

Board of Education Regular Meeting  
January 6, 2020

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m. in the Suffield Middle School Auditorium. The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Board members Susan Mercik Davis, Jamie Drzyzga, Brian Fry, Debra Dudack, Melissa Finnigan, Glenn Gazdik, Scott Lingenfelter, and Michael Sepko; and Superintendent Timothy Van Tasel, Assistant Superintendent Michelle Zawawi, and Business Manager Bill Hoff; First Selectwoman Melissa Mack and Board of Finance member Brian Kost

Absent: Maureen Sattan and SHS Student Representatives Abigail Sperrazza and Akshita Jindal

Recognition

Staff members could not attend this evening to present the QPR/Gizmos presentation.

Suffield High School Student Representatives

No report as Miss Sperrazza and Miss Jindal were not present.

Public Comment

None

Board Member Comment

None

Reports to the Board

- Superintendent's Report
  - Mr. Van Tasel said he sent formal correspondence today to families and staff relative to the budget.
  - A safety audit of each school was conducted by the Suffield Police Department this past fall. An executive session with the Board will be scheduled to review the findings of the audit.
  - A canine search was conducted at Suffield High School in December and no contraband was found. Mr. Van Tasel thanked the police departments that conducted the search. He added the MOU between the district and Suffield Police Department relative to canine searches needs to be updated.
  - Mr. Van Tasel attended the holiday luncheon at the senior center hosted by the Suffield Police Department. He enjoyed serving lunches to the seniors.
  - Superintendent Van Tasel thanked the staff and community for all the charitable fundraising done over the holidays.
  - Mr. Van Tasel will be hosting a mid-year summit on Jan. 17 with faculty and staff. This event is similar to convocation. Jay Williams, President of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, will be the keynote speaker.
  - The holiday social was postponed due to weather. We hope to find another date to hold this event.
  - Mr. Van Tasel received a request to commence negotiations for the Teamsters contract. It is anticipated these negotiations will begin in early February.

- Board Chair's Report
  - Board Chair Mercik Davis said she sent out subcommittee assignments to Board members. The Agriscience liaison position is vacant. She asked any Board members who are interested to email her with their interest.
  - She said all future business items requested by Board members at meetings will be documented in a Google Doc and shared with Board members.
- Business Manager's Report – No report
- Board of Selectmen Liaison's Report
  - Ms. Mack said the ongoing dispute with Haynes Construction over the large animal facility's roof has been resolved. She said the town can now advocate for the state to close out the high school grant.
  - A meeting with the Public Works Department and Mr. Plano is scheduled tomorrow for the purpose of reviewing outstanding projects and planning for next year.
  - Ms. Mack said the town needs to hold a special election for the WPCA position because the judge ruled to uphold the registrar's decision, which was a tie. No election date was specified in the ruling, so the town has asked the court for clarification. She will keep the district informed of the election date.
- Board of Finance Liaison's Report
  - Mr. Kost asked if the school construction grant reimbursement has been received from the state. Mr. Hoff said the large animal facility had to be completed before reimbursement because the school and large animal facility projects were done together.

#### Approval of Minutes

**MOTION #20-32:** Lingenfelter moved to approve the minutes of December 5, 2019 and December 16, 2019. Fry seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion carried 8-0.

#### Consent Agenda

**MOTION #20-33:** Dudack moved to approve the following on the consent agenda:

1. Policy #1331 – Smoke Free Environment
2. Policy #4118.231/4218.231 – Alcohol, Drugs, and Tobacco
3. Policy #5131.6 – Drugs, Tobacco, Alcohol
4. Policy #5131.911 – Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy
5. Policy #6142.101 - Wellness
6. Policy #6172.6 – Virtual/Online Learning

Drzyzga seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion carried 8-0.

#### Discussion/Action Items

- Budget Workshop #1: Technology, Transportation and Facilities Proposed 2020-2021  
Budget Presentations

Board member Sepko said he will keep track of all board members' questions so the administration can provide those answers during budget deliberations. Mr. Van Tassel said the goal is to keep the budget process organized and focused. Ms. Osleger presented the district's technology budget. She highlighted the notable budget changes, which include increased personnel for combined services with the town, reductions based on the new server structure, increases in internet costs due to additional fiber needed to support the server structure, and an increase in Microsoft licensing and support for pupil services student devices. Mr. Kost questioned how the personnel line could show a reduction with a proposed increase in staffing.

Mr. Hoff said \$168,963 of the technology salaries will be paid by the town. Ms. Mack noted that if the town had its own director and staff, there would be a greater cost to the town. Ms. Osleger said the town would need a director and two or three technology support personnel. Mr. Hoff added that the shared structure not only has a cost savings, but the services to the town are superior. There are also significant savings in purchasing. Ms. Osleger reviewed the line items and differences in the proposed budget over this year's budget, for a total reduction of a \$32,071, or a 4.4%. In response to a Board member's question, Ms. Osleger said the servers were approved at a town meeting. Mr. Hoff noted that student devices are being requested in ACCE, and if that is not approved, that expense will be added to the BOE budget. In response to a Board member's question about Microsoft agreements, Ms. Osleger said the district has fairly low multi-year agreements, but the district is looking at different structures. The Board and administration discussed the shared services and bulk purchasing opportunities the district currently utilizes.

Mr. Plano presented the maintenance budget and highlighted the notable budget changes. He said in previous years all maintenance projects and repairs were included in the Open Choice grant fund, but with the yearly decreasing balance in this grant, these expenses are now in the general operating budget, resulting in an increase of \$217,750 to the BOE budget. All other items combined have resulted in a slight budget reduction. The department continues to evaluate opportunities to collaborate with the town and continues to manage staff for maximum efficiency. He explained safety and security items for the district are included in this budget. The Board and administration discussed the status of the Open Choice grant fund and the town's contingency fund for unexpected expenses. Mr. Kost suggested adding a column for each department budget that gives this year's forecast for each expense.

