

**MANCHESTER BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND
MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
JOINT MEETING
TUESDAY, September 29, 2009
MINUTES**

Lincoln Center
6:00 PM

PRESENT: Spadaccini (Mayor), Peak (Deputy Mayor), Shanley (General Manager), Naab (Town Attorney), Directors Beckman, Farina, Kissman, O'Neill, Zingler

Chairman Rizzo, Crockett, Edwards (Secretary), Hackett, Cruz, Moran, Pattacini

ALSO PRESENT: Superintendent of Schools Dr. Ouellette, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Dr. Richardson, Assistant to the Superintendent of Finance & Management Mrs. Brooks, Director Pupil Personnel Services Mrs. Matfess

ABSENT: Pazda, Silver

OPENING:

Mr. Shanley called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m announcing it was the Annual Joint Meeting of the Board of Directors and the Board of Education. There were two items on the agenda – H1N1 Co-ordination Efforts and Other Consolidation Discussion.

Mayor Spadaccini led the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Shanley referred to a list that had been tabled which outlined the areas of collaboration and shared services between the Town and the Board of Education. The second page showed some additions to the list which had occurred in the current year – not the least of which – but probably the most important – were the combined efforts to prepare for H1N1 Flu. Mr. Shanley declared he shared with the Superintendent how pleased they were at how Ms. Sue Valade, Coordinator of School Health for the District, and Ms. Maryann Cherniak Lexius, Health Director, had worked together to prepare themselves. They had held a joint drill, together with the town of Glastonbury's personnel, which had been very successful.

ITEM 1. H1N1 Coordination Efforts

Mayor Spadaccini welcomed Ms. Valade and Ms. Lexius to update them on the current status. Ms. Lexius shared how Manchester stood with regard to planning for (Dispensing Area #33), the official name of Manchester and Glastonbury working together in emergency preparedness. They had been placed together back in 2002 during smallpox planning and had been collaborating ever since.

According to the State Department of Public Health the 2009 flu season had officially started – actually August 1st. What was significant about this was that, historically, flu statistics began from October 1st, but because of this new flu H1N1, which did not follow the pattern of typical flu seasons and which never really left this summer. They decided that, statistically, they would begin to start counting the 2009 season August 1st. They expected it to be a busy year.

Ms. Lexius recalled that the last part of the school year 2008-2009 was very challenging and due to the arrival of H1N1 in Manchester they were working together as a team with the school systems in town – parochial as well as the charter school and public schools. Fortunately, they ended the year without needing to close schools.

During those months of crisis level management they had learned a lot through daily communication between the public school systems and the health department staffs to keep kept abreast of what was emerging. This was a great opportunity for everyone to sit down and examine what lessons they had learned from this.

In June, when schools were dismissed for the summer the town and school officials from both Manchester and Glastonbury had participated in a deep breathing exercise on H1N1. They had a guided discussion which resulted in an after action report that documented lessons learned during the spring and planning needs for going forward.

Over the past summer a lot of work had been done in the school systems particularly to prepare for the upcoming school/flu season.

Ms. Lexius explained the difference between the seasonal flu, which killed 36,000 people annually in the nation. They know it usually affected the elderly and individuals who had chronic health conditions. H1N1 was different and this particular virus appeared to have a propensity to move onto viral pneumonia in certain targeted populations. The scientists had had an opportunity over the summer to watch this happening in the Southern Hemisphere and there were population groups that were affected more seriously than others. It appeared that the younger population - newborns to twenty-four years of age - were really suffering the most serious consequences from the disease.

Ms. Lexius reviewed three areas they were watching. First, what did they know about the vaccine? Four out of the five pharmaceutical companies had been licensed to dispense the vaccine, one license was still pending. All vaccines were not alike and that was going to lead to complications, e.g., that day they had learned that the State was receiving ‘flu mist’ for H1N1 which was made with a live virus that was very different to the injectable virus vaccine, or typical flu shots, which were not live, so the application and precautions were very specific when it came to dispensing that. It was not suitable for everyone, e.g., pregnant women or people with chronic health conditions. Flu mist was fine for children aged two and up to forty-nine years of age but in good health and other precautions had to be observed also.

Ms. Lexius said the good news was that this time next year H1N1 was going to be part of their seasonal flu shot and she hoped it would be a distant memory and we would all go through it with better organization around the table in emergency preparedness.

