

Board of Education Meeting
September 17, 2013

Call to Order

Board Chair, Robert Eccles, called the meeting to order at 5:36 p.m. in the Suffield High School Media Center. Present: Board members Robert Eccles, Sue Porcello, Mary Lou Sanborn, Mary Roy, Lori D'Ostuni, Scott Schneider, George Beiter and Jeanne Gee; and Superintendent of Schools, Karen Baldwin.

Executive Session

Gee moved, Porcello seconded to move into executive session. The motion passed unanimously.

Board member Zawawi entered the meeting at 5:38 p.m.

A personnel issue was discussed.

Regular Session

Porcello moved, Gee seconded to move into regular session at 6:23 p.m.

The Chair reconvened regular session at 6:30 p.m. with the same persons present plus Assistant Superintendent, Jim Collin, Interim Business Manager, Phil Russell, and observers.

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment

None

Communications

The Superintendent distributed a letter she has sent to Mr. Mike Beebe, the president of M&J Bus Company, expressing concern about several contractual compliance issues. She is asking for a meeting with Mr. Beebe to address these concerns.

High School Student Rep Report

Suffield High School Principal, Donna Hayward, introduced the 2013/14 student reps: Jean Kim, Ben Gee and Alexandra Schneider (and possibly one more to be named at a later date). These reps will rotate attending the Board of Education meetings throughout the year.

- Drama Club auditions for the fall production, "Alice in Wonderland" has taken place.
- The Science Fair Club will begin meeting on September 16 after school.
- NHS applications have been sent out and a Welcome Back Dance sponsored by NHS will be held on September 20.
- The marching band will be performing at the Big E on September 26.
- Members of the FFA will be competing at the Big E on September 27 (floral, duck pond landscaping, and livestock judging).
- Best Buddies Club is sponsoring a potluck on September 27.
- A-Team applications have been sent out.
- The fall sports season is off to a great start.

- Ben Gee and Jean Kim attended Boys and Girls State, sponsored by the American Legion, this summer and found it to be a very rewarding experience. Ben was chosen to move forward to Boys Nation and reported to the Board about his experiences in Washington DC. Ben thanked the Suffield High School Guidance Department for providing the info for these opportunities.

Approval of Minutes

Porcello moved, Sanborn seconded to approve the minutes of the September 3, 2013 Board of Education meeting. The motion passed with one abstention (Eccles).

Consent Agenda

MOTION #13-54: D'Ostuni moved, Zawawi seconded **to approve the following items on the consent agenda:**

- Policy 3280.1 – Grants, Gifts and Requests
- Policy 1330R - Use of School Facilities

The motion passed unanimously.

Discussion Action Items

- July/August Financial Reports

Interim Business Manager, Phil Russell, reviewed the July/August financials and updated the Board of Education on the status of the budget deficit. Board member Beiter asked to see historical data on grant monies to assist in budget forecasting. Phil reminded the Board that the Choice grant amount is currently unknown but will most likely be available at the next meeting in October. Chair Eccles stated that we could populate the budget column in future financial reports and adjust figures once grant money amounts are known. There was a brief discussion on unfilled vacancies in the district.

MOTION #13-55: Roy moved, D'Ostuni **seconded to approve the July/August 2013 financial reports as presented.** The motion passed unanimously.

- Report on SHS National Honor Society Process Improvements

Donna Hayward, Suffield High School Principal, shared improvements to the NHS processes and procedures following feedback received after last year's application process. A document review was conducted by the NASSP National Office (National Association of Secondary School Principals). Donna outlined the changes incorporated into rating sheets and bylaws. Communication issues were identified and the faculty was educated as to expectations. The high school's school climate committee will most likely make their goal around Communication as the high school is committed to better communication with students and parents. Board member Gee asked if there were any disqualifiers/dealbreakers (i.e. academic dishonesty) that would prevent a student from becoming a member of NHS. Donna replied that students make mistakes and each case is looked at individually (i.e. a student who admits to and shows remorse vs. a student who denies dishonesty). Board member Gee stated that it was concerning that students who commit act of academic dishonesty be eligible for elevation to a society that has articulated standards of achievement and character. There has been a request for a larger discussion on academic integrity. The Superintendent responded that this raises an opportunity for reflection on this topic as part of continued student improvement. Chair Eccles asked how we govern standards to ensure consistency from year to year. Donna stated that NHS advisors, Dom Casolari and Debbie Pierce, have had intensive training

and are in close communication with other area NHS advisors. Board member Beiter added that many issues may be a result of home influences. Board member Gee stated that Board academic expectations should be made known to faculty, students, and parents at the beginning of each school year. The Chair agreed that this is a good opportunity for further discussion on academic dishonesty and what is being done in the district to address it. He requested an update for the Board after this year's application process in the November/December timeframe.

- Report on CMT/CAPT Results

The Superintendent of Schools, along with Sophia Gintoff, K-12 Language Arts Supervisor, and Kim Loveland, K-12 Math Supervisor, updated the Board on the CMT and CAPT scores for 2013. The Superintendent emphasized that we are moving away from teaching to the test and focusing on best practice instruction. Differences between the CMT and the incoming Smarter Balance assessments were highlighted. Board member Zawawi asked when parents would see the new approach in students' homework assignments. She asked if the Board could view actual student assessments/work. Board member Sanborn asked how we are assisting parents with this change in testing and homework. New teacher class pages and principal and superintendent newsletters are some of the ways information will be available for parents. Also, the subject area supervisors will be creating class pages to address these changes.

