



**MEETING OF BOARD OF EDUCATION
February 23, 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 6:02 P.M.

All participated in the pledge. Board members attending were: Bob Mitchell, James Wood, Carol Burgess, Dana Ladyga, Monica Pomazon, Sheelagh Lapinski, and Wills Pike. Board Member Joe Aquitante was 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, Will, Klinefelter, David Gollsneider, and Heather Sangermano; Student Board Representatives David Baukus and Gigi Johnston, Mayor Ron McDaniel, Town Council Members Kathleen Pollard, Lenny Bunnell, and Town Council Liaison Joe Jaskiewicz, .

Board Chair Sandra Berardy asked for a motion for the following alterations to the agenda.

Move 8a to the special meeting on March 2nd. Move Superintendent mid-year evaluation to the end of the meeting. And alter item 7a. to state “discussion and possible action.”

Motion: Move to move item 8a. to the special meeting scheduled for March 2nd, Move the mid-year evaluation to the end of the meeting, and alter item 7a. to discussion and possible action to adjust the learning model.

Moved: Monica Pomazon

Second: Dana Ladyga

Vote: 7-0

Item 2. Hearing of delegates and citizens (regarding budget presentation only)

None

Item 3. Presentation of 2021-2022 Board of Education Budget

Superintendent Pallin presented the 2021-2022 budget, details from the presentation can be found on the district website; www.montvilleschools.org.

Business Manager Kathy Lamoureux reviewed the budget binder, giving a brief description of the content and various sections and coding. Kathy also highlighted the changes Superintendent Pallin presented, providing additional details to the anticipated changes and increases and the rationale behind them.

Superintendent Pallin reminded the Board that there are no contingencies built into the budget for students moving in or out. We are using the exact number of students currently in-district, and there is a risk to that.

Assistant Superintendent Dianne Vumback reviewed the need for additional support for students in the area of Social Emotional Learning (SEL), reviewing the most recent chronic absenteeism data for the district which mirrors the current date statewide. Dianne highlighted the work of the district social workers with this group of students.

Wills Pike - What will happen to the full-time positions in the ESSER grant when we find that we don't need them anymore? I know we are going to discuss technology, I am concerned that this was not addressed more forcefully in the past.

The subs and para's are in my permanent budget, these have been issues for many years; districts fight for subs, and the ratio of part-time to full-time para model has never worked.

Dana Ladyga - I do recognize that the technology needs have been presented in the past, but I do not feel that it was presented in a forceful enough manner.

Wills - We are in a critical state here in the district with technology, I advocate to have this fixed. I am concerned about how we got here and how we avoid getting here again.

Item 4. Hearing of delegates and citizens (regarding agenda items only)

Jenny Natale, MEA President - read a prepared statement from the Members of the Montville Education Association regarding any proposed changes to the current learning model. Board Chair Sandra Berardy requested a copy of the letter be submitted to The Board.

Item 5. Letters and communications

None

Item 6. Approval of the Consent Calendar

Motion: To approve the consent calendar.

Moved by: Jim Wood
Seconded by: Monica Pomazon
Roll Call Vote: Carried (8-0)

Item 7. Unfinished Business

a. Discussion surrounding learning model

Motion: To approve the draft plan to re-enter school four days a week as presented by Superintendent Pallin.

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

Superintendent Pallin reviewed a draft plan for students to re-enter school four days a week, including a time frame and work to be completed to make this change possible.

Bob Mitchell - this looks like a good plan, there is a lot of discussion all over the state. I am all for getting the students back in the classroom, which is what it best for them. The four day model is what it being seen across most of the state right now and it is working. School transmission is low.

Dana Ladyga - I am in full support of bringing the kids back full time. I am a board member and a parent of two students in the district, this has been the hardest year of my life. I support the teachers, but I feel there has not been enough discussion about how difficult this is for parents who work full-time.

