

Board of Education Meeting
June 3, 2014

Call to Order

Acting Board Chair Sanborn, called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m. in the Suffield High School Media Center. Present: Board members Lori D'Ostuni, Scott Schneider, George Beiter, Natalie Semyanko, Mary Roy, Mary Lou Sanborn; Jeanne Gee, Michelle Zawawi, Superintendent, Karen Baldwin, Assistant Superintendent, Jim Collin, and Interim Business Manager, Phil Russell.

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

MOTION #14-26: Roy moved to change the agenda to move Item IV. Recognition before Item III. Public Comment. Schneider seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

Recognition

Superintendent Baldwin recognized this year's retiring teachers: Janice DiRoberts, Barbara Dowd, Joan Heffernan, Pam Martin, Cynthia Nicholson, Deborah Nolan, Susan Reid, and Martha Wassall, and retiring administrator, John Warrington, Suffield Middle School Principal. She thanked them for their years of service and dedication to Suffield Public Schools. She also acknowledged the family members of the retirees who were present.

Superintendent Baldwin introduced the 2014-2015 Teacher of the Year, Kris Pryce. She highlighted Ms. Pryce's collaborative nature and deep focus on serving all children. In a year of increased challenges and demands, Ms. Pryce's attributes help build and contribute to a positive culture at Spaulding. Dr. Baldwin presented Ms. Pryce with a plaque.

Dr. Baldwin introduced the 2014-2015 Paraeducator of the Year, Michele Urch. Dr. Baldwin said the Paraeducator of the Year was developed in honor of a paraeducator who lost her life in the Sandy Hook tragedy. Holly Reinhard, a Kindergarten teacher, nominated Ms. Urch and wrote a powerful letter about her skills, work ethic and the positive impact Ms. Urch has in the classroom working with students.

Board member Sanborn wished all the retirees a safe and fun retirement, and congratulated Ms. Pryce and Ms. Urch.

The Board took a five minute recess.

Superintendent Baldwin introduced Suffield Middle School student members of the LEO Club, Millie Kochman and Kyle Englander, along with their advisor Mario Carullo. Kyle and Millie gave an overview of the LEO Club which is a community service club. This year the club has raised money for the Wounded Warrior Project, worked with children with autism, volunteered at Enfield's Loaves and Fishes, and partnered with elementary students at the Breakthrough

school in Hartford and Spaulding elementary to promote the love of reading. The LEO Club recently took a field trip to Boston where they worked at Strongwater Farm, a center that trains therapy horses for people with autism and wounded military. The students also participated in the Marine Corps 5K road race and toured Harvard University where they learned about careers and entrepreneurship. The Superintendent and Board members thanked Kyle and Millie for their excellent presentation and being wonderful representatives of the club and their school.

Public Comment

Board member Sanborn welcomed everyone in attendance. She said the Board is aware of the difficult issues currently confronting the district and the Board is working with the Superintendent to address and resolve the issues. Board member Sanborn reviewed the citizen participation guidelines and directed the audience to available hard copies of the guidelines.

Ms. Lisa Kantakis, 114 Raymond Road, Windsor Locks said she is a member of an alumni association that meets once a month with FFA representatives. All three directors have been very transparent with the large animal facility project. Her concern was with the two grants for the Agri-science program: the equipment grant and the ASTE grant. She was happy to see new purchases have been made and the equipment in place, but it has come to her attention that iPads were not distributed in a timely manner. She was concerned that it has taken 6 months to resolve the issue and get the iPads to the Agri-science center. She asked why the iPads were in another school in the system. She added the ASTE grant was to be used for Agri-science needs outside of the regular Agri-science funding. She said the Agri-science director would like to use those funds for the large animal facility and to get the Cannon property in better working order. She said that request was turned down. She would like to have an accounting done on the ASTE grant of how the money was used and why the director does not have the ability to use those funds for the Agri-science program.

