

**Mansfield School Committee Meeting  
Minutes for Tuesday, January 12, 2021  
Virtual Meeting using GoToWebinar**

An **Open Meeting** of the Mansfield School Committee was held virtually on Tuesday, January 12, 2021. The open meeting session was called to order by Chair Kiera O'Neil at 5:33 p.m.

**Members Present:**

Kiera O'Neil  
Lynn Cavicchi  
Lauren Scher  
Jenn Walsh (arrived 5:35pm)  
Linda Fernando

**Administration Present:**

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

**Members Absent:** None

**\*\*\* All votes taken by roll call vote \*\*\***

**Roll Call:**

Kiera O'Neil            aye  
Lynn Cavicchi        aye  
Linda Fernando      aye  
Lauren Scher         aye

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MANSFIELD SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Kiera O'Neil asked for a motion to enter into Executive Session pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 21 for the Following Purpose: Under Exception No. 3. To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares.

**Motion** to enter into executive session by Linda Fernando / Lauren Scher

**Roll Call Vote:**

Lynn Cavicchi        aye  
Kiera O'Neil         aye  
Linda Fernando      aye  
Lauren Scher         aye

**Motion Carries 4 - 0**

**School Committee returned to Open Session at 6:05 pm**

**Public Speak:** Public Speak is open for 15 minutes for anyone who has registered via GoToWebinar.  
None

**Communications:**

Letter was received regarding the use of Pool testing in our schools. This item will be addressed later in the meeting.

**Old Business:**

**Committee Updates:**

**Audit:** No update

**CIP:** Have a meeting January 27th.

**Budget:** None

**Mansfield School Committee Meeting  
Minutes for Tuesday, January 12, 2021  
Virtual Meeting using GoToWebinar**

Facilities: Meeting next week. We should have 4 policies ready for the next school committee meeting.

Policy: None

Returning and Learning: Discussed the MHS virtual remote cohort and student learning time. We have received a number of college students who have offered to sub which has been helpful.

**New Business:**

***Student Learning Time:***

Superintendent Murphy provided an introduction and update.

In November DESE surveyed school districts to ascertain the number of in-person and remote synchronous hours the typical student in grades 1, 4, 7, 10 receives over the course of ten school days in the hybrid and remote learning models. The documents we based our survey responses were ones created in August.

The remote model fell within DESE guidelines. In the hybrid model the documented hours of live instruction fell slightly below DESE's guidelines. Although the documented hours fell short, the practices used in the classrooms everyday are aligned with the guidelines. Teachers have increased the amount of time they have live connections with their students since the beginning of the school year.

District leadership and teacher leaders have been working together to assure compliance with the state's new regulation on student learning time in grades 1 through 12. Documents have been revised to reflect both our current program of live instruction (again, that is defined as in-person learning and remote synchronous connections). Our teachers are meeting this week to review expectations and changes to the documents that were agreed upon last summer.

***FY21 Budget Presentation:***

This is the annual detailed presentation of the budget.

Assistant Superintendent Ed Donoghue provided introductions and reviewed the agenda. He then reviewed the assumptions pointing out the proposed budget amount of \$57,407,560 which is a 8.99% increase over the FY21 budget. This amount may be further adjusted based on COVID related teaching and learning requirements which at this time remain uncertain. The salary and wages represents a level service budget. It was noted that there is a loss of revolving revenue due to COVID. The Special Education is up 5.58% which reflects our best estimate of outplacements for next year as well as a reduction in Circuit Breaker revenue due to COVID. There is a big increase in the technology budget which we will discuss in detail later in the presentation.

Next, the consolidated spreadsheet comparing figures from FY20, 21 and 22 was reviewed. This is a quick glance at the changes by high level category. It also notes the proposed COVID projections for FY22. The FY21-22 Reconciliation page provides information on key changes from last year. The Staff Changes reduction of \$530,580 represents the 14.6 one year FTEs that were hired to assist with COVID related needs. Lynn Cavicchi asked how we would factor this cost back in if we needed these resources next year. Ed reported that these figures will be shown and discussed in the COVID related category.

