



**Mansfield School Committee Meeting  
Minutes for Tuesday, February 11, 2020  
Town Hall, 6 Park Row, Mansfield, MA 02048, Room 3ab**

An **Open Meeting** of the Mansfield School Committee was held in room 3AB of the Town Hall on Tuesday, February 11, 2020. The open meeting session was called to order by Vice Chair Lynn Cavicchi at 7:02 p.m.

\* Due to technical difficulties, the meeting was not live broadcast by cable. Mansfield Cable, recorded the meeting for future cable broadcast.

**Members Present:**

Lynn Cavicchi , Vice Chair  
Linda Fernando (arrived 7:24 pm)  
Lauren Scher  
Jenn Walsh

**Administration Present:**

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

**Members Absent:**

Kiera O'Neil, Chair

**Public Speak:** None

**Communications:** None

**Administrative Reports:**

***Superintendent:*** Superintendent Murphy announced that this evening the Special Education Parents Advisory Committee (SEPAC) was meeting this evening. Tonight's topic is Transitions for older students as they prepare to leave Mansfield Public Schools on their 22nd birthday. Teachers, Special Education staff and administrators are presenting information to families.

***Assistant Superintendent of Teaching & Learning:*** Assistant Superintendent Michael Connolly announced staff recognitions:  
Jennifer Fleischmann (Robinson reading teacher) has been selected to serve on the MA Literacy Championship team. This team will serve as advisors to the state by lending their knowledge and expertise to the statewide early literacy initiative that kicks off in 2020. The goal of the literacy initiative is to help all students to become better readers and to identify evidence-based early literacy practices to ensure equity and excellence.

***Assistant Superintendent of Finance & Operations:*** None

**High School Student Representative Report:** None

**Approval of Warrant:** None

**Approval of Minutes:**

**Open Session Minutes of 01-21-20**

**Motion** to approve the minutes by Jenn Walsh / Lauren Scher

**Motion Carries 3 - 0**

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**Executive Session Minutes of 01-21-20 (Tabled until next meeting)**

**Gifts:**

- PAC organized a book donation opportunity for parents. The books donated were valued at over \$400 and each book was dedicated to a staff member. Thank you to PAC and our generous parents.
- Mansfield Cable Access generously donated \$1500 to Mansfield Public Schools which will be used to purchase wireless MICs. These are very helpful for group performances such as the National Anthem. Thank you to Mansfield Cable Access.

**Old Business:**

**Committee Updates:**

Audit: No Update

CIP: No update

Budget: Town-wide budget meeting held. Proposal to move items from budget to capital will be voted this evening.

Facilities: Ready to present policy changes to the policy subcommittee.

Policy: Next meeting will be March 5th.

Master Plan: Continued work on proposals

OPEB Task force: No update

**New Business:**

**Field Trips:**

**MHS Percussion Competition to CT 2-29-20**

(Mary Watkins / Matt McGuire) This is an annual competition which allows the percussion group to qualify for the World Championships. Cost is \$66 per person to cover a bus. The competition season is just getting underway for both percussion and color guard. Matt McGuire is very positive about this year's programs.

**Motion** to approve the Percussion Field Trip by Jenn Walsh / Lauren Scher

**Motion Carries 3 - 0**

**MHS History Day Competition to Maryland 6-14-20 - 6-18-20**

(Mary Watkins) This field trip is a place holder in the event that any of our students earn a trip to the National Championships. Mansfield has had great representation over the last few years. The high school will cover the costs for students to go to local and regional competitions. Once they reach the national level, the high school will cover a lot of the costs but students would have to cover room and board. It is expected that this would be in the \$400 range for students.

**Motion** to approve the History Day Field Trip by Jenn Walsh / Lauren Scher

**Discussion:** Lynn Cavicchi asked if plans were set to help these students who could be missing final exams. Mary Watkins reported that Julia Atwood does a great job of assisting these students through the exam period. Lauren Scher had some concerns regarding the cost. Will there be fund raising for those students who may not be able to afford to go? Unfortunately there cannot be school sponsored fundraising because 'History Day' is not a student activity. However there is a Social Studies student activity account with some funds that may be able to be used. Both Lynn and Lauren emphasized the importance of notifying students of potential costs prior to beginning any entry into the competition. It would be unfair for students to

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work hard toward Nationals but not be able to afford to attend.  
(Linda Fernando entered the meeting at 7:24 pm)

**Motion Carries 3 - 0 - 1** (Linda Fernando abstained since she was not present for the discussion.)

**MHS All State Music festival overnight to Boston 3-5-20 - 3-7-20**

(Mary Watkins) One student has qualified for this event. It is a great opportunity to learn and practice with professionals. Sheila Newton will chaperone and parent will attend.

**Motion** to approve the All State Music Festival Trip by Jenn Walsh / Lauren Scher

**Motion Carries 4 - 0**

**QMS Grade 7 field trip to Canobie Lake Park, NH 6-15-20**

(David McGovern) This is a traditional event for our grade 7 students. Roller Coasters and other rides support the physics lesson plans in grade 7. Coach buses will be used which are more comfortable and less costly than using school buses.