The State's plan in the beginning weeks when H1N1 vaccine was not enough. They expected it to start coming into the State within the next two weeks. The target populations to whom the vaccine was available if they chose, e.g., pregnant women, caregivers, and household contacts with children under six months old. The reason why there was no vaccine for children of that age group was that they were highly affected by this particular virus. As vaccine became more available people would be able to receive it but, in the early stages, it would be very important for them to collaborate with the Federal Plan as to who got vaccinated first.

The State had created a private public partnership. Private practitioners were being asked to come forward and be pre-registered as vaccinators. If they chose to, they would receive vaccine primarily for their patients but also public clinics, such as theirs, who gave seasonal flu shots, were eligible to be a public provider and they had put their hat into the ring to be considered as a provider of vaccine. They expected that some people would receive their vaccinations from their physicians, pediatricians and OBGYN Specialists. There would likely be individuals who either did not have a private medical provider, or their particular provider had decided not to become a vaccinator. That is the population who would be addressed in the public clinics. These would probably be scheduled after their seasonal flu vaccine clinics, which would be coming up in the next week. They expected that initially it would be by invitation, working closely with their medical practices that had patients who would like to be vaccinated and did not have vaccine.

With regards to the School System they expected that family clinics would eventually be made available in the evening hours, where a parent or guardian could accompany a child. This would all be dependent upon the volume of vaccine that was made available. There would be no charge for the vaccine. It was a federal asset and had been published by the Federal Government and they would be eligible to receive some administrative fee.

Ms. Lexius urged that everyone stayed tuned. They would be working closely with providing updates and developing a master communication plan as they go through the complicated flu season. They were launching their 'hand washing' and 'cover your cough' campaign, and there would be hand sanitizing foam dispensers placed in public places in town buildings very shortly. They were asking people to stay home if they were ill twenty-four hours after their fever had abated.

Ms. Valade reported on the school side of dealing with the threatening virus. The school system, School Health Services and Manchester Health Department had worked very closely together, starting prior to April when they were always collaborating on various health issues around town but, most importantly, since April through the summer and through planning in August. The staff of the Manchester Health Department had always been available to School Health Services, and vice versa, so

when they had started talking about clinics the School Health Services had already started talking to school nurses about their availability to participate in clinics to help with administration and promotion of vaccine. School Health Services was very willing to do that.

Ms. Valade proceeded to list steps that had been taken which included weekly meetings in April; notification to parents; meetings with Board of Education through August; creating a decision-making grid; Distributing a "Parents and Guardians Guide to Influenza" which was printed in both English and Spanish on the first day of school to all students which included parochial schools (available also on the website); hand-sanitizers were placed in classrooms; posters displayed showing hand washing techniques in all bathrooms and school nurses continued in efforts to teach these techniques; created a data base surveillance system throughout the school district on the advice of the Federal Government on a daily basis; looked at absence trends; Pandemic Flu Planning Team meetings; were looking at attendance records.

By mid-October seasonal influenza vaccines were going to be available to any school staff and they were being encouraged to participate in this.

Finally, Ms. Valade reminded parents and guardians that their help was needed when it came to keeping their children at home when they were ill.

Mayor Spadaccini expressed his thanks for the report. He viewed the town as being very well prepared, he had seen the literature that had been distributed to the schools; the work that had been done on the town side; the drills and meetings with multiple departments; he believed that both the town and the Board of Education had responded very well over the past months with the concerns of H1N1.

He discussed with Ms. Lexius how the dispensation of the two vaccines differed. She responded that it was very different in the population group they were expecting to attend, at least initially with young children. Young children typically had not been part of their seasonal influenza clinics so the layout would need to be different. They needed to look at more privacy for family groups. They still did not know how rapidly vaccine would be made available. The report seemed to be that the State of Connecticut would be receiving shipments partially, very small and on a weekly basis, so the change would be for them to decide what the magic number would be when they would open a public clinic versus when they got doses; notify their medical practices and publish it for people to call in and make an appointment. They would have to handle some new dimensions because of the dynamic of the vaccine. For instance they did not know how many people would want the vaccine to begin with. The media had discussed theories on both sides i.e., the need for the vaccine as well as the precautions, so they would find out at the end of the flu season.

Finally, their seasonal flu clinics typically were completed by Christmas. They were expecting that the doses would continue to be available well through the winter and perhaps into March and the State Department of Public Health had told them to be prepared for perhaps a six month period of time where they all might be in the business of vaccination, which was a big difference from past years.

