

**Mansfield School Committee Meeting
Minutes for Tuesday, January 10, 2023
In Person & Virtual Meeting using GoToWebinar**

An **Open Meeting** of the Mansfield School Committee was held in person and virtually on Tuesday, January 10, 2023. The open meeting session was called to order by Chair Kiera O’Neil at 6:36 p.m.

Members Present:

Kiera O’Neil, Chair
Lynn Cavicchi, Vice Chair
Lauren Scher
Jenn Walsh
Vivian Webster

Administration Present:

Teresa Murphy, Superintendent of Schools
Michael Connolly, Assistant Superintendent (Teaching / Learning)
Ed Donoghue, Assistant Superintendent (Finance/ Operations)

Members Absent:

All attendees in person / Roll Call votes not required.

Public Speak: None

Communications: One letter from a parent requesting that we consider second grade school choice for the 2023-24 school year.

Administrative Reports:

Superintendent Teresa Murphy updated the School Committee on recent requests for information regarding COVID. Specifically, we are being asked how absences have been and if we are considering masks again. Central Office reviewed attendance trends for both staff and students. Our absence rates are very good; much lower than what has been reported by other districts. There are some colds and flu but very little COVID. (Note, that we do not require families to report COVID to us but we watch trends of anyone out for 5+ days.). Additionally, fewer students and staff are absent now than in December. Staff attendance in January 2023 is better than it was in January of 2020 (pre-COVID shut down.) Regarding masking, we remain with our current plan. Anyone who wishes to mask is welcome to do so. We have no plans to consider any mask mandates. Lauren Scher asked if we were planning any booster clinics. Teresa has not planned for any but would follow up with Christine Harrison, Director of Health Services.

Approval of Warrant:

Motion to approve the warrant memo dated 12-14-22 by Jenn Walsh / Lauren Scher

Motion Carries 5 - 0

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	Goods & Services 230018S 11/1/22	Salary & Wages 2023-10 11/10/22	Goods & Services 23020S 11/15/22	Salary & Wages 2023-11 11/25/22	Goods & Services 230022S 11/29/22
General Fund	581,902.76	1,706,264.65	306,038.50	1,690,158.39	220,223.54
Medicare	-	2,465.60	-	2,465.60	-
Capital	-	-	11,900.00	-	39,499.00
Revolving	1,188.34	69,569.81	4,339.28	62,832.13	715.33
Food Service	36,235.30	30,000.65	69,775.55	28,444.58	36,709.72
Gifts	127.50	-	2,055.50	-	200.00
Student Activity	500.00	-	-	-	1,393.84
Grants	4,143.70	59,494.53	6,100.00	64,353.81	9,524.00
Prior Year	7,327.10	-	30,091.01	-	1,342.90
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
	631,424.70	1,867,795.24	430,299.84	1,848,254.51	309,608.33

Approval of Minutes:

Date	1st	2nd	Discuss Y/N	Vote	Roll Call (n/a)/comments
Open Meeting 12-13-22	Jenn Walsh	Lauren Scher	None	5 - 0	
Exec Session 12-13-22	Jenn Walsh	Lauren Scher	None	5 - 0	

Gifts:

The Clayman family of Mansfield generously donated ten \$50 gift cards to Stop&Shop so that we could give to families in need over the holidays. Two cards were provided to each principal who then selected family recipients. We thank the Clayman family for their caring support.

Old Business:

Audit: This year's audit has been completed and will soon be presented to the Select Board. There were no findings for the school.

Policy: Lynn met with Teresa Murphy, Mike Connolly, Diane Nugent and Felicia Vasudevan of MHTL. Non-discrimination, discipline, school choice and choosing library books were discussed. Full policy meeting will be held on Thursday to discuss further.

New Business:

Consideration of field trips: postponed until January 24th due to a change of field trip date.

