the asbestos abatement the final cost was about \$183,000. This project will close out with approximately \$12,000 being returned to the Town, a portion of these savings were a result of the Maintenance Department removing the bleachers during the project.

The District Security Upgrade was a multiyear project that is funded by the Town and the State. Currently the Tyl Middle School vestibule has been completed and we recently had a meeting to discuss the remaining items of the grant and the steps required to complete this project.

Refinishing the gym floors was funded at \$75,000 and has not been completed. The District was ready to start this work however, with the social distancing needed during lunch the gyms are being used to accommodate this. Therefore, the refinishing will begin once the gyms are not being used to handle the overflow from the cafeteria to protect the investment. Tyl teacher's parking lot was funded at \$70,000 which was anticipated to be accomplished this last summer. However, with the increase focus of reopening of the schools, this project

did not get completed. It is anticipated that this project will start in June at the end of the school year.

The last two projects that were funded out of the capital plan were for a van and a lease of a bus. This has been delayed based on the hybrid school schedule and the number of students that are currently being transported. We will be researching the State contract for van pricing and the transportation department is working on the specification for the bus that will be needed to complete these projects.

Item 5. Unfinished Business

a. Solar Update; Steve Carroll

The project is 99% complete, ConEd has a few low growing trees to plant on the main entrance side of the array in the spring to complete the project. The school solar array has been up and running since early June with monthly productions of 100,000 kWh in the peak summer months. Power production is split (65% MHS) / (35% TYL) between MHS and Tyl, even with the division of power, quite often we see Montville High drop off the grid during educational hours.

When we complete a full year of seasonal production we see our total savings, at this time we seem to be on track with our estimated savings. Our average cost per kWh with transportation from Eversource, has been around \$0.17 per kWh prior to solar, we are paying a flat \$0.079 per kWh to ConEd for solar supplied power.

There is also a reduction in cost per kWh with Eversource at MHS. Demand fees have been lowered also paired with lower consumption, we have been seeing lower transportation rates on grid supplied power. MHS has seen monthly rates drop to \$0.14 to \$0.12 per kWh.

Overall the project had its ups and downs, but at the end of it all Montville has a project that saves budget dollars and has a positive impact on the environment.

Laurie P- One thing to keep in mind that we are increasing our energy cost significantly due to the required Covid19 ventilation.

b. Continued discussion regarding Tyl roof project and engineering

Steve- I met with AL for continued discussion about the roof replacement and having it funded through the state roof project. It doesn't look like we can include this cost with the state roof project. I've talked with Al, Kathy and Laurie, and hope that moving forward Al is an approved engineer/architectThere is some talk about making Tyl fully air conditioned. There's no set plans to move forward with this right now.

Laurie: Kathy, Steve and I think it would be wise to set up a meeting with Board Finance Committee and town Finance Committee to review new information which we have received regarding the Tyl roof project. We had been led to believe that replacement of the rooftop HVAC system would be eligible for state school construction reimbursement. Tentative conversation with Al Jacunski and the state dept. have determined that may not be the case. It might be partially eligible if the new HVAC equipment includes air conditioning in a building that does not have air conditioning. We still believe it is important to combine the projects to replace the roof and HVAC units because while we are putting in a new roof it does not make sense to reinstall old units. From the Office of School Construction: "The best approach is to contact our office as soon as you know the scope of this project, and the proposed components of the HVAC system installation that are demonstratively different from the existing system. At that time, we would be able to indicate more precisely those partially eligible components."

c. Bid waver for a bid waiver for the Tyl roof engineering study.

Motion: Consideration and action to approve a bid waiver to use Al Jacunski's services for the Tyl Roof Engineering Study.

Moved by: Dana Ladyga
Seconded by: Bob Mitchell
Vote: Carried 8-0

Laurie: We would like to use Al Jacunski to develop the project scope and would ask to go to Finance Committee meeting with us because we have used him before and he is familiar with the building.