Mr. Rizzo expressed his thanks for the work that had been done with consolidated efforts. Ms. Valade and Ms. Lexius had put the personal face on that effort and he saw them as the leaders in our struggle.

Mr. Shanley wanted to know about the life expectancy of the virus on contact and the need for frequent cleaning to be carried out. Ms. Valade informed that the guidance from the government was still that the virus could live on surfaces from two to eight hours so clearly there was a chance for exposure on many surfaces. The school system had acknowledged that. Custodians were taking all the necessary steps to swipe all doorknobs, computer instruments, keyboards, drinking fountains et al. There was no need to close a school to clean a school. Continue to do routine maintenance, always mindful that the product one was using had a viral and bacterial kill. Mr. Shanley clarified that the eight hour number was the key there – if school was out at 3:30pm in the afternoon, by 6:00am the following morning, anything that would have been alive would be dead.

Ms. Lexus said that truly the best thing they could all do would be to adhere to the hand washing rule! The best thing was one's own proactive effort.

Mr. Rizzo wanted to know if the Town and the Board had established some kind of a threat system if they started to see a larger number of cases cropping up. How would they respond to this? Ms. Lexus said this was something they were putting pen to paper on right now; it was an annex to their epidemic preparedness plan. Manchester Community College had been asked what they would be doing to keep track of absentees for influenza-like illness among their staff and faculty. They also had a Surveillance Program, through the State Department of Public Health, that collated information from the hospitals for admissions. Mr. Shanley was Head of their Policy Group with their Emergency Management Director and their departments all had a seat at the table.

Mr. Zingler added his congratulations on the wonderful job of cooperation from all sides of the government. On the question of social distancing, one question that came to his mind was if there was a protocol/policy in place for how Boards would conduct their business if there was a social distancing. How would Boards function and handle routine business or decision making concerning the school systems in the town?

Dr. Ouellette responded saying that while she could not speak for both Boards they were already having discussions on preliminary procedures in place for managing the school system. With regards to organizing their staff from payroll to maintenance and operations – these were currently under discussion. They were not in the position to make a decision based on a Board or quorum kind of vote. Some of the things they were looking at, e.g., technology; telephone systems; how to do a massive calling up to parents; Channel 16 perhaps, or the web for lessons et al. She thought Manchester was pretty progressive compared to other school systems.

Mr. Shanley concurred with Dr. Ouellette. Planning had been under way for some time as to the impact on our organizations. Current Board rules did require a presence; perhaps they might take a

look at those rules from the angle of a health emergency, or something like that, and allow themselves to meet via some other form of technology.

Mr. Shanley observed that their biggest concern would be the death rate, the inability to house as many people as they had in their alternative care facilities.

Ms. Hackett talked about voting by telephone. She recalled during earlier discussions that had taken place some years ago that, in the interest of having to respond to emergency, it might come to looking into what was permissible as an exception to the rule.

Mr. Edwards followed upon the comments made by Ms. Hackett. His recollection was that they had legal opinions from their attorneys who said from an F.O.I. standpoint there wasn't any problem with this as long as the public was included. The bylaws did not prohibit it and he suspected that we may not labor under the same restrictions as the Board of Directors. He agreed with Mr. Shanley's comments that if it was coming to that we would have much bigger problems than meetings.

OTHER CONSOLIDATION DISCUSSION

Mr. Shanley stated that the second agenda item was an opportunity for open discussion of whatever item members chose to comment upon.

Mr. Rizzo affirmed earlier remarks that the meeting was typically a meeting where the Boards had a chance to discuss opportunities to consolidate services, combine efforts and this meeting was held every year. He declared the meeting open for comments.

Director Peak said they had talked about the issue a number of times and the information that had been tabled showed, in a number of ways, how capable the Boards were in cooperating. He was interested in finding out where there might be other areas of services that could be consolidated to produce real savings to the budget and the taxpayers and which would require much more cooperation and planning. For an example, Custodian Services was one that had been brought up by Ms. Brooks at a previous meeting and was something that could be consolidated. However, the Board of Education would give up the benefits of having a little bit more control over their buildings. There were times when neither the Board of Directors nor the Board of Education would want to consolidate but what areas could be considered that would produce meaningful savings perhaps that might be already happening in other communities. The three areas he recalled that had come up in discussion were Custodial Services, Payroll Services and Grounds and Maintenance.