FY24 Detailed Budget Presentation:

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The presentation was kicked off by Assistant Superintendent Ed Donoghue. He thanked all those that helped pull all of the numbers together. Throughout the presentation each principal thanked those that worked diligently to assist this effort.

The proposed budget for FY24 is \$59,090,994 which represents a 5.8% increase over FY23. Ed noted that last year's increase over FY22 was only 1.8%. As he noted last year, we can not operate on such a low budget increase each year so this year's increase is expected. The budget does represent level services.

Central Office: This budget is relatively flat. The largest increase is due to a new assessment from Bristol County Agricultural School for \$68,000 toward construction costs. Curriculum is up due increased translation costs and the new Dyslexia tool being moved from the Special Education line item to Central Office.

Questions/Answers:

Lynn asked why Bristol County Assessments appear in the school budget but Southeast Regional Assessments are in the town budget. Ed will research. Lynn also noted that transportation costs look stable on paper because last year we used \$300,000 and this year \$400,000 from revolving funds. We cannot sustain this supplement over time. She suggested that we take a look at transportation fees for next year.

Kiera asked how many students attend Bristol County. Eight students. This made Kiera more comfortable with the total assessment amount.

Lauren Scher asked about using the Student Opportunity Act (SOA) Grants. Teresa noted that we really do not know what we are getting from SOA as it is buried in chapter 70 funds. This has been a frustrating process for most districts. Mike Connolly noted that the SOA project does not announce funds for us; rather it notifies us of potential grants to which we can apply. Mansfield has not been eligible for any grants that have been announced to date.

Facilities: This budget has increased largely due to the increased cost of utilities and the need to contract outside vendors for our HVAC support due to the long-term absence of our HVAC technician. We have signed a three-year contract for natural gas which will help provide some stability. Additionally, our new boilers will provide increased efficiencies and decreased maintenance costs.

Questions/Answers:

Kiera asked if there is any kind of warranty on the new boilers which will keep maintenance costs close low. Ed noted that these boilers are much more efficient and require less maintenance overall. There is a warranty as part of the installation but Ed did not have the details.

Lynn asked if inflationary factors were built into the cost of supplies. Yes, we have and we have also factored in co-op buying options. She also asked if we have any risk in a three-year utility contract; what happens if the rates decline. Per Ed, the general sentiment that utility rates are unlikely to drop by much. The rate we secured is reasonable and we will have a consistent budget line.

Special Education: (Special Education Director Jim Leonard) This budget has increased largely due to increases in tuition costs and contracted services. Other line items are within expected ranges. Contracted services represent the hiring of outside nurses for complex medical needs of students. These are very hard positions to fill. We made every effort to do so but had to move toward outside companies. The State has allowed private based schools to raise tuition up to 14% which is

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Minutes for Tuesday, January 10, 2023
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extremely detrimental to public schools who outpace students. It is understood that one person in the State authorized this change. BICO has raised their fees by 10% and we are starting to get notification from other schools on their increases. The circuit breaker reimbursement is based on last year's special education expenses.

Questions/Answers:

Kiera stated that the special education budget is higher than last year is still less than in FY22.

Lynn asked if we have increased costs this year, can we expect our circuit breaker reimbursement to increase next year? That is correct, the reimbursement fluctuates based on prior year expenses.

Lauren asked if we are locked into the contracted services. In other words, can we continue to advertise for a new staff member? Jim noted that this is possible but last year's search was exhaustive. It is a very specialized skill and very few are interested in the job requirements.

However, we will continue to pursue. Why is there a budget line item for special education buses if we have added a bus to capital? This cost reflects the maintenance costs on those buses that are not being replaced. Is there any chance that the 14% tuition increase will be rolled back by the State of MA? We have been told that there is no pulling this back. However, we do understand that there is discussion on legislation to prevent a single person from approving rates in the future. Lauren suggested the committee write to our state representatives. Lynn noted that recently there was a joint letter from MASC, MASS, MEA and others related to the increase in tuition costs as well as inflationary factors which will be very harmful to school budgets.

