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**Mansfield High School**

School Council

December 2, 2009

2:10 pm, Room 185

Meeting Minutes

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**Attendees:**

Heather Burgess (student)

AJ Calvario (student)

Nathaniel Michener (student)

Mitch Negus (student)

Julie Ready (student)

Amanda Zieselman (student)

Nancy Breef-Pilz (parent)

Vicky Burgess (parent)

Julie Cline (parent)

Jennifer Dempsey (parent)

Deborah Snyder (parent)

Sheila Newton (teacher – music)

John Pontes (teacher - English)

Joanne Vacirca (teacher – math)

Mary Watkins (teacher – social studies)

Tina Karidoyanes (guidance counselor)

Catherine Capolupo (intern)

Dr. Joe Maruszczak (principal)

**Agenda:**

- Review of Draft of MHS School Improvement Plan, 2009-2010
- Presentation of MHS Operational Budget, FY 2010
- Brainstorming/Suggestions

**Distributed:**

- MHS Budget PowerPoint FY 2011
- MHS School Improvement Plan 2009-2010 Draft (via email prior to meeting)
- MHS Operational Budget FY 2010 (via email prior to meeting)

Dr. Joe Maruszczak welcomed the attendees (listed above) and reviewed the previously established agenda. The committee responded positively to his suggestion to begin with a conversation regarding the budget to assist in framing thoughts on the school improvement plan.

**MHS Operational Budget**

Dr. Maruszczak shared the following:

- The district has a budget of (approximately) \$42 million.
- The MHS operational budget is \$464,062
- He has requested an increase of 3.5% for FY11 to \$480,353
- One of the funding needs in the coming year is to address the move from offering sophomore year biology to offering freshman year biology in response to the MCAS testing demands. The cost associated with this change is \$17,000 for new text books. The second significant increase is for electronic portfolio licensing and web hosting for additional student to participate in the Senior Project & Career Pathways.

- Clarification was offered in considering that contracted services within the Principal's budget include busses for such activities as band and color guard competition and servicing of the microscopes in the science department.
- The entire district budget for technology is \$107,000 for technology, covering K-12 as well as central office technology needs.
- Each year the district's business manager takes away 15% from each budget line which is then held for emergencies throughout the year and returned at the end of the fiscal year (assuming no emergencies).
- This past year the actual budget was \$438,000 but spending was only \$363,378 reflecting \$50,000 that had to be returned to the district following the decrease in state aid. The difference also accounts for funds not spent by department heads.
- Dr. Maruszczak noted the funding among departments within MHS and trends in funding.

The presentation and materials brought forth two notable discussions among committee members. During the first, the committee discussed school wide expenses. The committee noted the opportunities and challenges associated with reducing supply costs such as photocopying and the increased costs associated with a broader use of technology. Queries included reducing the number of photocopies distributed for announcement and instructional purposes with a goal of using technology to distribute this information (a specific example being the MHS School Handbook). Another query was regarding the costs associated with online textbooks as opposed to paper texts (feedback was that the online texts did not represent a savings, and due to technology access issues within both the school and in home, present their own set of challenges).

The committee supports the goal of reducing paper costs, to address both budget and environmental purposes, but realizes significant investments would need to be made in technology. It was noted that a move in this direction would parallel the desire to increase the use of technology in instruction, and develop students an understanding of technology to support 21<sup>st</sup> century learning. (Reflecting this discussion, Dr. Maruszczak announced that MHS will soon launch a weekly e-newsletter. The newsletter will be distributed to parents and students, with the goal of increasing awareness and strengthening communication with parents.)

The second discussion focused on the costs associated with the robust athletic programs offered by MHS and the numerous students who participate (65% of the student body). Dr. Maruszczak offered information on the athletics budget in comparison with the operating budget for the school. One committee member noted that under the proposed budgets for the coming year, roughly the same amount would be spent per student for both instruction and athletics. The committee debated the merit and challenges of requiring a (\$125) user fee for participation in athletics and noted the following concerns: fees would exclude some families on a purely financial basis, some families may be reluctant to pay a fee if

their son or daughter was spending significant amounts of time on the bench, and high participation rates in athletics mean that students are engaged in an organized activity after school and are thus not free seek other (far less desirable) activities. Some committee members also expressed concern that user fees would negatively impact parental support for the schools as well as external perceptions of the school district and students.

### **MHS School Improvement Plan 2009-2010 Draft**

The committee then discussed the draft of the MHS School Improvement Plan. Dr. Maruszczak solicited feedback from committee members. Members expressed support for district wide professional development (citing activity 1.6 as an example), noting that teaching improves when teachers have the opportunity to work face to face with one another. It was also noted that professional development has not been funded in the MHS operational budget since FY 07. However, the committee also considered that common planning time within the school and district may prove to be more effective than funding in moving the school and district forward. A second activity (2.4) received support from the committee with regard fostering communication and collaboration across grades with personal comments to the perceived disconnect between 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade math.

The discussion then explored the concepts of common planning time and briefly touched upon the positive impact on teaching and student learning. It was noted that ½ days are counted as full when counting toward the 180 with the example of Wellesley High School noted (where students are dismissed at 12:00 noon each Tuesday to allow teachers the opportunity to work together). In contrast it appears that professional development in Mansfield has diminished over time and that there have not been sufficient funds for either professional development or technology.

Several committee members also expressed support for activity 3.3 which addresses programming to increase alcohol & drug abuse awareness and specifically supports the rebuilding of SADD.

The discussion of the School Improvement Plan returned to the issue of budget when funding for the plan was touched upon. Members specifically asked how they could help in advocating for the school. Dr. Maruszczak shared some facts that challenge Mansfield in funding its schools (and therefore in funding the improvement plan).

- Mansfield is in the top 24% in the state in terms of tax rate.
- Of the 341 communities, Mansfield has the #1 population rate per capita of children under 18 years old.
- Thus even with a high tax rate, we have a lower rate of spending per pupil.

This led to discussion regarding the necessity of a proposition 2 ½ override, to which some members questioned the town's support for the schools. It was noted

that many parents are not completely aware of the state of affairs. Dr. Maruszczak encouraged members themselves to attend and ask questions during School Committee Meetings. He would like to see more parents become active overall, and has established a Parent Advisory Council which will not only act as a sounding board but offer parents another opportunity to bring concerns to him.

Ultimately, the committee noted that additional budget cuts will negatively impact students from a learning point of view, whether these manifest themselves in increased class sizes, limitations in access to electives or challenging schedules for students and teachers.

**Upcoming MHS School Council Meetings:**

January 6, 2010	March 31, 2010
January 27, 2010	April 28, 2010
February 24, 2010	May 26, 2010

**Upcoming School Committee Meetings:**

[http://www.mansfieldschools.com/central/school\\_committee.htm](http://www.mansfieldschools.com/central/school_committee.htm)

*7:30 PM Town Hall Rooms 3 B & C*

*Please note that the agendas for previous meetings are also posted on this site.*

December 15, 2009	March 23, 2010
January 12, 2010 ** Budget Meeting	April 13, 2010
January 14, 2010 ** Budget Meeting	May 4, 2010
January 26, 2010	May 25, 2010
February 23, 2010	June 15, 2010
March 9, 2010	