Ms. O'Neill was appreciative of the list provided by Mr. Shanley and Dr. Ouellette stating she was mostly interested in what they had combined in the last year since their meeting last fall. She realized that the Town did work with the Board of Education especially on pandemic issues, drills etc. The recycling drill had been a terrific effort as had the Youth Master Plan.

Ms. O'Neill had some simple suggestions, e.g., the buying of supplies. Every department, the Town and the Board of Education all buy supplies. She asked if they leveraged their buying power as a whole. She felt sure there were probably contracts that had to be staged in so the contract could be issued for the town collectively.

Dr. Ouellette informed Ms. Brooks had been working very closely with Mr. Shanley and his staff who were the consummate professionals.

Ms. O'Neill further questioned if items they were working on were employee suggestions.

Ms. Brooks informed that the General Services Department, Jerry DuPont and she talked regularly. They went out to bid on certain items. The contract they had for the copiers was purchased for a State bid. They also combined electricity, oil and gasoline. They were working on a cell phone combined bid. One of the areas with which they were having difficulty was that many times their Board got an educational discount and they had to be careful with that discount which could not be shared. She thought overall that the Boards worked very well together and consolidated wherever possible. They had a huge network issue with Information Systems the past summer at the High School. Mr. Shanley added the joint Energy audit and the fact that as soon as the grant money was available it would be applied to town and school buildings. That was essentially a joint purchase.

Ms. Brooks reminded they had taken over quite a few of the audit reports that had to be done for the Accounting Department on the school side. She thought they had worked very well at consolidating and they should continue to consolidate efforts, not departments.

Director O'Neill continued debating the issue with Ms. Brooks, quoting obstacles that had been overcome in the past, e.g., the Head Start Program had taken a few years. She was looking for contracts that ended at different times and suggested perhaps they could work on a plan. She thought that in future they ought to compile some sort of a list.

Director Farina thanked the Board of Education members for their wonderful job on their given budget – he wished it could have been more. As he talked to parents and teachers he was concerned about class sizes, while realizing that the Board had no choice but to increase them. When one heard about sizes of twenty-seven, twenty-eight, twenty-six, twenty-two in Kindergarten, there was reason for concern. He thought we were seeing the effects of cutting a budget too far. He was also concerned at the rate of school failure and not making Adequate Yearly Progress. He was concerned about the way Robertson was integrated into Bowers, where one class from Robertson was moved to Bowers with a Robertson teacher. He thought that undermined the intent of school choice when they did not meet AYP.

Director Farina thought that they should look at department consolidation. He lauded Director Peak for bringing up this issue again. He also thought the joint Boards should meet twice a year to discuss this. He did not think departments were out of the question. He thought Payroll, Human Resources,

Facility Maintenance needed to be looked at hard to figure out where there was duplication of effort; where efficiency could be increased by consolidation. He did not care whether the Town or the Board took Payroll but in a Town the size of Manchester it seemed quite silly to him that they had two Payroll Departments and two Human Resource Departments. He understood the Human Resource people at the Board of Education had to have certain knowledge of School Teacher Certification, and the hiring process, but there was no reason that those offices could not be in one location and working together. In the future he hoped that could be looked at and it would help if they met biannually, instead of just once a year. He thought that this year, based on the possibility of having a very tight year again, budget talks should start much earlier; he actually believed that four joint meetings this year would not be out of the question.

Director Farina said what he did not want to see happen was the Board of Education working very hard, month after month, on a budget to give it to the Board of Directors and have them pick it apart without having the full picture, and then having it thrown back on their laps a month later when they had only two or three weeks to make a decision. The entire Board had done a wonderful job at saving Nathan Hale. He lauded it for managing to keep the school open. He stressed that if they started working together earlier we would not be at odds come budget time. It looked as if it might be another tight budget year. He informed that his wife worked in Lebanon, Connecticut, and her Board had started their budget shops already. If we kept open minds and looked at the possibilities of where and how we could find savings in consolidating this year; take advantage of the budget crisis to become more efficient, we could move forward much more successfully this spring. He reiterated four meetings would be helpful to the community.

