

Board of Education Meeting
December 3, 2013

Call to Order

Chair Bob Eccles called the meeting to order at 5:53 p.m. in the Suffield High School Media Center. Present: Board members Bob Eccles, Mary Lou Sanborn, Mary Roy, Scott Schneider, George Beiter, Michelle Zawawi, Natalie Semyanko and Jeanne Gee; Superintendent of Schools, Karen Baldwin.

Executive Session

Sanborn moved, Gee seconded to go into executive session at 5:53 p.m. for the purpose of discussing records and reports related to collective bargaining between the Suffield Board of Education and Suffield Administrators Group. The motion passed unanimously.

Gee moved, Sanborn seconded to come out of executive session at 6:20 p.m.

Board member D'Ostuni entered the meeting at 6:23 p.m.

Regular Session

Superintendent Karen Baldwin called the regular session to order at 6:30 p.m. Present: Board members Bob Eccles, Mary Lou Sanborn, Mary Roy, Scott Schneider, George Beiter, Michelle Zawawi, Natalie Semyanko, Jeanne Gee, and Lori D'Ostuni; Superintendent of Schools, Karen Baldwin; Assistant Superintendent, Jim Collin; Interim Business Manager, Phil Russell; and observers.

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Student Recognition

Superintendent Baldwin recognized Kate Rookey, a Suffield Middle School student, and Melissa McCarthy, a Suffield High School student who were this year's recipients of the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) Student Award. Superintendent Baldwin said students are selected by faculty and the award recognizes students' service to their schools and communities while maintaining academic success and exhibiting leadership qualities. Superintendent Baldwin highlighted Kate's and Melissa's achievements and community service. She congratulated Kate and Melissa on receiving the award and thanked their families for attending the meeting.

Melissa's grandfather thanked the Board and the Superintendent for recognizing his granddaughter.

Staff Recognition

Superintendent Baldwin recognized Kathy Carney and Kim Moriarty, staff members in the Central Office, for their work during the interim when the Superintendent was without an executive secretary. Superintendent Baldwin thanked Kathy and Kim for not only their hard work and collaboration but in how they did the work. She said their high level of engagement, commitment, and willingness to learn new aspects of the operation is a wonderful example of the collaborative environment that the district is striving for as a whole. She presented them with a certificate of appreciation on behalf of herself and the Board.

Election of Board of Education Officers

- Chairperson

MOTION #13-67: Sanborn moved, D'Ostuni seconded the nomination of Robert Eccles as Suffield Board of Education Chairperson. The motion passed unanimously.

- Vice Chairperson

MOTION #13-68: Schneider moved, Gee seconded the nomination of Mary Lou Sanborn as Suffield Board of Education Vice Chairperson. The motion passed unanimously.

- Secretary

MOTION # 13-69: Roy moved, Gee seconded the nomination of Lori D'Ostuni as Suffield Board of Education Secretary. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

None

Communications

Superintendent Baldwin received a card from Sue Porcello thanking the Board for the gift and her time on the Board.

Approval of Minutes

Sanborn moved, Beiter seconded to approve the minutes of the November 18, 2013 Board of Education meeting amended as follows:

- On the third page under Review of October 2013 Financial Report, amend the fourth to last sentence to read, "Mr. Beiter asked if food service would be able to pay for the full cost of benefits this year."

The motion passed with one abstention (Eccles).

Consent Agenda

None

Discussion/Action Items

- 2014 Draft BOE Meeting Schedule – Superintendent Baldwin said a few revisions were made to the 2014 schedule in response to suggestions by board members at the November 6, 2013 meeting when the schedule was originally presented. Specifically, Tuesday, November 4, 2014 was changed to Wednesday, November 5, 2014 due to Election Day, and the location of the January 21, 2014 and the February 19, 2014 meetings were changed from the high school media center to Suffield Middle School and Spaulding, respectively, due to Board of Education tours at the schools prior to those meetings. Board member Beiter said the Middle School media center is a better venue for board meetings. Board member Eccles suggested considering other configurations of the tables in the High School media center. Superintendent Baldwin suggested revisiting the idea of holding meetings in the Middle School auditorium and possibly have a few meetings televised each year. Board member Eccles asked Superintendent Baldwin to check into holding meetings in the Middle School auditorium. Chair Eccles advised that the dates of the 2014 Board meetings be approved with the understanding that the location of the meetings may be changed.