Mansfield High School: (Principal Russ Booth) The high school was able to reduce the budget from FY22 primarily due to a decreased need for textbooks next year as well as decreased maintenance costs. Increases are due to some new software subscriptions including a new virtual chemistry lab for our students allowing them to virtually perform experiments that in the past could only be shown to students by video. Student clubs and activities have increased primarily due to the addition of the Active Minds Wellness Club and E-sports for whom we need to have transportation and rental fees at Helix in Foxboro. Health/guidance services is up due to the School to Career partnership. This has been so successful that we have added a second contracted person. We can now support students 5 days per week.

Questions/Answers:

Lynn asked if there are any changes to the program of studies that may result in the need for additional textbooks not accounted for in this budget. Russ noted that there would be no further impact.

Athletics : (Principal Russ Booth) There is a slight increase mostly due to the increased cost of officials and venue rentals. We continue to use funds from the revolving accounts to offset expenses.

Questions/Answers:

Lynn asked if inflationary costs were factored into supplies as the increase is so low. It was noted that we have left over supplies from 2020-2022 while sports were not running or running at a minimum. We also cycle through uniform replacements where some years the cost is higher than others (ie. Football equipment/uniforms are costlier than uniforms for other teams.) Russ will follow up with Tim Selmon.

Kiera asked what our annual receipts are for athletics. It is roughly \$200,000 year but we don't have the exact figure for the last two years available tonight. We try not to keep a lot in reserves.

**Mansfield School Committee Meeting
Minutes for Tuesday, January 10, 2023
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Qualters Middle School: (Principal Dave McGovern) QMS was able to reduce the budget by 7.56% with the biggest decrease in the textbook line item. We have completed purchases in recent years and there is a smaller need in FY24. Instructional Equipment is down significantly due to the changeover to new SmartBoards. Our maintenance has decreased significantly and there is no need to replace bulbs in the new systems. Equipment maintenance is also down. Furniture cost is up as Dave continues to convert from single desk/chair combos to table based classrooms. The new tables are also whiteboards which promotes team building activities. On a positive note we have incredible number of students participating in after school activities. This has resulted in an increase in this budget line item.

Questions/Answers:

Lauren asked if the furniture purchases will be an annual line item. Yes, we had started prior to COVID but then took a break. Our goal is to continue as it promotes a positive learning environment. Kiera was thrilled to hear about the increased participation in school clubs. Jenn noted some concern that if we remove text book amounts this year then in future years when we need to make purchases, our budget will show a big increase and we risk the perception that may have. Teresa agrees but the purchase of textbooks is cyclical and is also based on curriculum changes by the state so we don't always have total control of the timing. Kiera asked if the \$34,000 is a good indicator of the average annual textbook cost. It should be but again it depends on what changes are required and where we stand for enrollment numbers.

Lynn noted that the cost due to SmartBoard installations dramatically reduced Instructional Equipment costs and wondered why this is not reflected across all schools. Ed noted that it may not always be highlighted but it was factored in across the district.

Jordan/Jackson Elementary School: (Principal John Nieratko) The budget is basically flat with a very slight decrease mostly due to a reduced need for furniture purchases and teaching supply needs. There is an increase in maintenance due to the need for carpet cleaning now that we have returned carpets to the classroom post Covid. Last year's increase furniture costs covered new combined seating for the cafeteria and multipurpose room.

Questions/Answers: None

Robinson Elementary School: (Principal Kerri Sankey) A slight increase in the budget with increases coming primarily from extending the Envision license and for some chromebook costs.

Questions/Answers:

Lauren asked why there was a need for more chromebooks since we had leased a large number last year. The original intent was to have a few baskets of 5 chromebooks in each classroom. Experience this year has proven that we need more available for use in special education classrooms, EL classes and for various assessments. The good news is we do not see the need for one to one.