Item 6. New Business

a. Consideration and action to approve and submit the 2019-2020 Annual Report to The Mayor

Moved by: Bob Mitchell
Seconded by:
Vote: Carried (8-0)

Laurie: You received a copy of this annual report. It reflects several key items:

- Expanded and active role of Student Representatives*
- Policy work*
- Creation of Finance Committee*
- Recognition of Schools of Distinction (Oakdale and Murphy)*
- Transition of online learning in March*
- One-to-One roll out*
- Increase in social workers*
- Teachers and paras of the year*
- Recognition of students, athletes, and programs which give back to the community*

b. Snow days and remote learning consideration

Motion: The Board moves to allow for three snow days and to make additional weather-related closures remote learning days.

Moved by: Dana Ladyga
Seconded by: Sheelagh Lapinski
Vote: Carried (8-0)

Laurie: 60% of parents and 63% of staff expressed the desire to hold remote learning activities during weather-related closures.

The state has directed that on weather-related remote learning days, districts should provide 4.5 hours of instruction for elementary students and 5.0 hours for secondary students with a 50/50 mix of synchronous and asynchronous learning. We could use a half day schedule for synchronous Zoom classroom instruction and then provide asynchronous activities. This would still provide students with the opportunity to enjoy the snowfall!

CSDE revised expectations: districts are not required to provide meals on weather/snow days regardless of how the district is considering the day (as a school day with remote learning or as a cancellation). When snow is forecast, we could send students home with meals the day before. Frozen meals could be saved for the weekend if the weather changed and in-person classes are held.

Monica- "How does it work if we go to school and then power goes out and students must go home?"

Laurie- I think it would still work, if the students are sent home after arriving at school it still counts as a school day.

Monica- Would that be the same if one side of town is out and the other isn't?

Laurie- Yes it would, that has happened in the past. However, if things got that complicated I would likely just call the day as a snow day.

Bob- I am surprised by this result after attending some meetings with LEARN, most area districts want to keep the 3 days as snow days.

Laurie- Area districts are mixed in their plans for how to approach this. Some are taking advantage of the flexibility, others are not.

Dana- As a parent I'd like to keep the 3 snow days and the rest distance learning days.

Monica- I'm in agreement with Dana.

Carol – I am uncomfortable not following the results of the survey.

c. Committee review of 2021 committee dates; Policy, E&E and Communications to send to The Town

Motion: The Board moved to accept committee dates and submit them to the Town.

Moved by: Bob Mitchell
Seconded by: Jim Wood
Vote: 8-0

d. Discussion regarding Hybrid Model for remainder of 2020

Laurie: At this time, I am not aware of any districts who are considering moving from the hybrid model to full in-person learning prior to January. In fact more movement is being made to close schools for in-person learning through the holidays and several districts which had switched to full in-person learning are moving back to a hybrid model. At this time, we are able to manage our positive cases with minimal impact on school because of the hybrid model and the ability to provide 6 feet of distance, therefore reducing the number of close contacts. It is my recommendation that we revisit any plans to bring students into school 4 or 5 days a week at the December Board meeting for a possible transition in January if our data improves.

We are bringing more special education students in four 4 days of instructions so we can more efficiently provide their modified programs. We will be able to accommodate these students and maintain our social distancing.

How Many students are currently fully remote? About 420

Dana- Laurie, I think you're doing a great job with contact tracing- I am wondering if we can brainstorm to maybe think about bringing back staggering days. I speak for a lot of parents- our kids are struggling. It's hard. If we can't go back fully maybe stagger M,T,W cohort 1, Th F cohort 2 and flip or something like that.

Laurie- I am very hopeful that by January we will be in the position with COVID-19 cases in the community to bring students back.

Monica- Dana I appreciate the concerns you have, I am just concerned that if we bring them back too soon we will move back into a red area. I think we should look at January and see where our numbers are.

Bob- I agree that the hybrid is the best of a bad situation. Have we started to think of a plan to cover the education these learning losses?

