

Suffield Board of Education Workshop
March 10, 2014 6:00 p.m.
Central Office Conference Room

Present: Board members Robert Eccles, Lori D'Ostuni, Jeanne Gee, Scott Schneider, George Beiter, Michelle Zawawi, Mary Roy, Natalie Semyanko, Mary Lou Sanborn (via telephone at 6:45 p.m.); Superintendent, Karen Baldwin, and Assistant Superintendent, Jim Collin.

Board member Beiter said he was concerned about the workshop meeting being used to discuss what he believed to be the work of the Board. Board Chair Eccles commented on the appropriateness of the meeting structure to address the budget work being done in a workshop which is posted and public.

Board member Gee expressed concern over the meeting and the pressure put on a budget process when items in the budget for discussion/decision have not gone through the proper subcommittee process.

Board Chair Eccles said the Board needed to come to a consensus in order to vote on the budget at its March 18th meeting. Changes can be made through the amendment process.

Board member Zawawi said she was interested in the current initiatives proposed, especially in the Middle School. She inquired as to the possibility of taking the academic support model out of the budget, giving the district more time to adjust to all the many changes and continue to focus on the Middle School Continuous Improvement Plan. The Superintendent said Central Office can review removing the academic support model. Board member Zawawi asked if the academic support model presented is the best and final plan for the Middle School. Superintendent Baldwin answered in the affirmative. Board member D'Ostuni said she was very uncomfortable forcing 7th and 8th grade students to take Unified Arts classes in which they are not interested. The law dictates that can only be done through 6th grade. Board Chair Eccles commented that both these issues should not be part of the budget discussion. Board member Beiter said he is concerned about the budget. Board member Semyanko said she feels uncomfortable being "forced" into a decision on these two issues because they are tied to a budget vote. Board member Roy said she is comfortable with a compromise that removes the academic support model but keeps the Middle School Continuous Improvement Plan in the budget.

Board member Schneider said he was very concerned about the mixed messages and division among Board members regarding the budget process. He hoped the Board can find consensus and move forward.

Board member Sanborn said the academic support model is not ready for full Board support. She asked if a 1.0 FTE can be moved to the Middle School to help build experiences and interest in the Vo-ag program.

Board member Beiter left the meeting at 7:45 p.m.

Board Chair Eccles outlined the next steps: the Superintendent will create a summary statement of the continuous improvement initiatives, the line item detail that supports the request and the aggregate salary figures for the models in the 2014-2015 proposed budget.

Zawawi moved to adjourn, Schneider seconded.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanne Gee