

MACON PIATT SPECIAL EDUCATION DISTRICT (MPSED)
BOARD MEETING MINUTES – THURSDAY, JANUARY 21, 2021
Macon-Piatt Sp Ed District – Conference Room (Virtual attendees)
335 E Cerro Gordo Street, Decatur IL 62523

Chairman Vic Zimmerman called the meeting to order at 7:33 a.m. Member roll call was taken.

Members Present: Damian Jones (Vice-Chair), Sheila Greenwood, DeAnn Heck, Brett Robinson, Paul Fregeau, Amanda Geary, John Ahlemeyer, Andy Pygott, Vic Zimmerman (Chairperson), Travis Roundcount, Bob Meadows, Cheryl Warner
(12 virtual attendees)

Members Absent:

Also Present: Kathy Horath, Vickie Vieth (Secretary), *Online Attendance:* Travis Friedrich, Matt Snyder, Jill Reedy, Bret Hitchings

Public Participation: Jill Driscoll – McGaughey SpEd Teacher
Mt. Zion Administrators (group letter): Heather Ethell, McGaughey Elem Principal; Gary Gruen, Mt. Zion Grade School Principal; Justin Johnson, Mt. Zion HS Principal; Julie Marquardt, Mt. Zion JH Principal; Billy Rockey, Director of Curriculum & Technology; Randy Thacker, Mt. Zion Intermediate School Principal

Both comments submitted for public participation were read by Kathy Horath into the record.

Motion by Supt Jones to approve the Executive Board minutes from December 9, and December 17, 2020 meetings as presented, seconded by Supt Pygott. Voice Vote: All in favor.

Call to **CLOSED Session** at 7:39 a.m. by Supt Robinson's **motion** to discuss possible litigation, appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance or dismissal of specific employees, seconded by Supt Geary. Chairperson Zimmerman called for a Roll Call Vote to go into closed session. (12) Ayes: Jones, Greenwood, Heck, Robinson, Fregeau, Geary, Ahlemeyer, Pygott, Zimmerman, Roundcount, Meadows, Warner.

Return to **Open Session** at 7:59 a.m. by Supt Fregeau's **motion**, seconded by Supt Greenwood. Voice Vote: All in favor.

Roll Call Action Items

A. Personnel and Administrative Appointments

Not a lot of activity for January personnel. There are still quite a few number of open positions. Have posted for School Psychologists and Deaf & Hard of Hearing teachers. After this last hire we will not be able to hire any new teaching assistants until all TA's are placed for next year. Due to DPS combining buildings and having a declining enrollment, specific positions might be eliminated. The sequence of RIFs was explained after a question was raised regarding the length of this process...it will take until April.

Motion by Supt Fregeau to recommend the Executive Board advise Decatur Public Schools, as administrative district for the Macon-Piatt Special Education District, that the employees presented be recommended as listed, seconded by Supt Warner. Chairperson Zimmerman called for a Roll Call Vote. The motion carried with (12) Ayes: Jones, Greenwood, Heck, Robinson, Fregeau, Geary, Ahlemeyer, Pygott, Zimmerman, Roundcount, Meadows, Warner. (0) Nay; (0) Absent.

B. Funding Formula for FY22

Prior to a motion, Kathy Horath gave a summary of what was changed in the funding formula. This modification removes SpEd Administrator (SEA) costs from the general administration line. A member district may give notice to the SpEd director of their intention not to use SEA services for the coming school year by February 1st. The allocation of SEAs will be determined and SEA costs will be assessed to all remaining member districts based on member districts' percent of special education students enrolled in the cooperative. Kathy does recommend making this change. **Motion** by Supt Roundcount to recommend the approval of the FY22 Formula for Determining Member Districts' Proportionate Share of the Operating Expenses of MPSED, seconded by Supt Pygott.

Before opening for discussion, Kathy stated she made this recommendation after much consideration of the pros and cons. If done correctly, this does not create a financial increase of costs to the other member districts. The bigger question was...if the cooperative was ready to decentralize our administration. In the past, this idea has always been opposed by Kathy. It has helped Kathy to reconsider her position by seeing how the current decentralization of district hired staff (...teachers, social workers, speech pathologists) are still accepting the direction of the cooperative values, features, and processes. If a district hired SEA were to attend all the SEA meetings along with following the Macon Piatt Board procedures and eligibility processes, then Kathy felt this concept would also work. The director is still responsible for the special education services; thereby, Kathy would insist on regular contact with the SEA or the designee. SEAs are still needed to oversee the Macon Piatt program and services – a wide decentralization is not being recommended at this time.

Several questions were raised and discussed by various members of the board. Clarification was given regarding the monthly 3-hour cooperative meeting and the attendance requirement. Ultimately, it would have to be an agreement with the superintendent who employees that SEA. At the end of the day, the directives will be coming to the SEA from the employing district's superintendent. A comment was made regarding the benefits that the hiring district would receive if their SEA still participates in the cooperative meetings. Along with receiving professional development and working with other special education administrators, the SEA would bring more knowledge and information to the employing district and staff. A concern was addressed if there was any possible liability danger to MPSED if a district does not follow special education policies. By not following the rules, this leads to lawsuits and lawsuits lead to legal expense which would solely be the district's responsibility. Since Kathy is your State Approved Director of Special Education, she would have to participate in any due process conferences. It was mentioned if this statement could be written into the agreement that those district-hired individuals would require cooperative oversight in regards to rules and regulations. It was thought that a like statement could be added to the agreement.