Laurie- We have discussed the options of after school programs, summer school programs and extra support we can offer students once we return to normal. We are also taking a look at our curriculum and determining what we can delete from instruction this year, and what we need to learn.

One major concern for me is that if we bring students back and they are close enough in classrooms to be considered close contacts, we tip the balance to having to fully close rather than remain in the hybrid model. We would definitely do some kind of phase in to full in-person learning when the time is right.

Carol- I think right now we need to stay in hybrid as difficult as that is. I cannot imagine how challenging this is, but I don't think that now is the time to move. I think we should further discuss that at our next meeting.

e. Discussion of district work on equity

Dianne: On November 3rd, the ADL (anti-defamation league) provided a highly interactive and engaging online anti-bias training for our educators.

This 90 minute session introduced the participants to the foundational elements of anti-bias education. This is an approach to teaching and learning that is designed to increase understanding of differences and challenge bias, stereotyping and all forms of discrimination.

Our first training was dedicated to exploring the rationale and practices of anti-bias learning and focused on strategies and resources to create and sustain safe, inclusive and respectful learning communities. This session, in conjunction with future offerings we are planning, will provide opportunities for us to learn from and about one another and explore ways to address bias and prejudice through awareness, intervention and personal action.

We had three sessions – one for the elementary level, middle and high. And the feedback was excellent. We had 120 teachers take the evaluation (which by survey standards is impressive) and on a scale of 1 to 5 it was rated 4.23. Which again, is very positive – especially given the topic.

The recent public conversation about bias and injustice, has further pushed the need for addressing equity in schools. ADL training, coupled with our work on social emotional learning – is essential to attaining that equity and fostering a culture of respect and inclusion.

Also related to equity is attendance. Absenteeism is a leading indicator and a cause of educational inequity. Our district wide attendance team plans to disaggregate attendance data by ethnicity, student population sub groups, high needs and EL status to allow us to better identify patterns so we can be proactive about addressing the root causes in a collaborative way with all stakeholders.

Our social workers, school psychologists and counselors have been engaging with students and families who are facing more challenges than ever to problem solve in a compassionate and supportive manner to overcome obstacles they face.

In the end, these approaches - learning about anti-bias education, embedding social-emotional learning in our curriculum and analyzing attendance data shows the importance of relationships and our commitment to working with all our stakeholders to close educational gaps.

f. Discussion regarding school security

We have begun to expend funds from the security grant which is combined with the town's capital fund appropriation. The Tyl entrance has been reconfigured to ensure visitors do not have access to student spaces. We are now working on upgrading communication systems in schools to ensure there is communication from the office to all spaces in the school, the purchase of additional walkie talkies and improvements to our camera systems. We will talk about our security plan, which is confidential, in executive session.

Item 7. Committee and Liaison reports:

- a. **Policy Committee** – *No Meeting*
- b. **E&E Committee** – *No Meeting*
- c. **Communications Committee** – *Monica attended Survey and School Community Voice Team meeting last Thursday. We also had four parent reps and David attended to review survey results of our students, families, and teachers.*
- d.
- e. **Principal Reports – Distance Learning** - *Distance Learning, Heather and Will presented samples of our online platforms Seesaw and Google Classroom as well as applications for live instruction (Zoom) and increasing student engagement and participation (PearDeck, Padlet, Screencastify, etc.)*
- f.
- g. **Montville Education Foundation** - *From Robin Marquand: MEF has been in “hibernation”, but we are all still around! We have over \$100,000 in our investment account and we still would like to pay for the computer bags purchased last year!*

- h. **LEARN Bob**- *The one thing that came out of the last meeting of the board of directors- a thought exchange- CREC area offers a teacher residency program through LEARN. to help diversify your teaching population. Sandra- I had looked into that with Laurie- it is costly.*

Laurie- the other issue with that program is that it is for elementary schools only. We would take on a minority teacher in residence and cover part of the expense of supporting their education, benefits and living costs. At the end of the residency program, we would be committing to provide them employment. That might be difficult because elementary is where we typically cuts positions. In the higher grade levels, it would be easier to guarantee employment for them.