The Central Office budget was reviewed by Ed. Transportation costs have increased slightly due to the loss of Pay-N-Ride fees for last spring and this fall. We are in the 5th year of a contract with

**Mansfield School Committee Meeting  
Minutes for Tuesday, January 12, 2021  
Virtual Meeting using GoToWebinar**

Connolly so there was no rate increase. We will be going out to bid for this contract again next year. The technology budget showed a 75.52% / \$287,585 increase (note that a correction was made to the original slide which showed \$387,584 and 140.51% increases.) Director of Technology Lori Letendre provided some detail. The key contributors to this increase are: server and software upgrades to manage the quick rollout of our 1:1 initiative; larger network requirements and firewall upgrades due to remote learning and increased chromebook use; network protection software due in part to recent ddos attacks. Another key cost is that the first year chromebooks are already reached their lease expiration date and we must replace. Kiera O'Neil asked if we could get a further breakdown on the technology costs. She also asked if we needed to add any money for unexpected technology expenses if we remained in any kind of remote learning next year. Ed felt that we would be ok with what was proposed.

Ed Donoghue reviewed the Facilities budget. The custodial increase is due to the hiring of 2 additional custodians to help with the additional cleaning and setup needed due to COVID. The utilities cost shows an increase primarily due to a loss of revolving offsets. Equipment maintenance is the only item that dropped.

Special Education Director Jim Leonard reviewed the Special Education budget. The administration budget is up primarily from a salaried position that was changed over to a consulting position. This is a shift in budget from another line item. He anticipates this amount to decrease over time as we improve efficiencies across the district. The large increase in teaching supplies and assessments is due to the increase in testing needed to understand student learning loss as well as a shift from school budget line items to the district line item. Vice Chair Lynn Cavicchi asked if we will see a reduction at each school due to the shift of teaching supplies to the district. Jim noted that yes, there is a reduction but the full reduction won't be realized until the district fully takes over the managing of these assessments. She also asked how much of the COVID FY22 budget related to Special Education. Teresa responded that \$175,000 would fall under this category to be reviewed later. These items will support neuropsych evaluations and social/emotional support.

Principal Mary Watkins reviewed the Mansfield High School budget. The principal's office budget increased for school-wide learning platforms such as Pear Deck as well as potential graduation expenses if we cannot use the Xfinity Center in May. The biggest increase is in textbooks. This is driven primarily by the digital companion to books. The digital resources become obsolete or the licenses expire and vendors set the prices so it is cheaper for us in the long run to buy both new books and digital uploads. The biggest purchase here would be new literacy and vocabulary books though there are also math and science books needed as well. The instructional technology budget increased due to the cost of virtual labs and some additional software supports for students at home. Vice Chair Cavicchi asked why Pear Deck was not in the Instructional Technology line item. Ms. Watkins thought it would be best placed in the Principal's budget because it was to be used school wide. Assistant Superintendent Michael Connolly noted that over time we want to move more of those line items to the district level. Lynn Cavicchi asked for clarification on the potential COVID expenses. Per Mary and Teresa these would be: Bridge program expansion, addition of a clinical social worker, additional teachers in science and math, Edgenuity tuitions and online subscriptions. Lauren Scher asked why there was a reduction in Guidance costs since the need had probably increased. This reduction, per Mary Watkins, is due to the reduction in translation needs.

Mary continued with Athletics. There is very little change in these budgets. The athletics goods and services change is due to increases in transportation costs, rental fees and officials raises.

**Mansfield School Committee Meeting  
Minutes for Tuesday, January 12, 2021  
Virtual Meeting using GoToWebinar**

There is also a loss of revolving funds due to the loss of user fees. Kiera O'Neil asked if the FY21 budget figures reflected the changes made due to COVID or if they were the original budget figures. Ed noted that there had been some changes to reflect the loss of spring sports. There was some savings this year due to the pre-purchase of equipment last year but much of this savings is offset by the increase in transportation costs. (More buses and cleaning needed due to COVID.) Lynn Cavicchi asked about enrollment trends and how this may impact the user fee account going forward. Mary indicated that this year due to COVID there was a decline in participation but she would need to do some research about future years. No further questions.

Principal David McGovern reviewed the Qualters Middle School budget. Similar to the high school, text books and the need for digital resource renewals drive the biggest increase. We are also in the first year of the science three year model change so new textbooks are needed. We are in the second year of a three year math textbook upgrade. Instructional technology increases are due to digital subscriptions and other software needed for our increased chromebook use. Instructional equipment is primarily driven by the science curriculum changes. Microscopes are now needed in all grades. QMS will purchase new and upgrade others as needed. Additional graphing calculators are needed for math. Due to the complexities of this year, furniture purchases will be put on hold so there is no furniture budget for next year. There were no questions from the committee.