Wills Pike - I support in-person teaching of course. I think with proper safety precautions in place, everyone doing what they need to do to maintain the safety of the child, it is a great viable option. I appreciate the fact that our teachers feel comfortable with this in terms of they want to do this, there are some parts of the country that are not interested in doing this.

Laurie –Our teachers badly want the students back in the classroom, but they are scared. I respect that they are nervous and there is a reality to that nervousness. I will continue to work to address the concerns of the staff, parents and students, through various meetings.

Sheelagh - My concern about not having students in school are the social implications and lack of contact.

Jim- I support the return and understand the concerns of the staff. I am particularly pleased with the plan for the elementary students.

Monica - I agree and am piggybacking the comments made by the other Board Members. I am concerned about what would happen if there was an issue. Looking at the vaccines and the eligibility puts a whole other idea on what the end of the school year might look like. I am in favor of the plan with reservations.

Carol - The data presented surrounding attendance is very concerning to me, I am in support of the re-entry plan.

b. Technology project update and district technology plan

Nic Savoie reviewed the status of the network project and the five year plan for technology in the district.

Wills Pike - Are we using the one vendor or will others be used? Laurie - an RFQ will be used for the work done outside of the networking completed by Novus.

Wills - I am not a big fan of owning all of this equipment, technology becomes obsolete so quickly. Kathy- when we began buying computers we were not 1:1, it does make more sense now to lease. The only time it does not make sense is when you have a grant that wants to purchase equipment for you.

Item 8. New Business

a. Capital Requests

Tabled to the March 2nd meeting, motion above.

b. Discussion regarding District Phone System

Facilities Director Steve Carroll presented the plan to replace the phone system which was last replaced in 2008. This year there is a new law requiring that a call to 911 identify your location in the building, our current system does not allow for this. We are currently using copper lines which are slowly failing, as Frontier abandons copper lines and has no plans to replace them. The phone system is becoming obsolete and it is very difficult to secure replacement parts. The cost of the maintenance contract increases annually as the phones age. I am researching several options. Between the reductions in the cost of the maintenance contract, the change to internet phone service, the project has the potential to become cost-neutral. The maintenance department is willing to take on the added responsibility of maintaining and programming the project.

Laurie - The catalyst to this project were several service failures at Murphy and Tyl.

Wills - Even if there was a cost I would advocate for this through a capital request to the town.

- c. Consideration and action to appoint a Board Member to the Custodial Negotiating Committee

Motion: Moves to appoint Board Member Bob Mitchell to the Custodial Negotiating Committee.

Moved by: Monica Pomazon

Seconded by: Jim Wood

Roll Call Vote: Carried (8-0)

- d. Superintendent's mid-year evaluation

Item. 9 Committee and Liaison reports:

- a. **Montville Education Foundation** –*Laurie, no meeting*
- b. **LEARN Bob**- *Nothing to report.*
- c. **CABE/NSBA** – *Bob, nothing to report*
- d. **Montville Youth Services Bureau** – *Sheelagh- Absent, no report*
- e. **Student Board Representatives**

David Baukus; Senior Class - *Over the past month, there have been many updates to ongoing projects across the school. For student government, the blood drive that they have been planning has been moved for a final time from St. Patrick's Day to April 7th, which is still a Wednesday. They also will be finally be able to host their Pink day for Cohort 1. Some members of the government will pass out flowers to students and staff wearing pink at the end of the day, as they did for the second cohort the week of Valentine's Day.*

Furthermore, the counseling department has been hard at work this winter to put together multiple different resources for the students. They have been updating their Google Classroom with scholarships available for the seniors to apply to, as well as putting them in Naviance. They are also working on making a fun and interactive presentation for the upcoming ninth graders as a way to generate more excitement and to attract students that were considering going to a tech school for their freshman year.

And just yesterday the MHS Project Graduation Committee announced to the seniors that they will be hosting a drive-through parade on March 7th, with includes ice cream, prizes, and a raffle. Upon hearing the announcement or seeing the email, it generated a lot of excitement with the graduating class, as I feel that we all have been looking for something new and different to participate in. Personally, I feel that this will be a good chance to

reconnect with the other cohort and to bring all the students together for the afternoon safely.