Bob - One item was brought up with an amendment to it- Doing away with the Indian mascot. We will revisit that.

- i. **CABE/NSBA** – *No Meeting*
- j. **Montville Youth Services Bureau** –*They have been busy, raising money doing a basket Raffle, they did a drug take back collecting unused prescriptions drugs. They have been painting murals, you may have seen they painted the crosswalk at the youth service bureau. They will be presenting to the board to paint crosswalks at all schools.*
- k. **Student Board Representatives**
Senior, David Baukus: From the last meeting, the district has ended the roughly 2-week distance learning period and gone back to in-person learning, with positive reactions from students for both distance and hybrid learning portions. During this period, the communication between students and teachers was much better than in the spring, and it provided the district as a whole a way to stay safer and not recklessly endanger anyone. And back in school, students have taken greater

precautions than at the beginning of the year. With the nice weather, some classes opted to take outside mask breaks, and the students spread out further than before, with no one within about ten feet of each other when their masks were off, while some opted to leave their masks on.

Clubs have kept on as per the new normal, and to point out a few: The National Honor Society has been doing a local food drive for the past two weeks. They have received dozens of food donations and nearly 75 dollars in monetary donations. All, of course, goes to the Montville Food Bank. Student government has also been working hard, and they have officially moved spirit week to the week before our winter break starts. Also, they have created individual committees to tackle a multitude of goals, such as creating mental health checkups, Friday night games, and a place to actively collect student opinions on a variety of topics. Students across grade levels are even more invested in our school this year, and they have been making a real impact in positively shaping these clubs.

Junior, Gigi Johnston: Starting November 14th, the National Honor Society and its members started a food drive which will take place every Saturday until Thanksgiving from 10am-12pm at the youth center. Because of the pandemic, they have been very limited in what they can do for fundraisers in order to stay safe and follow guidelines. They were able to collect a lot of food and donations that will be donated to the Montville Food Bank. There are specially marked bins within the high school where students and faculty are encouraged to donate food items. There has been a decent amount of food collected from the bins, and a reminder about the collection is given every morning during announcements.

On November 3rd the Youth Center also served as a polling place where voters cast their ballots and multiple students from the high school volunteered to help with the voting machines, the long lines of people, and ensuring that everyone followed safety precautions.

On Oct. 19th school was shut down for two weeks for in-person learning. Shortly after fall sports were cancelled for the remainder of the season. Teams were able to engage in practice and competition for over a month. The boys' soccer team went undefeated with a 6-0 record, the girls ended with a 2-3 record, the linemen football team had a record of 1-0, the seven-on-seven team with 0-4, the boys' cross country team ended with 1-2, and the volleyball team ended with 1-4. Winter sports have been postponed until January 19th with further discussions upcoming. The weight room is still open for individuals who wish to participate in an after school exercise program; students just have to have a guardian sign a form and agree to follow safety precautions.

Recently, the National Honor Society, Student Government, and Montville High School Athletics have come together with the help of Marc Romano and their advisors to create a tutoring program to engage in helping students throughout the school in subjects they may be struggling in.

Last week the school returned to the hybrid learning model. Students are much happier to be back and hope to remain this way for a while.

Last Tuesday marked the end of the first quarter and considering the situation, there has been much success in providing students with what they need to achieve.

- 1. Board Chair Remarks – Sandra:** *“Keep on trucking. I know you are all doing as best you can.”*

Item 8. Superintendent’s Report

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

I would first like to introduce our new Special Ed Supervisor Theresa Gouveia. She began yesterday and has hit the ground running. This week she will be shadowing me while I facilitate PPT meetings throughout the district. I am thrilled that she has started as I have been busy fielding situations that otherwise would have gone to her position.

This month has seen its challenges with many of our clinical day schools moving to fully remote learning which lends itself to many discussions with concerned parents in regards to engagement. Likewise we have concerns in district with the level of engagement for some of our students and have developed criteria to use for identifying those struggling special education students that would be appropriate to bring back four days.