Mr. Hoff presented the utilities budget and said electricity was budgeted at the 2018-2019 actual plus 8% for generation resulting in a 29.9% increase. He said LED lights are being installed at the high school and the project is almost complete. Mr. Plano added that the lights were installed at 70% but the percentage will be reduced which will correlate to energy savings. He also stated the LED lights have daylight harvesting capabilities which will reduce usage. Natural gas is budgeted at the 2018-2019 actual resulting in a 14.0% increase.

***Lingenfelter left at 7:38pm, returned at 7:41pm***

***Zawawi left at 7:40pm, returned at 7:43pm***

Board member Sepko suggested hiring consulting services to further look at ways to save on various expenses.

Mr. Hoff reviewed the transportation budget. He said the district is in its final year of the M&J Bus Company contract. The contractual rate increase for next year is 2.25%. The regular education transportation proposed budget is a 1.8% increase over this year's budget, and the special education transportation proposed budget is a 7.1% decrease over this year's budget. The reduction in special education transportation expenses is due to reduced outplacement expenses and reduced fuel expenses.

- **Capital Budget Discussion**

Board member Sepko said the ACCE request is separate from the BOE budget. The Capital Plan is a 10-year plan for capital expenditures which gets submitted to ACCE, a subcommittee of the Board of Finance. The items have been prioritized by the administration and is being presented to the Board for discussion and review and eventually for the Board's approval in the coming weeks. Superintendent Van Tasel said the Board and community leaders attended a walk-

through of all school buildings and have begun discussions for a long-range facility study of all town and school facilities. Mr. Hoff said only the projects for year one have been prioritized. He reviewed the priority items, which include the district technology projects, air conditioning classrooms at Suffield Middle School, program enhancements and building renovations at Suffield Middle School, Family Consumer Science overhaul at Suffield High School, safety and security enhancements district-wide, an open bay storage building district-wide, an overhaul of the HVAC system at Suffield High School, auditorium and gym renovations at Spaulding School, bathroom partitions and furniture replacement at Suffield High School, and bathroom and gym storage area renovations at McAlister School. The Board discussed these items and the rationale for how they were prioritized. Mr. Van Tassel asked board members to review and share their thoughts on the priorities. Board members discussed moving the Safety and Security District item higher on the priority list. The list can be revised, if needed, and presented to the Board for a vote at the January 21 Board meeting.

- **Approval of the Suffield Education Association Stipends**

Board Chair Mercik Davis said the stipends were part of contract negotiations last year and it was decided to table the stipends piece of the contract so the administration and SEA could review them more closely. Much work has been done by the teachers and stipend committee. Mr. Van Tassel said the recommendation was that the administration would work with the union as it relates to stipends to address inequities in the structure. The focus was on coaching stipends and the committee and teachers worked to find the balance in bringing equity across all stipends. There are three parts to the stipend structure: department heads/team leaders, coaching and extracurricular stipends.

***Mr. Kost left the meeting at 8:45pm***

**MOTION #20-34:** Sepko moved to approve the Suffield Education Association Stipends as presented. Finnigan seconded the motion. In response to a Board member's question relative to how stipends are paid and the work accounted for, Mr. Hoff said depending on the stipend some are paid once if it is a short assignment, while others are paid twice for longer assignments. Payment requests are accompanied by a signed evaluation form and documentation of the number of students, hours, etc. In response to a Board member's question as to how the amount of each stipend was determined, Mr. Hoff said the committee looked at each sport and the length of the season and hours involved. Fall and spring sports' seasons are similar in length season, while winter sport's season is longer. Board members discussed the accountability and reporting of these assignments.

Board Chair Mercik Davis called for a vote. It was requested that a report of all stipends paid be shared with the Board at the end of the school year. In response to a Board member's question relative to comparing stipends of other districts, Mr. Hoff said comparisons were done. All members voted in favor. The motion carried 8-0.

- **Approval of Suffield High School Course Proposal, Farm to Fork**

Board member Drzyzga said this is a new course in the family and consumer science department focused on food production from beginning to end.

**MOTION #20-35:** Dudack moved to approve the Suffield High School course proposal, Farm to Fork, as presented. Sepko seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion carried 8-0.

### Subcommittee Reports

- January 2, 2020 Finance, Facilities and Negotiations Subcommittee Meeting - Board member Sepko said the Board has discussed all topics that were covered at the subcommittee meeting during tonight's budget discussion.
- December 16, 2019 Policy Subcommittee Meeting - The following policies are being placed on a 30-day read: Policy #6159 – IEP/Special Education Program; Policy #6146 – Graduation Requirements; Policy #0200 – Goals and Objectives; and Bylaw #9130 – Committees. Board member Finnigan asked if there has been discussion relative to participation in sports being considered as credit for the Physical Education requirement so these students can take other electives. Board member Dudack said it has been a discussion but implementation of that could prove difficult. Mr. Van Tassel said the challenge is having objective criteria for assessing students taking sports in lieu of PE classes.

### Board Liaison Reports

- CREC - none
- Agriscience - none
- CABA - none

### Future Business

- End of year report on all stipend payments
- Report on special needs student results on state assessments
- Presentation on transition programming for 18-21 students

### Public Comment

None

### Board Member Comment

None

### Adjournment

Fry moved, Lingenfelter seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:06 p.m.

*Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of February 3, 2020.*

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Guerrette  
Secretary Pro Tem