GiGi Johnston; Junior Class – *Since the last meeting the winter sport season has started as well as some other activities, some of them being new. Because there are only two teams participating in regular winter sports, the boys' and girls' basketball teams, some changes have had to have been made. This school year in the fall season a new event called the Montville Athlete of the Week started, which is similar to the more popular event that includes all schools in the Eastern Connecticut Conference, called the ECC Athlete of the Week. Only multiple athletes from all those schools who stand out are recognized by allowing anyone who goes on the website to vote for an athlete and at the end of the week, a winner with the most votes is chosen. The Montville Athlete of the Week works the same way, except only athletes from our school are nominated. This winter season is different from the fall season because there are only the basketball teams to choose from, rather than the larger number of teams in the fall. This week's nominees were a junior, Bernard Hawkins on the boys' team, and junior Maya Hillman on the girls' team. Maya had the most votes and now receives the title of Athlete of the Week for this week.*

As well as that event starting up again, so has the new strength and conditioning program that has replaced the popular after school weight room program. It includes students from all sports teams who have had their winter season unfortunately taken away, along with many others who just wanted to join, adding up to about 40 students in total. It started last week with virtual practices, but yesterday was the first day of in-person training. It is split up into two cohorts so only about half are allowed to attend in person at a time. Soon in the future this program might be added into the event of Athlete of the Week, allowing nominees from here to be voted upon as well as the basketball teams' nominees.

There was also a successful CIAC sportsmanship meeting recently, in which 10 juniors representing all sports at the school, who have been selectively chosen by coaches, attended the meeting. These athletes have been chosen for characteristics that display leadership, sportsmanship, etc. They have planned a mask drive, where an event to donate masks has been set up.

In addition, this month is official's appreciation month, and this includes referees for basketball games who have been thanked by the winter teams. Last Saturday, the girls' basketball team signed cards for the refs and gave it to them as well as thanking them for all their hard work. This is something that is planned to continue to take place throughout the season to honor and appreciate their support and dedication.

So far in the girls and boys basketball season, there have been a total of five games. The boys have played East Lyme, Stonington, and Fitch, now standing with a record of 1-2. The girls have played Stonington and Fitch, with a record of 0-2. While these numbers may be discouraging, they were very close games in which the players had displayed their skill and hard work in these tough times, though it is now seen as a "new normal." The girls'

team celebrated their three seniors on Saturday with the annual senior night, and the boys' senior night is still to be decided upon.

Jim Wood - What do you both think about the re-entry plan? David: I am concerned about families with students at multiple schools, with some students coming in 100% and then going home to their families, which is something that we were trying to avoid with the cohorts and I have concerns about the upper grade levels. Students are apprehensive at the high school. The fear among students is that this will lead to more dangers than is justified. I know you Mrs. Pallin have done a lot of research and have more insight than we do as students. GiGi; I agree with what David is saying as well as the teachers' point of view. I think as long as the new plan is monitored very closely it could work.

f. Board Chair Remarks – None

Item 10. Superintendent's Report

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

As you are aware this time of year brings my concentration to the budget, but also on ESY and fall planning. This summer our ESY Program will consist of a preschool program, a K-5, middle school program as well as a social skills and transition program.

The Transition Academy continues with eight students in the program. They are all attending four days a week and began community outings this month. They have a group attending a program at High Hopes Therapeutic Riding and another group at The Mystic Aquarium.

My supervisors have been a great support to me and have done a terrific job at building collaborative relationships with their staff.

Amanda has held several meetings with both Tyl and high school staff to understand their areas of need as well as to brainstorm various ideas and strategies to address programming needs for our most involved students at the secondary level.