Ms. Lisa Bonner, 37 Wainscot Lane, shared the results of a teacher survey that was conducted by the SEA. She said the report is 27 pages in length and included teacher comments. Ms. Bonner said the survey revealed 84% of teachers reported low morale stemming from a large amount of data collection and reporting requirements, the curriculum writing process, and a low level of confidence between teachers and the district administration. She said the school system is so effective because of its teachers and their dedication to the students. She said a lack of response by the administration would be demoralizing to teachers, staff and students. She asked the Board to take action and not by forming a committee.

Ms. Marie Richter, 60 Rosewood Drive, said one of the Board's strategic goals is develop effective methods and procedures to promote incoming and outgoing communication with all stakeholders in the school community. She would like to establish an effective dialog with the Board. She said her main concerns were high turnover of building administration, teacher survey results that indicate declining staff morale, and establishment of a forum for open communication to provide for transparency. She acknowledged the teachers and administrators

that were leaving, stated the importance of local educational values and belief, and requested direction and timely feedback from the Board.

Communications

Superintendent Baldwin said a Play-Doh donation was made to Spaulding School by Christos Nikolis, Co-Chair of PMC Kids Ride. The donation is valued at \$100.00. She also was forwarded a letter from Donna Hayward that was from the CIAC Ice Hockey committee regarding the commendable conduct by this year's Suffield-Granby-Windsor Locks Co-op ice hockey team. Board member D'Ostuni asked if the Hockey Team had been made aware of the CIAC commendation. Principal Hayward responded in the affirmative.

Approval of Minutes

Gee moved, Semyanko seconded to approve the minutes of the May 20, 2014 Board of Education meeting with the following corrections:

1. On page 5, second paragraph, eighth sentence clarify Board member Beiter's comment relative to the district not paying for the outstanding electricity account, to add that he believes the Town should not pay for it either, the Board should seek help from State representatives, and it should be the Board's priority to resolve this.
2. On page 6, second paragraph, sixth sentence, to change the word "she" to "her".

All members voted in favor and the motion passed.

Consent Agenda

MOTION #14-27: D'Ostuni moved, Schneider seconded to approve the following items on the consent agenda:

1. Field trip request - SHS Madrid/Costa del Sol, Spain – April 9-18, 2015
2. Adoption of Directory Information Policy #5125.3 and dissolution of Policy #5145.15; and adoption of revisions to technology policies #4118.5, #4218.5, #6141.321, and dissolution of #6141.323.

All members voted in favor and the motion passed.

Discussion/Action Items

- Curriculum Audit Update as of June 2014

Dr. Baldwin said the curriculum audit update comes to the Board through the Programs and Services subcommittee that met on May 19, 2014. The committee discussed the ongoing and dynamic nature of curriculum revision. Dr. Collin said the audit documents the status of curriculum development that has occurred since August 2012. He reviewed the audit and how it was organized, showing each subject and each column representing steps in the curriculum development process. The curriculum written is guided by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), but developed in collaboration with teachers. He noted the process is arduous and the instructional shifts are different than in the past; they are more process-oriented compared to content-oriented. This work needs to be done on