MOTION #13-70: D'Ostuni moved, Schneider seconded to approve the 2014 Board of Education meeting schedule as proposed. The motion passed unanimously.

- Field Trip Request – SHS Paris and Tours, France – April 10, 2014-April 19, 2014 - Mr. Carl Casinghino, a world language teacher at the High School, gave an overview of the field trip to France. He anticipates 10 to 12 students from the AP French class and French 5 class will be going on this trip. Board member Sanborn noted that the old field trip form was completed. Field trip forms were updated earlier this year. Superintendent Baldwin said she would get the correct form to Mr. Casinghino. Board member D'Ostuni asked if the itinerary was the same as last year's trip. Mr. Casinghino answered in the affirmative.

MOTION #13-71: Roy moved, D'Ostuni seconded to approve the field trip request per board policy. The motion passed unanimously.

- Field Trip Request – SMS Quebec City, Canada – May 16, 2013-May 19, 2013 – Ms. Corinne Khawaja, a world language teacher at the Middle School, gave an overview of the field trip to Canada. She showed a slideshow from last year's trip. She said 44 students are signed up for the trip with six chaperones. Board member Sanborn noted there were not enough chaperones for the number of students. She said the student to chaperone ratio is six to one. Ms. Khawaja said she would add chaperones to be in compliance. Board member D'Ostuni asked if the itinerary was the same as last year's trip and asked about the amount of walking. Ms. Khawaja answered that it was the same and that the walking was good for the students. Board member Roy asked how long the school has been offering this trip. Ms. Khawaja said this year will be her second year going, but the Middle School has taken this trip for many years.

MOTION #13-72: Beiter moved, Roy seconded to approve the field trip request per board policy. Board member Sanborn wanted the approval contingent on having eight chaperones. Superintendent Baldwin assured board members that the number of chaperones would be in compliance with the policy and regulations. The motion passed unanimously.

- Field Trip Request – SMS New York City, NY – May 16, 2013-May 18, 2013 – Ms. Marilyn Kopf, a world language teacher at the Middle School, gave an overview of the field trip to New York City. The trip will allow for students to apply the use of Spanish. They speak entirely in Spanish. They will go on a guided tour, eat in Spanish restaurants and learn about Spanish culture at the Museo del Barrio. She anticipates the trip will be full as in past years. Board member Sanborn asked Ms. Kopf to make sure the number of chaperones is in compliance with the regulations.

MOTION #13-73: Schneider moved, Zawawi seconded to approve the field trip request per board policy. The motion passed unanimously.

- Discussion and possible action to ratify the tentative agreement between the Suffield Board of Education and Suffield Administrators Group.

Board member Eccles said the Board held an executive session prior to the regular session this evening and the tentative agreement has been approved by the Suffield Administrators Group. Board member Sanborn read the Board's goals for the negotiations into the record: "The first was to continue to make strides in health insurance plan design and premium cost share, through maintaining the high deductible Health Savings Account (HSA), and increasing the deductible to \$2,000/\$4,000. The second goal was to reach a wage settlement that maintained the administrators' salary as competitive within the Hartford County comparisons, and allowed for step movement of early-career administrators. Third, the Board was committed to negotiating a wage increase that would be fair to the administrators, but also reasonable in these challenging times. The tentative agreement that we reached achieved these goals." Board member Gee commended and thanked the administration and negotiating committee for their hard work.

MOTION #13-74: Schneider moved, Beiter seconded to ratify the tentative agreement between the Suffield Board of Education and Suffield Administrators Group. The motion passed unanimously.

Reports to the Board

- Superintendent's Report
 - Update on large animal facility – Superintendent Baldwin distributed photographs of the large animal facility and a supporting narrative to board members. She updated the Board last week after the Permanent Building Committee meeting on the status

and continued struggles with the facility. There are numerous concerns with the roof and during a walk-through inspection last week with the Town's building official, it was discovered there are missing support structures in the roof and cracks in the concrete walls. The Superintendent said Haynes Construction was part of the walk-through and she was copied on an email that the issues are trying to be resolved. She said they have known about the issues with the roof for a couple of months, but they do not seem to be making any progress. The RFP was issued for the fire pump but only one company responded and they did not understand the scope of work involved in the project. The committee will issue another RFP in hopes of attracting a contractor with more excavation and plumbing knowledge. She said the Town's Public Works Director is contacting companies he feels are qualified to do the project.