**Motion** to approve the Grade 7 Canobie Lake Park Trip by Jenn Walsh / Lauren Scher

**Motion Carries 4 - 0**

***MHS- Removal of Class Rank:***

At the 1-21-20 School Committee meeting, Mary Watkins and Tina Karidoyanes presented a proposal to remove class rank. It discussed the many reasons why class rank is not beneficial to students. The committee was given time to think about the plan and will vote tonight. Two members of the audience asked to speak. We had already completed our public speak portion of the meeting and no one had signed up to speak. These citizens stated that they were not familiar with the public speak requirements. Vice Chair Lynn Cavicchi allowed comments but read the statement on Public Speak guidelines. Each person was given time to speak. No debate with the committee will occur.

- Frances MacDonald, 24 Bird Road: Ms. MacDonald was very concerned about this plan. Schools should be strengthening our academic services not watering them down. This competition for class rank makes our students stronger. It was her opinion that class rank is a true "matter of fact" number with no interpretation. It is unfair that students who take AP courses will not be recognized for their efforts.
- Keith Ninesling, 27 Kerry Drive: Mr. Ninesling is very much against this proposal. He feels that it is a way of coddling our students and minimizing the academic successes of our students. Competition is good and students should be pushed. The class rank recognition is an opportunity for students to shine and something they can strive to achieve. He compared the class rank achievements to the achievements of the football team in the super bowl.

**Motion** to approve the removal of class rank at Mansfield high school by Jenn Walsh / Lauren Scher.

**Discussion:** Lauren Scher began by explaining that our current class rank is not a clear cut process. If it were on a true bell curve, then there would be benefits to having it. However, it is extremely difficult to differentiate between students causing many student's rank to appear much lower than grades would indicate. Last year, GPAs had to be examined out to 4 decimal places to differentiate approximately 19 students. It just doesn't make sense the way that it is

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setup currently. She is, however, concerned about how we will honor high achievers and wants the high school to research ways to do this.

Linda Fernando indicated that there is too much stress with the current system. The high school needs to have more discussions on how to honor students without using class rank.

Jenn Walsh noted that the class rank will be in use for the current sophomores through seniors giving us 3 years to identify new ways to recognize our students. When the School Committee met earlier in the day with the Student Advisory Committee, the students were in strong support of the removal of class rank. Other parents have reached out to her as well so she feels comfortable moving forward with a vote.

Lynn Cavicchi thanked Mary Watkins and Tina Karidoyanes on the extended process that they went through to examine class rank, the pros & cons and the impact to college admissions. We absolutely want high achieving students and will support them as needed. However, class rank does not provide statistical relevance. It does not reflect student learning. Colleges want to know what classes a student takes and how well they do in those classes. How well rounded is the student? There is still a great deal of competition in getting into colleges. Linda Fernando reminded everyone that GPA does not go away; just class rank.

**Motion Carries 4 - 0**

***Revised Capital Request:***

Ongoing budget meetings have been held with the Town manager and changes are being made to budgets in order to close the gap.

**Motion** to approve the following changes to the Capital Funding Request: Move \$200,000 of Technology funding from the Operating Budget to Capital Funding. Move \$100,000 of Textbooks funding from the Operating Budget to Capital Funding by Jenn Walsh / Lauren Scher.

**Motion Carries 4 - 0**

***2020-2021 School Calendar first reading:***

Assistant Superintendent Michael Connolly reviewed the events created for next year's calendar including conference dates; vacation dates and professional development. He reminded the committee that the first day of school (prior to Labor Day) was already voted on by the committee. The biggest challenge is trying to squeeze in professional development time without severely impacting parents with half days. It is also difficult to find time in the spring for professional development due to MCAS testing. Some of the professional development days have been scheduled for Fridays. We have Fridays on this year's calendar but they have not yet occurred so we don't know the impact to student absenteeism. The committee expressed some concern with Friday dates as well as the doubled up dates in January. It is always a possibility that we have snow and that could wipe out 2 days at once. Mr. Connolly indicated we would take another look prior to bringing a final version to vote.

***Student Opportunities Act:***

Superintendent Murphy provided an introduction to the new Student Opportunities Act which was passed to provide additional state funding to schools in order to address equity issues. The distribution of these funds is based on the high needs students of each district. Mansfield is targeted to get \$114,000. This act is established to occur every year for the next 7 years. However, the amount of money available for each year is unknown. The district will have to carefully determine how to spend the money, how to monitor/measure and report. Timeline as follows:  
Feb/Mar- Identify subgroup needs; engage community; identify plan and measurement methods  
Mar- School Committee approves plan; plan submitted to the state by April 1.

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The state provided many examples of opportunities and initiatives to choose from. The Commissioner's priorities are full day Pre-K, increase in college preparedness for high school students and a more diverse staff in districts.

Lauren Scher noted that we already have school improvement plans in place which is aligned with best practices. She encouraged Teresa to choose initiatives that we are already considering. \$114,000 is not a lot and we don't want to spend more just to receive that money. For example, expanding community outreach may cost us money in meetings, surveys, visits, etc. Lynn Cavicchi recommended engaging the community through our School Councils, existing groups like "Grandparents raising grandchildren", SEPAC, PAC, MESA as well as talking directly to students. We should focus on short term plans as we have no guarantee of future funding.

**Upcoming Agenda Items:**

School Calendar 2020-2021 vote

Student Opportunity Act vote

Communities that Care Survey results

Lynn Cavicchi asked us to research the need for a vote on the special education stabilization fund.

**New School Committee Business:** None

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

**Documents Referenced:**

2020-2021 School Calendar proposal

**Motion to adjourn:** At 8:31 p.m., **Motion** to adjourn the open meeting by Jenn Walsh / Lauren Sher

**Motion Carries 4 - 0**

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