a collaborative basis through the curriculum supervisors working with teachers. He said in the second year, the district has been able to streamline the process. Dr. Collin added he would like every teacher to get involved in the curriculum writing process because of the opportunities for professional learning. Questions from Board members were asked about subjects not yet modified being aligned with CCSS and when are teachers working on curriculum writing. Dr. Collin said all areas, even those not yet updated, are touched to some extent by CCSS, and teachers were first working on curriculum with the supervisors in a pullout model, however, in the second year the curriculum writing was done more during team meeting times. Dr. Collin noted some of this work will take place over the summer as well. He said the curriculum supervisors are responsible for coordinating the entire process in every grade level to addresses the standards. Board member Zawawi asked if a timeline and cost of the curriculum writing work could be established and shared with the Board. Dr. Collin said that is possible but projections should be done at three month increments since the process is dynamic. Board member Gee said she believes some of the disconnect the district is experiencing is due to the CCSS and all districts being made to conform curriculum, instruction and assessment changes made and brought to us by outside corporate and governmental systems. Board member Gee stated the morale of our experienced, expert teachers is being impacted by the modes these new mandates are being enacted within the district in a top down, command and control method that mimics the way the standards were brought to states to begin with. The disconnects are related to the lack of perceived collaboration in embracing and implementing the Common Core. Several Board members expressed concerns that some long held learning experiences for students are being eliminated and that is discouraging to teachers, students and parents. Board member Semyanko said she would like the district to err on the side of caution before we throw out home-grown projects and work when changing the curriculum. Dr. Baldwin and Dr. Collin expressed their desire to have input from teachers. Board member D'Ostuni said curriculum needs to come to the Board for approval. Dr. Baldwin said the Policy subcommittee met prior to this meeting and they discussed having a policy framework in place to advance this work. Board member Zawawi asked if teachers have an established chain of command in which to report concerns or ideas. Dr. Collins said that is a component that has been an issue, but it is being worked on. Superintendent Baldwin said this is dynamic work and is challenging. Work with teachers will continue to develop a meaningful plan.

Overview of Aramark RFP for Food Service

Phil Russell said representatives from Aramark will present their proposal at the Thursday, June 5, 2014 Budget subcommittee meeting. Mr. Russell provided all Board members with Aramark's written proposal package. He said Aramark's fee structure is different from the district's current food service company. Aramark's fees are calculated on a per meal basis, which encourages them to increase the participation rate. Superintendent Baldwin added that three food service companies responded to the RFP, but only Aramark bid. The district asked for

three programs, the traditional program and two alternatives. Aramark stated they would not bid the alternatives, but did provide an alternative that outsourced labor. There is cost savings to outsourcing labor. Dr. Baldwin noted the district is at a critical juncture in negotiations with the food service group. She encouraged all Board members to attend the June 5 meeting. Board member Sanborn asked if the proposal is unique to Suffield. Superintendent Baldwin said they have a brand but the proposal is unique to Suffield. There is significance in the timing of the collective bargaining issue, and we are trying to schedule a June 9 special Board meeting to discuss these issues. Board members may be more informed after the presentation on June 5. Dr. Baldwin also noted the Board will have to make a decision on the food service proposal at the June 17 meeting, and that is why we are providing the information and a presentation in advance of that meeting. The Board has not had a discussion around the alternative if the Board decides against hiring Aramark. Superintendent Baldwin said the district contacted Burlington, Harwinton, and Avon, who share a food service director, relative to adding Suffield to the group. However, they have indicated they are not interested. Board member Gee asked if there are any downsides to hiring Aramark. Mr. Russell said he is impressed with the proposal and does not find any downside to hiring Aramark.

Conduct of Exit Interviews by the Board of Education

Board member Sanborn said at the last Board meeting, a Board member brought up whether the Board can conduct exit interviews. She distributed the current exit interview process to Board members, which she read aloud. She said this is not part of hiring process manual but the Board could discuss adding the process to the manual. Board member Sanborn contacted Rebecca Santiago, the Board's attorney. She read aloud Ms. Santiago's response to her inquiry: Exit interviews are legally allowed but are typically done by the Superintendent due to sensitive information and for the protection of the Board. Comments could also be taken out of context. If exit interviews are done, specific ground rules and controls should be established. The Board could hold exit interviews in executive session, in accordance with the Connecticut General Statutes (CGS), and consequently would not be open to the public. Responses by interviewees could be misinterpreted and the Board could be held liable. Ms. Santiago said a second option is to conduct exit interviews with a subcommittee of the Board and the Superintendent. A third option is to have the exit interviews conducted by the Human Resource Assistant.