A question arose regarding special programs across the cooperative and SEAs supervision over particular program categories. Currently SEAs do not have control over certain kinds of programs as they once had in the past. At this point, it is a non-issue. If it does come into play, then that portion of the SEA's salary would be charged directly to the program...just as it is with the SEAs who are tied to the Early Childhood, or SEAP programs. Costs of both administrators are charged to that specific program instead of the SEA formula. Another topic addressed was the possibility that one of our SEAs would be RIFFED. In order to make the cost neutral to the remaining member districts, Macon Piatt has to have the correct number of SEAs needed, thereby a district needs to give the cooperative proper notification by February 1st. With the timing of it all, a RIF may have to be done...it is unknown at this time.

Again to summarize the reasons why Kathy is recommending this change is if Macon Piatt does this correctly, then we can still remain prudent in the way special education services are delivered. Certain flexibility has occurred over the time of our decentralization which started about 10 years ago. The fact that our prior decentralization efforts have not yielded any of the concerns that we had prior to decentralization. All the staff still follow proper rules and procedures...thereby there is no strong reason to say 'this is a bad idea'. Hearing no further comments, Chairperson Zimmerman called for a Roll Call Vote. The motion carried with (11) Ayes: Jones, Greenwood, Heck, Robinson, Geary, Ahlemeyer, Pygott, Zimmerman, Roundcount, Meadows, Warner. (1) Abstain - Fregeau; (0) Nay; (0) Absent.

Before going into the Director's Report, a request was made from one of the board members stating it would be good to see a yearly overview on how this situation is working out – not only for the district but for the remaining districts. Kathy agreed to send an annual report to the executive board on how this change is working for all districts.

Director's Report

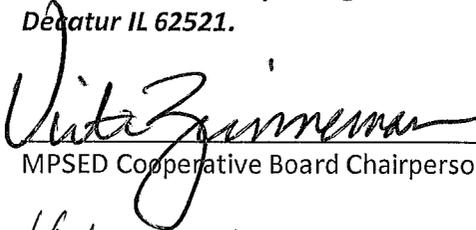
- A. Finance Update – Currently working on enrollment projections. We will be ready to start looking at the budget on the next finance committee meeting which will be February 25th at 7:30 a.m. By that date there should be some semblance of a draft budget regarding how many people will be in each position. A Treasurers report is in your packet – the fund balance is healthy. An inquiry was made regarding the status of our Medicaid balance. Kathy asked if she could share that information in writing at a different time since the figures were located in her office. That will be discussed in our next finance committee meeting. Kathy reminded the board that we had to change the way of billing for private residential costs due to our Medicaid balance dwindling. Our OTs/PTs were also originally in this Medicaid account and they had to be moved out of that formula due to low funds. At this point, it is getting harder to get Medicaid funding. Kathy will continue to look at that topic...we will definitely have that conversation.
- B. Enrollment Projections – in the interest of time, Kathy is going to table this topic. Just know that we are looking at a reduction in special education teachers for these particular programs: SED – at the elementary building; LifeSkills – at the Middle School; Essential Skills – possibly at the elementary level; LifeSkills – at the High School. As we study the numbers and see when Decatur opens the doors for in-person learning if our enrollment goes back up, we can always scale back.
- C. Building and Program Location update – After participating in a DPS Board meeting, they were talking about locations for their consolidated building – LifeSkills at Parsons was one of the questions they raised. Still unsure what they are going to do with LifeSkills at Parsons but the original recommendation was to move all four classes from Parsons with two going to the Baum campus and the other two going to the Montessori campus. We do not know yet what the new recommendation is going to be since the DPS board was not comfortable with the recommendations presented. Also...due to the uncertainty of how many kids will actually be attending in Decatur, DPS has elected to keep Garfield and Stevenson campuses intact as buildings that are online rather than offline. Those campuses are not available for Macon Piatt to pick up or purchase from Decatur at this point. Based on that comment, we are not going to have our own building next year whether it is a DPS building or if it is buying a separate building and renovating it into Macon Piatt. It was discussed in the finance committee meeting that if it were ever to come to fruition, we would want to have the purchase completed by January – allowing us 6 or so months to prepare the facility to move into starting in July. We are another year away from that possibility. After looking at some commercial buildings, Kathy did not see

anything that was appropriate for renovation in the cost range necessary. At this point it is safe to say we will be in our same buildings for next year.

Hearing no further questions or comments. Chairperson Zimmerman entertained a motion to adjourn. **Motion** by Supt Meadows to adjourn this meeting of the Macon-Piatt Special Education District Executive Board, seconded by Supt Ahlemeyer. Voice Vote: All in favor – Meeting adjourned at 8:39 a.m.

Handouts: *Draft December 9 and December 17, 2020 Minutes*
 Personnel Appointments
 Draft Formula for Determining Member Districts' Proportionate Share for FY22
 Treasurer's Report
 Vendor Checks (Electronically Sent)

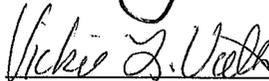
****Next Meeting of the MPSED Executive Board will take place 7:30 a.m., on Thursday, 2/18/21 at Richland Community College – National Sequestration Education Center – Room 121 – 1 College Park, Decatur IL 62521.**



MPSED Cooperative Board Chairperson

2/18/21

Date Approved



MPSED Cooperative Board Secretary

2/18/21

Date Approved