The Superintendent said she received an email earlier today regarding the Cannon property, the parcel gifted to the town adjacent to the large animal facility. The email stated that Chestnut trees were cut down on the property by the Town who is doing a sidewalk project in the area. The owners of the Cannon Farm specifically asked for those trees to be preserved when they gifted the land. The Facilities Director visited the site and confirmed the trees had been cut down. He also visited the Public Works Department and was told an arborist told the Town the trees were not Chestnut trees. Board member Sanborn asked if the trees were tagged. Superintendent Baldwin did not know. The scope of work for the sidewalk project was reviewed by school staff and tree removal was not part of the scope of work. Board member Gee asked if there were any other stipulations in the gifting of the property to the Town. The Superintendent did not know of any stipulations but said preserving those trees was a priority of the family and the family reiterated their desire when they toured the facility in September 2012. She said since she just received this information earlier today, she will look into the matter further to get more information. Board member Eccles said the Town should have some kind of process for restrictions on land use. The Board should have a process and procedures in place for restricting land use on school property. The Superintendent added that the procedures need to address improved communication between the Town and the school. Board member Eccles asked the Superintendent if she has contacted the First Selectman. The Superintendent said not yet because she wanted to meet with the Facilities Director first to get the facts, which only occurred a few hours ago.

Board member Schneider, referring back to the facility's structural problems, asked if the cracks in the cement walls can be corrected within the building code. The Superintendent said she believed so. Board member Schneider asked if the cause of the cracks was known. Superintendent Baldwin did not know the cause. Board member Eccles asked what is the legal status of the facility. The Superintendent said

- a temporary Certificate of Occupancy has not been issued. Once it is issued, the facility will be turned over to the school district, and the Board will have to approve it. Board member Eccles said he would like it to go before the Facilities Subcommittee first and have them make a recommendation to the Board.
- Update on Middle School Continuous Improvement Plan – Assistant Superintendent Collin updated the Board on the Middle School Continuous Improvement Plan. Board members Gee and Zawawi are participating in the process and the committee will meet again at the end of January. Three goals have been established to guide the work. They are (1) increase the array of offerings for middle school students in the Unified Arts domain, (2) maximize instructional time in all areas with a focus on the core academic areas of English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies and World Language, and (3) ensure a developmentally appropriate middle school that focuses on the needs of middle school students and best practice at the middle school level. Weekly administrative meetings are taking place, meetings with Suffield Middle School faculty have occurred and committees are being formed to carry out the work and plan site visits to other middle schools, and a steering committee has been formed which includes parents to be part of the process. This is a multi-year process that involves gathering and compiling information and establishing short term steps to achieve the long term goals. Board member Schneider asked how Science and Social Studies fit into this work. Dr. Collin said initially the plan is to focus on ELA and inequities in instruction but the process will eventually address all areas of curriculum. The Superintendent added that ELA and world language are the drivers for 2014. There is large number of students in study halls and the priority is to provide them better alternatives in the short term. Board member Gee said the parents involved in the steering committee want to give students a full and rich experience and are looking at the smaller issues to achieve that. Board member D’Ostuni said work needs to be done in tandem with the three goals. Middle school students need to be taught skills to see the big picture and develop critical thinking which are separate from the three goals. Social Studies is a key component to this. The Superintendent said she and Dr. Collin met earlier today and discussed the Science and Social Studies component. That piece will be presented to the Board in context with the budget. Some pieces are going to need more support than others and allocating resources will need to be done to achieve that. The administration is not ignoring that piece but only so much can be done at this point. The priorities will be presented to the Board in early 2014. Board member Eccles asked how many students were in a typical study hall and how are they proctored. The Superintendent said it can vary; a study hall in the cafeteria may have 40 students where a classroom study hall may have 10 or 11, and study halls are proctored by teachers and duty clerks. Board member Eccles asked if more teachers will be needed if those students are put into classes instead of study halls. The Superintendent said an analysis would