Board member Beiter said he was disappointed because the opportunity to interview the exiting administrators has passed. Board member Sanborn said the Board could still move forward with the exit interviews. She suggested mailing the exit interview questions to staff that are leaving. Board member D'Ostuni suggesting adding one more question to the list, "What first brought you to the district?" D'Ostuni went on to say exit interviews should be conducted by an HR person. It should be recommended to the person leaving to have the Superintendent sit in to hear the information since the Superintendent is the one person in the district that can effect change everywhere. However, there are several reasons for someone not wanting to sit with a Superintendent including issues or comfort level, so the person should be able to have a person

they choose to be in the exit interview with the HR person. Several Board members agreed that the Human Resource Assistant should be present for the interviews. Board member Sanborn said the current process will be followed, and the administrators leaving will be invited to participate in an exit interview. Board members discussed moving this issue to the HR & Personnel subcommittee for possible revisions to the current process and a recommendation would be brought to the Board.

Reports to the Board

- Superintendent's Report

- Business Manager Vacancy and SHS Principal Timeline – Superintendent Baldwin said the performance task interview occurred today for the business manager vacancy, and the committee believes they have a finalist candidate to be brought to the Board for an interview on June 17. The Superintendent held an orientation today for the high school principal interview committee. Board Chair Eccles is the Board representative and will be available by telephone and Board member Gee will be in attendance as well. There are six candidates interviewing tomorrow. Board member Zawawi questioned the time allotted to Board members to review the applications, since the interviews are taking place tomorrow. Board member Sanborn said Board members could review the applications for information purposes only during this week. Board member Zawawi added she was concerned about the interim principal position, specifically paying \$650/day for an interim when there are other administrators who could fill in. Board member Beiter asked if the Superintendent could provide an estimate total dollar figure for the interim's salary. Dr. Baldwin said the SHS Principal process is being fast tracked with a possible start date of August 1. She stated that Mr. Jakubowski will likely work two to three days a week for the month of July, and that it is important to have a contact person, and someone to make decisions at the high school. The Superintendent added if the Board does not want to hire an interim high school principal they do not have to. Dr. Baldwin said she believes it is the prudent and wise choice, but it is the Board's decision. Board member Roy noted not having an interim principal has never been done. Board member Gee suggested asking a current teacher who is certified to serve as interim. Superintendent Baldwin said she would be happy to do that. Board member D'Ostuni noted that there needs to be two people for administration purposes since due to vacations we need to have coverage and it was desirable to have someone families would know. She also pointed out teachers would know the students and Mr. Jakubowski was Interim last year at the high school.
- Initial Response to School Climate Concerns
Superintendent Baldwin said the morale issues among teachers are understood by the administration. She assured the audience and the Board that she will work together with all stakeholders to get the district through this difficult time. Dr.

Baldwin noted the administration values and holds teachers in high regard. The process needs to be collaborative, transparent, and focused on information sharing. She has recently met with the President of SEA, Mark Janick and union representatives and discussed the teacher survey results. She said more information is needed to analyze the report. Dr. Baldwin has reached out to Ms. Karam, who spoke during public comment at the May 20 Board meeting, and asked for her feedback on developing a parent committee. Dr. Baldwin said Ms. Karam welcomed the idea, and as a result letters were sent to parents inviting them to join Dr. Baldwin in this initial work in advocacy, communication and information sharing. Dr. Baldwin has also met with two principals relative to this work and met with the Professional Learning Committee (PLC) on June 2, who provided valuable feedback. Superintendent Baldwin said the district will survey teachers again in the fall working collaboratively with the PLC to create the survey. Structures and a policy framework can also be created at the Board level. Board member Zawawi asked if Board members will be a part of the parent group. Superintendent Baldwin said it is important for her to hear from and develop a constituency of parents, and is modeled after a committee in a former district. The Board discussed the need to review the survey. All Board members and the Superintendent did not receive the survey. The Superintendent will review the survey and sit down with the SEA and the Board will meet with the Superintendent. The Superintendent stated that relationship building is important and this is an opportunity. Board member Zawawi suggested a roundtable discussion once a month of what's going on so everyone will be listened to. Board member Schneider suggested holding a workshop for stakeholders to get their ideas out on the table and how to best approach issues and implement solutions. Board member Beiter stated we have plenty of groups and the Board and SEA should have a dialogue and we need to listen and respond accordingly and a report be put on the next Board meetings agenda. Board member Semyanko stated kids need to be at the core of discussions and decisions. Board member Sanborn agreed with member Beiter and asked Mr. Janick to provide electronic copies of the report to the Board and Superintendent. SEA President, Mark Janick responded he will send the report.