Roland Green Preschool (Director Krista DeMello): There is very little change to the budget (less than \$2000.) Krista took an extensive look historically into each line item and is satisfied with the budget amounts. There is a one-time increase in the copier lease amount due to a billing error on the part of the copier company.

Questions/Answers:

Lauren asked if there were any maintenance concerns due to the age of the building (99 years.) Ed feels that we have supported this school well and there are no major concerns. Krista added that recent maintenance to the boiler have been very successful. Teresa did note that there is a

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problem with the chair lift and we are still waiting for outside maintenance to be able to provide the needed supplies. Krista also noted that tomorrow starts long awaited improvements to the playground including removing non-ADA compliant wood chips and installing new floor covering.

Ed Donoghue reviewed the remaining slides concentrating on #17 which highlights which staff and services will be covered by the remaining ESSER funds. There is approximately \$530,000 remaining in these funds that can be spent next year and then we are down to zero. There was a great deal of discussion on how to portray that the schools are attempting to keep these services but now absorb them into the budget. These services are valuable to our students who suffered during COVID and continue to feel the impact. Lynn noted that these services had been sought out prior to COVID so it is even more important to keep this staff on.

Kiera asked if we had heard anything about free school lunches for next year. As a reminder, the federal free program ended in June of 2022. In July, MA voted to extend the free school lunches for the 2022-23 year. Ed hopes that MA decides earlier than last year. We are currently serving over 2100 meals per day which is significantly higher than pre COVID levels. In addition, we (and most districts) struggle to collect unpaid balances from families.

Lynn noted that we need to make sure the public understands that inflation has a significant impact on our budget and we do not have much wiggle room.

Consideration of Policy Change:

Mansfield has had several new requests from students to become student teachers. We welcome this opportunity and request the addition of several school sponsors. Note that Regis and AIC requests came in after the agenda during the 48 hours prior to the meeting.

Motion to approve the addition of American International College, Regis College and William & James College to policy LDA (List of eligible schools for student teachers) by Jenn Walsh / Lauren Scher

Motion Carries 5- 0

FY23 School Choice review:

As we have finished registrations the first year of school choice in Mansfield, Teresa brought some information to the committee. Twelve students are currently enrolled as school choice students (of which 4 were already in Mansfield but moved out of town choosing to remain as Mansfield students.) One student is expected to start at the beginning of the second term. In addition, twelve students applied but chose not to enroll; six students enrolled but then changed their minds and we had to withdraw them prior to September, three students applied who were not really choice students. We are getting many calls about next year. Teresa noted that there are still many factors in play to determine what openings we will make for next year including staffing and enrollment. Once we have a better idea we will approach the committee again for a vote on grades and slots available. We are not clear if we have to come to you for a vote but we are choosing to do so. Vivian Webster indicated she had received feedback from two school choice parents who are very happy and chose Mansfield "because Mansfield cares about our kids." Lynn asked where the school choice funds would sit. Ed noted that it would be a revolving account in the school where the students attend. This year it will reside at the high school only.

School Committee Business:

**Mansfield School Committee Meeting
Minutes for Tuesday, January 10, 2023
In Person & Virtual Meeting using GoToWebinar**

Jenn Walsh, Kiera O'Neil and Lynn Cavicchi all noted that they should be able to attend the next student advisory committee. There was some discussion on whether or not it should be held on the same day as school committee. This can be discussed at the next student advisory meeting.

Other- Items not anticipated by the Chair 48 hours prior to this meeting: None

Documents Referenced:

FY24 Budget Presentation

LDA Policy

Motion to adjourn: At 8:50 p.m., Kiera O'Neil asked for a motion to adjourn.

Motion to adjourn by Jenn Walsh / Lauren Scher

Motion Carries 5-0

Respectfully Submitted,
Diane Nugent, Administrative Assistant to
Superintendent & School Committee