Principal John Nieratko presented the Jordan/Jackson budget. The principal's office increase is primarily due to postage. Many more mailings are taking place with students not always in the building and fewer handouts going home in backpacks. Instructional Technology reflects digital subscriptions such as Pear Deck, IXO, RTI assessment tools and interactive technology for counselors. J/J will order some new furniture but much less than last year. There were no questions from the committee.

Principal Kerri Sankey reviewed the Robinson budget. Textbook costs decreased due to the completion of payments for the new Journey's literacy program and the number of social emotional classroom books purchased last year. Instructional technology is down since there were large purchases last spring such as IXL which is used for math and literacy practice. There were no questions from the committee.

Director Krista DeMello reviewed the Roland Green budget. There were no significant changes. Instructional Equipment increased due to the addition of a classroom and more 1:1 materials for students to reduce the amount of sharing during COVID. There were no questions from the committee.

Superintendent Murphy reviewed the staffing requests: an additional district wide Instructional Technology Coach (we currently have one); a science and World language teacher at MHS (positions that were cut in previous years but the need exists due to student course requests); QMS World Language teacher (currently staff teach across multiple grades which is challenging in the middle school team model); a .2 increase in a Robinson Physical Therapist (a previous position was changed from 1 FTE to .8 FTE but we find this is not enough and want to change it back to a full time position); and a .4 Roland Green psychologist (allowing someone on site 2 days per week.) Kiera asked if there were any proposed reductions. Per Teresa at this time there are not but there are still many unknowns such as COVID, the loss of kindergarten students last year and whether or not they will come back and the lack of retiree announcements this year. Lynn Cavicchi asked for clarification on the technology coach and whether or not it would be dedicated to elementary.

**Mansfield School Committee Meeting  
Minutes for Tuesday, January 12, 2021  
Virtual Meeting using GoToWebinar**

Teresa noted that it would be to help focus more attention on the elementary but it was not clear how staffing would be split.

The next slide provided a high level look at what we may need related to COVID for next year. A lot has changed since the spring but we still do not know exactly what our return to school will look like. Additionally, we have much remediation to take place due to the loss of learning.

Superintendent Murphy, Assistant Superintendent Donoghue have discussed these items with Town Manager Kevin Dumas. It was agreed that these items should be kept separate from the initial budget proposal. The proposed total amounts are \$865,370 for staffing; \$378,228 for services and \$369,304 for supplies. We hope that we will not need all of this but we are preparing for multiple scenarios.

**Staffing:** If we continue with remote or hybrid models we will need, for example, additional MHS teachers for the virtual remote academy; a .5 Roland Green inclusion teacher and additional custodians. Regardless of class structure there are COVID outcomes. These are scenarios that we must manage even if we go back to a traditional school setting. The objective would be to recoup lost learning time and move our students forward. Examples of costs are math interventionists, reading interventionists, expansion of the high school Bridge Program, substitute teachers and a speech/language pathologist.

**Service:** Items include a data assessment system which allows us to identify student loss, manage instructional adjustments, and provide more targeted instruction. We will need to enhance our summer school program, renew Edgenuity platform subscriptions, provide compensatory special education services, compensate transportation costs (loss user fees) and support increased facilities costs such as moving items from storage.

**Supplies:** Schooling will look different regardless of the COVID status. For example at the elementary level, we will be looking at larger cafeteria tables, Phonics programs for loss of learning, increased supplies at Roland Green to minimize sharing, continued need of PPE supplies.

Chair O'Neil thought it would be helpful to see some of these items broken down on the presentation. Place items into two categories: If we are still in pandemic mode and Recovery Items regardless of pandemic status. Linda Fernando expanded on that asking for more detail on the staffing needs. Teresa Murphy reminded the committee that we still don't have the details we need since there are so many unknowns. However, the district will make its best guess on the particulars. Ed Donoghue stated that this spring's budget process is going to be very challenging as there are so many unknowns within the school, town and state.