Dr. Ouellette responded eloquently and defensively to the concerns expressed by Director Farina with regard to schools not making Adequate Yearly Progress (not referred to as family schools). Her view was that the schools were progressing and were working very diligently and progressively. She was sure he was aware of some of the media attention that some of our suburban areas were receiving, e.g., Greenwich, West Hartford, Glastonbury, et al as the bar was raised. They would see more and more schools not making AYP – not Manchester alone. Having said that, Dr. Ouellette thought it was important to note that we still needed to observe the integrity of our schools a day or two before school opened. One of the difficulties with ‘Our No Child Left Behind’ was that time was not on our side with that law – time was of the essence - and unfortunately as much as our Administrative Team and principals planned and tried to transition our students from one grade level to the other, it was only fair to share with parents who their next teacher would be for the next grade level so they could take the time to transition with them, name their teacher, scope it out, prepare mentally, etc. Unfortunately the Board did not have the data in front of them tonight regarding AYP. That data did come in the end of August and a very quick decision had to be made then, - some very emotional and traumatic, such as Robertson.

Dr. Ouellette concluded her response by applauding Director Farina’s comments. They certainly wanted a true fair school choice; wanted school integration, but also wanted to make sure they had a

school transition. She thanked him for making the point and there were certainly difficulties with AYP. She assured him that as one of the largest school systems in the State we were not alone in that. She quoted “There is no bar; there is no standard with regards to how many students may transfer”.

Mr. Edwards pointed out there had been a lot of discussion about the need for more consolidation of departments and functions. He followed up on Mr. Farina’s comments that we should be open in terms of one organization ultimately holding a function. Human Resources was an excellent example. He believed the Board of Education employed more people in far more complicated contract situations, licensing, and certification. He felt it would be very difficult for the Town to take that function over whereas it would be comparatively easy to take over the Town employees. He would want to remain open to the notion that not all consolidated services needed to be under the Board of Directors. It would sometimes make more sense to consolidate those services under the Board of Education with the appropriate chargebacks in place. He urged that everyone keep an open mind to that possibility.

Ms. Hackett talked about the hiring of staff and accountability with regards to consolidation. A lot of the suggested consolidations sounded familiar to her. Nevertheless it was important to keep the conversations going.

Director Kissman extended his thanks to both Boards for working together. He stressed they should all keep in mind the Board of Directors had a designated assignment, as had the Board of Education. In saying that, he was also glad to see both staffs at least talking and working together. Some said should it work a little faster - we would all like to see that - but at least they are talking and working together. It has had a positive outcome as could be seen by the list of consolidations that had been tabled. He thought as long as they kept moving in that direction they were far better off. They might not be moving as fast as many wanted – and maybe we had to move faster – but the main impact was there were bridges. He recapped, that he had worked under four Managers when there was no communication on either side. Everyone kept their own little capsule in both Boards, as well as staff on either side. He could see improvement over the years where they were moving. No one wanted to give up their little ‘plum’ and some wanted two ‘plums’. Somehow, they had to decide how they were cutting the ‘plums’ so everybody was equal and what would be the best for the community and its residents and give them the best service in the meantime.

Mr. Moran echoed Ms. Hackett’s comments that some of the suggestions sounded familiar one year later and agreed with Director Peak in some of the main areas. He charged the Mayor and Board Chair to maybe look at one of the items, e.g., Payroll and get the ball rolling on this. He did not know if there was a timeframe to wait for the two new Boards to look at this but he would not want to be sitting with a group of people next year still talking about the same suggestions. Perhaps we could start by talking about one and go from there.

Director Beckman applauded both Boards for the consolidations and for the excellent work they had done on working with the budget. He talked about the closing of Nathan Hale School and the fact

that they had not had a public hearing on that. When they got to the budget meeting there was still a great deal of questions as they did not have the numbers. He felt it was important before issues like that cropped up to have all the numbers together. The great outcome this year was that the program was increased and school was not closed. He thanked everyone jointly for their work on that. He looked forward to smoother budget processes in the future and the consolidation of more services.

Mayor Spadaccini said he would be happy to take on that task. He thought Payroll was a good thing. That had been done to some degree already between the Superintendent and the General Manager. If there was a way they could do it that made sense and would save money then he was all for it and he would be happy to spearhead that effort with Chairman Rizzo.

Mr. Crockett approved the Boards all working together. He reminded that the Town had saved approximately \$230,000 with its new insurance contract for workers' compensation and other liabilities. It appeared the Board of Education had not yet been informed by the Town of the savings on the school district's portion of this insurance and hoped the Board would soon hear from the Town about that.

There being no further questions or comments Chairman Rizzo called for a motion to adjourn.

Mayor Spadaccini made the motion which was seconded by Jay Moran and the Joint Meeting of the Board of Directors and Board of Education was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Manchester Board of Directors
Manchester Board of Education