



Board Briefs, December 21, 2023

At its December monthly business meeting, the MRH Board of Education approved a resolution authorizing prepayment of general obligation bond debt, a move which will realize savings of nearly \$400,000 on interest payments. The \$2,000,000 prepayment will allow the District to maintain the debt service fund at a level matching the current debt service levy (\$1.35).

Board President Amber Withycombe submitted her resignation in order to accept a position as the next Maplewood City Manager, effective January 4. In her letter to the Board, Withycombe wrote "Serving on the school board has been a life-changing opportunity to give back to the district that has nurtured, developed, and affirmed my children. An obligation of every governing body is to evaluate and, when necessary, challenge the status quo. The current social, political, and economic contexts that shape our school board's decision-making demand that we embrace a growth mindset, interrogate our systems for fairness and equity, and meaningfully address the constraints that limit student achievement."

Board Secretary Katie Kaufmann said "Ms. Withycombe has led the Board to assert our District values through resolutions addressing major issues impacting our students and educators. Thanks to Ms. Withycombe's partnership with [Superintendent] Dr. Jamison, the District has increased community input and engagement opportunities that have welcomed more and diverse perspectives to shape our future."

Elected to the MRH Board in 2021, Withycombe's term was scheduled to expire in April 2024. In total, three seats on the Board will be open on the spring election ballot. Board members opted on Thursday to leave the newly vacant position open, thus allowing voters to fill the position.

Superintendent Dr. Bonita Jamison provided the Board with an update on collective bargaining efforts for teachers who are members of the Missouri National Education Association (MNEA). In January, a meeting will be scheduled with MRH legal counsel and MNEA representatives, and a union recognition election date will be selected.

The MRH summer school program (Summer Journey) will be administered by an administrative intern, a new position approved by the Board. Previously, summer school responsibilities were handled on a rotating basis by assistant principals. The administrative intern will support the planning, preparation and hosting of June Summer Journey and will allow greater familiarity and better alignment of the program with intended outcomes for students.

Three new courses received the go-ahead from the Board. Math Course 6/7 and Math Course 7/8 were developed in an effort to better meet student needs and provide families with more options for math placement; they allow multiple access points to reach more challenging math content. A new Seed to Table course allows students to engage in authentic life skills needed to provide for their physical needs. They will be introduced to food and agriculture career pathways.

MRH Board of Education