Vice Chair Cavicchi felt that the presentation slide did not provide enough transparency. We need to show what we need even if the rest of the world "returns to normal." It is very important to articulate the story behind our potential outcomes. 2021-22 is going to continue to be a challenging year for us.

Kiera O'Neil asked if we can put a lot of emphasis on the remediation needs and setting priority to each items. She also asked if we can pre-purchase any items with this year's money. Ed does not feel that we will have the capacity to do so. There are still many expenses that we still need to cover for this year. However, we will continue to watch for opportunities.

**Mansfield School Committee Meeting  
Minutes for Tuesday, January 12, 2021  
Virtual Meeting using GoToWebinar**

Lauren Scher pointed out that there may be items that HAVE to happen. For example we will need to move items out of storage. If we do not get COVID support, we need to be prepared to move these costs to our operating budget. We need to scope other items that may fall into this category.

Assistant Superintendent reviewed the remaining supplies which detailed expenses by category and source of funds.

**Questions / Comments:**

Lynn Cavicchi: Make note of grant assumptions for next year which are expected to be slightly down, note any impact of Student Opportunity Act, and provide enrollment projections.

Lauren Scher: There are many open questions on both the revenue and expense sides. This will create many challenges for us. It is important to get a good handle on all of our COVID expenses.

***Consideration of Job Descriptions (Office Assistant and Library Media Assistant):***

Superintendent Murphy explained that these job descriptions date back to the early 90s and many of the functions are out of date. Lynn Cavicchi asked if the title of office assistant was appropriate. Teresa felt that this is what the bargaining unit put forward so it should be approved as such but she would go back and ask their thoughts. Lynn also asked the district to consider a separate job title for those that deal with items such as the budget and other financial matters. Teresa did not feel that this would be appropriate since there are many important functions that are spread across staff members and there was not the need to isolate this piece. She will confirm with Anne Aldo who is head of the union. The topic of the media specialist was discussed as it is a licensed position at the high school but a clerical position at QMS and elementary schools. Teresa noted that the roles are very different at these schools. The topic of a shared elementary position was discussed with the committee noting surprise that we did not ask for this position in our budget. Teresa noted that we have many times before but the committee had not approved due to other pressing priorities. The district did not feel it could add it to this year's request. Teresa then noted that the committee was moving off topic as this agenda item is to approve job descriptions not to discuss staffing needs. Chair O'Neil agreed and brought the discussion back to the job descriptions. Linda Fernando asked for some minor editing.

**Motion** to approve the Office Assistant and Library Media Assistant job descriptions with minor edit changes by Linda Fernando / Jenn Walsh

**Roll Call Vote:**

Lauren Scher	aye
Linda Fernando	aye
Kiera O'Neil	aye
Jenn Walsh	aye
Lynn Cavicchi	aye

**Motion Passes: 5 - 0**

**New School Committee Business:**

None

**Other- Items not anticipated by the Chair 48 hours prior to this meeting:**

**Mansfield School Committee Meeting  
Minutes for Tuesday, January 12, 2021  
Virtual Meeting using GoToWebinar**

Recently the state offered school districts the opportunity to take advantage of state funding and resources to do COVID pool testing on students. The state will provide supplies for a 6 week period but the effort must be managed by existing school staff which would put a big strain on our already overworked nurses. This plan was discussed with Christine Dooling, Director of nursing, Fire Chief Justin Desrosiers, Town Health agent Amy Donovan-Palmer. There are more cons than pros when reviewing the process and expected outcomes. There will be a lot of logistics to getting parent consent and performing actual testing. Once a positive pool is returned we would then need to retest all students in that pool and keep them quarantined until there was an identification of the positive student(s). Jenn Walsh pointed out that pool testing is not a stepping stone to getting kids back to school faster. It is just a way to manage the spread.

The district determined not to pursue pool testing but to continue using our resources to social distance, clean and contact trace to keep our COVID impact as low as possible.

**Documents Referenced:**

FY22 Budget proposal

**Motion to adjourn:** At 8:48 p.m., **Motion** to adjourn the open meeting by Linda Fernando / Jenn Walsh

**Roll Call vote:**

Lynn Cavicchi	aye
Jenn Walsh	aye
Kiera O'Neil	aye
Linda Fernando	aye
Lauren Scher	aye

**Motion Carries 5 - 0**

Respectfully Submitted,  
Diane Nugent, Secretary to the  
Superintendent & School Committee