

Board of Education Meeting  
December 15, 2016

Call to Order

Board Chair Gee called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. in the Suffield High School Media Center. Present: Board members Natalie Semyanko, Kendra Wiesel, Jeanne Gee, Susi Keane, John Richter (6:10 p.m.), Matt Service, George Beiter, Michael Sepko (6:07 p.m.), Lori D'Ostuni, Superintendent Karen Berasi, Assistant Superintendent Brian Hendrickson and Business Manager Bill Hoff.

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Recognition

None

Public Comment

None

Approval of Minutes

Semyanko moved, Beiter seconded to approve the December 5, 2016 minutes. D'Ostuni, Keane, Gee, Wiesel and Semyanko, and Service voted in favor, Beiter abstained. The motion carried 6-0-1.

Consent Agenda

None

Discussion/Action Items

● 2017-2018 Superintendent's Proposed Budget Presentation

Superintendent Berasi said the entire leadership team has worked very hard in preparing this budget, starting last spring in working with the District Management Council in strategic budgeting. She noted the budget priorities are aligned to the District Improvement Plan and reviewed the district accomplishments over the last year. She noted the many state and federal mandates that are challenging to local school district budgets. She reviewed this year's student enrollment and the projections for the 2017-2018 school year. With enrollment projected to significantly decline over the next 10 years, class sizes will get bigger and FTEs will be reduced. The high school administration is looking at offering an eight period day. This will provide more flexibility and class choices for high school students. If this schedule is adopted a reduction in FTEs at the high school would not occur, meaning there is a cost but will provide wonderful opportunities for SHS students. Ms. Berasi reviewed negotiations dates for union contracts; the Board will be negotiating with Teamsters next year. Ms. Berasi reviewed the proposed health insurance projection for next year as well as over the last seven years. She said if the actual cost is less, then the budget request will be reduced accordingly. She also pointed out that health insurance costs have not been very volatile over the last seven years. Mr. Hoff added health insurance has only increased by approximately 2.6% over the last seven years. Ms. Berasi reviewed the initiatives for next year which are aligned with the goals of the District Improvement Plan, including continuing the work being done in curriculum, training and professional development for teachers and continued improvement in organizational health through providing supports to staff and increasing clarity and consistency of communications. Ms. Berasi explained the specific reductions and additions in

FTEs, resulting in a net reduction of 4.15 FTE. She reviewed the major budget accounts which compared the 2016-2017 adopted budget to the proposed 2017-2018 budget. The Board discussed the increase in special education costs. Ms. Berasi said the district is building capacity in-district to reduce the number of outplaced students; however, the district cannot always provide the services required for some students as is the case with students with significant emotional disabilities, and these placements are very costly. The majority of the special needs population is provided services in district. Board member Beiter said as a district we need to advocate for all children and find common ground when there are disputes and be careful how we communicate. Ms. Berasi said the system needs to change in how it operates so that districts can best serve the special needs population. She noted CCSN is a method the district is using to build the capacity of teachers in-house. Also, at the high school a plan has been implemented to address students who have emotional disabilities, and Ms. Donais is looking at combining the 18-21 program with Windsor Locks. Ms. Berasi reviewed the driving components that are increasing and decreasing the budget request for the 2017-2018 school year. She reviewed the budget by major object and noted that salaries and benefits account for 82% of the budget. She reviewed the status of the grants and the total FTEs funded by grants. Overall, the 2017-2018 budget request is a 2.66%, or \$910,526, increase over last year for a total budget of \$35,140,770. Ms. Berasi closed by saying that investing in students is investing in Suffield. School and department budgets will be presented to the Board in January.

***Keane, D'Ostuni and Wiesel left at 7:15 p.m.***

- CABE Lighthouse Training

Board members met with representatives from CABE to discuss board communications.

***Beiter left at 7:40 p.m.***

Adjournment

Semyanko moved, Richter seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 p.m.

*Minutes are subject to approval at the next meeting on January 3, 2016.*

Respectfully submitted,

Lori D'Ostuni  
Secretary