Theresa has also been collaborating with her staff. She created a spreadsheet of each case manager's service hours which has been helpful when looking at staffing and programming needs for next year. Additionally she conducted an informal survey to find out how she can best support her staff. It is clear from the survey responses that she has earned the respect of her staff in the short time she has been with us. This is quite a nice accomplishment.

In closing I would like to add that Theresa, Amanda and I are working to align programming throughout all levels of the district. Our conversations have been really refreshing and it excites me to think about the improvements this team will make as we continue to work together.

b. Report from Assistant Superintendent – Dianne Vumback

Today I met with the District Attendance Team to discuss the specifics behind the numbers you saw in the Superintendent’s Budget Report. Every one of those students have a story. Every one of those students has an obstacle they are facing when it comes to school. It can involve the need for parent support, student disengagement, aversion, healthcare barriers, and family situations – a whole host of possibilities.

We have advanced to the level of looking at chronic absenteeism by subgroup and creating whole scale intervention supports for school teams to utilize.

Preparations for state testing are underway. This year handling remote testing will be challenging for those students who do not come in to test. We have had a good response with our remote EL students where many have come in for testing purposes – so we hope that trend will continue with the Smarter Balance later in the spring.

One way to look at the social and emotional needs of our students is to take a look at their attendance in school.

Here is a comparison of the percentage of students who were chronically absent last year versus this year. And while this data is alarming and concerning, it is not Montville specific, meaning all districts are experiencing this trend across the state.

The definition of chronic absenteeism is missing ten percent or more of the academic year for any reason. While attendance can be complicated by remote learning, students not engaging or attending classes will ultimately have an impact on their academic learning and social emotional well-being.

Absenteeism is a powerful early warning sign that students are headed off track, an indicator often tied to educational inequity. It is also an accountability measure that the state is heavily focused on.

As you can imagine, this tremendous increase of students classified as chronically absent has placed an overwhelming demand on our social workers’ time.

It has been the role of the social worker to “unpack” the data on these students and to work closely with some families to support them and provide interventions and strategies unique to their situation that empowers them to attend to school.

Working with families and communicating in a culturally relevant manner with parents and educating them about attendance has been critical and demanding work.

This slide shows the increase in the number of families our social worker has been working closely with at the elementary level. It is important to note that given the time constraints and having one social worker for three elementary schools, it requires being rather selective when taking on a family management case.

Monica - what percentage of the chronically absent students are special education students? Dianne; I can tell you the highest percentage of students are our EL students and our highest need students.

c. Report from the Superintendent – Laurie Pallin

We are working with the state and the Uncas Health District to gain information about how vaccination plans for educators will be executed. At this time, I believe they will have dedicated vaccination sites, outside of the VAMS system for educators, but I am awaiting clarity. Uncas Health will guide this process and I expect more information on Friday from them. We are very eager to get our educators vaccinated and have offered to assist in any way possible.

Wills – Read a portion of an article entitled “Lost Education of the Pandemic Generation” which reviewed standardized testing results across the country and the learning losses experienced.

Laurie - Dianne and I have spoken about whether there is a value to spring standardized tests. A newspaper article like that is alarmist, the students have gained a lot of things that cannot be measured by a standardized test. I don't think we want to come back from a pandemic and start with assessment testing to look at the losses, I think we want to approach it asking: what can we leverage from this experience to move forward?

Item 11. Information Items

None

Item 12. Citizen's Comments

None

**The Board entered executive session for the purpose of the mid-year evaluation of
The Superintendent.**

Motion: To enter executive session inviting Superintendent Pallin for the purpose of completing the mid-year evaluation of Superintendent.

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

Motion: To exit executive session with no votes taken.

Moved by: Monica Pomazon
Seconded by: Bob Mitchell

Vote: Carried (8-0)

Item 13. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn.

Moved by: Dana Ladyga

Seconded by: Bob Mitchell

Vote: Carried (8-0)

The meeting adjourned at 9:24 P.M.

Respectfully submitted by,

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

Monica Pomazon, Secretary
Montville Board of Education