Last Friday I attended a ConnCase meeting with Bryan Klimkiewicz, Division Director, Bureau of Special Education in which there was much discussion around the delivery of services and evaluation timeline constraints due to closures. It was reiterated that if State or LEA’s decide it is necessary to go fully remote due to health and safety concerns, we are not relieved of the obligation to provide FAPE to each child with a disability under IDEA. In preparation for this possibility all our case managers spent some of their time during the PD day to create implementation plans for fully remote and hybrid models.

I am confident that our students are well positioned with an educational program that meets their unique needs. We are very fortunate to have such dedicated and hardworking staff throughout the district.

b. Report from Assistant Superintendent – Mrs. Dianne Vumback

c. Report from the Superintendent – Mrs. Pallin

Meals – Our online meal request process is not reflecting the numbers of people who actually come to pick up meals. Effective on Monday, we will disband use of this survey and prepare meals based upon the numbers which we are seeing. The federal meal program will continue providing free meals to all students through June. Families are able to pick up meals for weekends as well as for school days under this program and are able to pick up meals for five days at a time. Carol and I are discussing whether a Wed. afternoon distribution would increase participation.

Holidays and travel quarantines – We are urging our staff and families to review the travel quarantines and guidelines before the holidays. Since almost every state is on the CT quarantine list, we want to be sure everyone knows that they must complete the online travel form and

quarantine or receive negative test results before they come to school / work.

Cases since Nov. 9 Re-opening – We have had four positive cases since our reopening on Nov. 9. One at MHS in which we identified one close contact, one at Tyl with two close contacts, one at Mohegan with one close contact and one at Murphy where we identified two first grade cohorts as possible close contacts.

Testing sites and times – The state has released access to free test sites which have shorter turn-around for test results and a link to that site has been posted on our website.

Testing through UCFS clinic – Effective Nov. 30th, we hope to be able provide rapid tests to all students and staff through our MHS UCFS clinic. The test used is the BinaxNOW antigen test. It is a rapid test that would be used for symptomatic students to enable us to begin contact tracing more quickly. If the results of the test are negative, it would still need to be followed up with the more accurate PCR test, but hopefully the information gained from this test would enable us to begin isolating and quarantine affected individuals more rapidly.

Sports – As I am sure you have heard, CIAC met today to weigh in on winter sports. The CIAC Board of Control acted this morning to postpone all winter sports to January 19, 2021. The CIAC Board of Control will continue to collaborate with the DPH, Governor Lamont's office, and the CSMS Sports Medicine Committee in the weeks leading up to the January 19th start of winter practices. Today's action supports member schools while they continue to manage rising COVID numbers within their communities and experience widespread movements to distance learning.

If we decide to run winter sports in January, DPH is saying that we must require mask-wearing during practices and competitions. They have said that mask-wearing is safe for aerobic activities like basketball. If there are students for whom this is unsafe, they should not engage in that activity. There is no provision for participation in sports and mask-exemption as sports are voluntary activities.

Teachers and support staff are to be commended for the work they are doing. They are working extremely hard and are providing high quality experiences for our students. I am extremely appreciative of all their efforts.

Item 9. Information Items

Item 10. Citizen's Comments

None

Item 11. Future Agenda Items

Review of Hybrid Model

It is anticipated that the Board will meet in executive session to discuss the results of an investigation into a personnel matter.

Motion: That the Board enters executive session at 7:37 p.m. for the purpose of discussing

school security.

Moved by: Wills
Seconded by: Monica
Vote: Carried (8-0)

Motion: That the board exits executive session at 7:50 P.M. with no votes taken.

Moved by: Bob Mitchell
Seconded by: Monica Pomazon
Vote: Carried (8-0)

Item 9. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn.

Moved by: Jim Wood
Seconded by: Dana Ladyga
Vote: Carried (8-0)

The meeting adjourned at 7:51 P.M.

Respectfully submitted by,

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

Monica Pomazon, Secretary
Montville Board of Education

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