need to be done and a determination made of what classes would be offered before a determination can be made on more teachers. Board member Zawawi asked Dr. Collin what is the level of enthusiasm among teachers. Dr. Collin said teachers are open to the process, in agreement with the goals, and are participating in the process. Board member Schneider asked if this work will impact students when entering high school. Dr. Collin said districts with strong Unified Arts programs in their middle schools see strong academics and career focus in the high school students. Students have more authentic, real world experiences at the middle school level to help them determine what their abilities and aptitudes are for post high school preparation. The Superintendent added it was very purposeful including the K-12 supervisors on this project because this work needs to connect to the high school level. Board member Schneider asked if this work will impact the 2014-2015 budget and inquired as to how the timing will work. Dr. Collin said it will impact the budget and will be very challenging. There are many variables in this ongoing and dynamic process.

- Chair's Report

- Board member Eccles reminded Board members to send him their preferred committee assignments as well as how to compose the subcommittees. He would like the subcommittees in place by the next meeting. Board member Zawawi said outlining the roles and responsibilities for each subcommittee would be helpful especially to Natalie who is new to the Board. It would also be helpful to know when these subcommittees meet. Board member Eccles said the committee meetings are scheduled by the subcommittee chair working with the committee members to determine the meeting times. He added if anyone had questions about the committees they could contact him. Board member Gee suggested providing availability to the Chair as well as preferences. The Superintendent said she can outline the subcommittees for Board members and send the 2013-14 agenda topics again as well.
- Board member Eccles said he would like to hold a retreat on December 16 which would include a brief discussion by a representative of Shipman and Goodwin around the roles and responsibilities of Board members and FOI guidelines. After the discussion he would like to have an open discussion about the Board's effectiveness; things we are doing well and areas to improve upon. He asked Board members to send him any other agenda items. Board member Gee asked if the retreat could be a part of the regular December 17 Board meeting to avoid two meetings in one week. The Superintendent said the Board meeting for the 17 was being developed, and included the November Financial report, and possibly two other informational reports to the Board. Board member Eccles appreciates it a tough time of year but thinks the retreat should be separate from a Board meeting.

Board member Sanborn left at 7:58 p.m.

- Board member Eccles said the Board discussed shared services in the context of a Business Manager at the November 6 meeting. Out of that discussion, came the idea of shared services with a Human Resources Director. He was asked to contact the First Selectman, which he did. The Board has had representation in the hiring process of a new Town Human Resources Director. He shared concerns with the First Selectman on governance issues, for example, how to share costs and issues around management reporting and performance evaluation. Board members Roy and Beiter have been involved in the interview process by sitting in on the interviews. Board member Roy was involved in the first round of interviews which had seven candidates. Three candidates were forwarded to the next round. Board member Beiter was involved in the final interview process. He said all three candidates were well qualified and at this point it is the First Selectman's choice. Board member Eccles suggested having the Blum Shapiro consultant in on the process of how to structure the share services of a Human Resource Director. Board member Roy said she will contact other towns that have shared services to get information as a next step.

Subcommittees Reports

- None

Future Business

- Common Core State Standards – Implementation of Smarter Balanced Assessment
- Substitute Service Budget Study and Kelly Services Data
- Gender Gap Writing/SRBI
- PALS Program – 2013/2014 student data and parent survey results – June 2014
- Learning Management System status – February 2014
- Educator Evaluation Plan Implementation and Plan Approval
- School Goals – School Improvement Plan

Executive Session

Schneider moved, Beiter seconded to enter into executive session at 8:03 p.m. for the purpose of discussing records, reports, and bargaining strategy related to collective bargaining between the Suffield Board of Education and the Food Service Union, UE Local 222, CILU #38. Attorney Rebecca Rudnick Santiago, of Shipman & Goodwin joined the Board and Superintendent in Executive Session.

Beiter moved, Schneider seconded to adjourn from executive session at 9:29 p.m.

Adjournment

Board member D'Ostuni moved to adjourn. Board member Roy seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori D'Ostuni
Secretary

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