- Chair's Report

- Board member Sanborn reviewed the media policy that states members should refer media to the Board Chair for comment.

Subcommittees Reports

- Subcommittee Chair Sanborn said the committee met prior to this meeting and reviewed three policies that will be put on a 30-day read at the June 17 meeting: Policy #6146 & 6146.2 – Graduation Requirements, #4115 – Evaluation of Certified Staff, and #2120 – Organizational Chart. A survey will be sent out to teachers in the fall regarding this

year's implementation of SEED. Policies on curriculum design and materials selection will be updated and placed on the Policy subcommittee's future agenda.

- Board member Beiter wanted to correct the May 14, 2014 HR & Personnel subcommittee meeting to remove the reference to ultimate Frisbee and note that comment was made facetiously.

Public Comment

Mr. Wilfred Roy, 40 Deep Brook Harbor, said he worked in human resources for 40 years and conducted many exit interviews. He said written exit interviews work, and organizations get a 16-18% response rate, which is very high. He said the Board needs to take exit interviews and surveys with a "grain of salt", because those who respond are typically those who feel strongly for or against the topic. He recommended against the full Board conducting exit interviews. Exit interviews must be confidential and not conducted by someone in the chain of command. An organization this size should have two to five human resource personnel. Surveys should be done by an outside service to guarantee results. Any one survey is indicative but cannot use it by itself because people use them as opportunities to express their pet peeves. Surveys must be done on a regular basis to get meaningful data, and they need to have the same or similar questions the next time they are conducted with similar questions continuing after. Exit interview results are always more negative than reality. Push-pull opinion type questions are geared in such a way to bias the answers. He stated that he had not seen the survey questions but cautioned about the integrity of the survey depending on the questions.

Lisa Bonner, said Suffield is a great school system with great teachers. She said there is so much raw truth in the survey, and that it was a step in communicating with the administration. She stated that she had a degree in Statistics and that the questions on the survey were sound. She agreed with conducting exit interviews, but said the questions in the current process will not result in quantifiable data. She said teachers are afraid to speak out. To shift the culture, leaders need to shift their behavior.

Board member Zawawi would like the Vo-ag grant funds be added to the future agenda. Superintendent Baldwin said the ASTE grant is a carryover grant and the financials are reported each month. There is approximately \$57,000 in that account. Dr. Baldwin said she will talk about the Cannon Property in her update to the Board, but there are concerns over potential soil tests. Laura LaFlamme is not available on 17th to give an update, but it is a future agenda item. Board member Zawawi asked for an update on the iPad's allotted for the Agri-science program. Superintendent Baldwin said all of the iPads have been delivered to the Agri-science department. It was questioned that the Agri-science purchased iPads were in another school in the district. Board member Zawawi asked if the projector was delivered. Dr. Baldwin said the projector has been delivered but not installed due to electrical issues.

Future Business

- Substitute Service Budget Study and Kelly Services Data – placed on Budget Subcommittee future agenda
- Program Updates – June
- Material Selection and Curriculum Audit
- Agri-science update – courses, number of students, etc.
- School Climate and Culture
- Curriculum Audit
- Curriculum Writing Process and Engagement of Teachers
- Scope and Budget for Unit Development
- Policy Process – Curriculum Review and Adoption
- Appeals Process for Material Selection in Classrooms

Adjournment

D'Ostuni moved, Beiter seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:32 p.m.

Minutes are subject to approval at the next meeting on June 17, 2014

Respectfully submitted,

Lori D'Ostuni
Secretary