Suffield CAPT scores improved in 3 out of 4 areas. Board member D'Ostuni addressed four issues: 1) that continually there is no change in writing scores, the gender gap still exists and when will something be done about it (D'Ostuni noted the board would like to see evidence from other school assessments that show if there is not a gap or about the writing levels), 2) that with few exceptions, the data on CMT and CAPT over the past five years shows little improvement in programs (D'Ostuni noted that the board would like to see evidence from other school assessments that programs are improving since the CMT/CAPT data is what the public typically sees), 3) where are students developing their "skills" toolkit for the learning and work required and when they don't have these skills how are they getting them developed, and 4) piggybacking on earlier comments by Gee, Sanborn, and Zawawi, when will information for parents on what their children should be able to do in each grade or subject be provided so that parents will know when to communicate with teachers that their children are having difficulties since right now parents do not know. The Chair asked if gender gap issues were evident in other assessments. Sophia Gintoff is compiling data to address this. A report will be shared with the Board when complete. The Superintendent stated that a closer look at curriculum-based assessments is needed. An update will be provided to the Board in November along with an SAT/ACT/AP scores report. Board member Gee asked that PLAN scores be included.

- Superintendent's Contract

MOTION #13-56: Gee moved, Roy seconded **to extend the Superintendent's Employment Contract one year through 2015/16.**

MOTION #13-57: Schneider moved, Sanborn seconded to amend motion #13-56 to add: **and increase the Superintendent's base salary by 2.5% for 2013/14.**

Discussion followed. Several of the Board members spoke in favor of the increase citing the work the Superintendent has done in the district. Board member D'Ostuni stated she believes in merit pay and that the Superintendent has more than earned the increase in salary. Board member Beiter while supporting the work the Superintendent has done, expressed his concern about fiscal responsibility in light of our budget deficit this year. Board member Porcello stated that the 2.5% increase was in the original budget that was adopted this year.

The amendment to motion #13-57 was approved 8-1 (Beiter voting against).

There was discussion about the standard practice in Connecticut of extending a Superintendent's contract. Board member Roy stated her belief the Superintendent has us on the correct path and that she has earned the extension. Board member D'Ostuni stated that extending the Superintendent's contract would benefit the district and facilitate the large change agenda the board has in place by creating stability and continuity in leadership. Board member Beiter stated that he felt it was early in the contract to extend it.

The Board voted 8-1 to approve motion #13-56 as amended (Beiter voting against).

Reports to the Board

Superintendent's Report

- Jeff Ziplow of Blum Shapiro will be in district on September 18 to meet with members of the Business Office. The town has completed their business office review in the process of examining the viability of shared services between the town and the school district. The Chair noted that technology would be reviewed as well, but only as it relates to business office functions.
- The Permanent Building Commission sent a revised punchlist for the Large Animal Facility to Haines Construction. Haines is disputing some of the items on the list.
- RFP for the fire pump project is still in progress. There will be a PBC meeting on September 26 for approval.
- Work continues on refining a \$194 thousand equipment list for the Large Animal Facility. There have been changes of about \$40 thousand to the ten year old list based on programming changes in that time. The Superintendent has sent a letter to the State Department with rationale for the revised list.

Chair's Report

- The new Chair, Bob Eccles, thanked the members of the Board for their support in naming him Chair.
- There will be no committee changes at this time with the exception of Sue Porcello replacing the Chair on Budget (Porcello is now the Budget Chair) and Human Resources subcommittees.

Subcommittee Reports

- Budget – Sue Porcello reported that the Subcommittee met on September 10. Discussion centered on the budget deficit and the six areas driving the deficit and plans to close that gap.
- Policy – Mary Lou Sanborn stated that the Subcommittee had met on September 4. Policies being reviewed include homeschool participation in extracurricular activities

with insurance implications are being looked into. Also, the subcommittee looked at a policy for coaches of swim teams. The next meeting is scheduled for October 1.

Future Business

- Common Core State Standards – Implementation of Smarter Balanced Assessment
- Large Animal Facility
- Substitute Service Budget Study Beginning August 2013
- School Climate Survey – Sept-Nov. 2013
- National Honor Society – November/December 2013
- Food Service Update Budget Study beginning August 2013
- Update on Learning Management System – Teacher Class Pages
- 10 Year Capital Improvement Plan – October 2013
- Standards Based Report Cards – November 2013
- SAT/ACT/AP/PLAN Scores – November 2013

Public Comment

Parent, Natalie Semyanko, thanked all of the presenters for their work implementing the Common Core. Mrs. Semyanko further requested that the district examine critically the communication vehicles in place as, despite the new website, they are not adequate in keeping students, parents and the community informed and connected to the schools. Citizen, Tom Frenaye, echoed the sentiment.

Executive Session

Sanborn moved, Zawawi seconded to enter executive session at 8:56 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

A personnel matter was discussed.

Return to Regular Session

Zawawi moved, Sanborn seconded to return to regular session at 9:20 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

MOTION #13-58: Roy moved, Porcello seconded to **approve the proposed MOU between the Teamsters, Local 671 and the BOE concerning the central office secretary position.** The motion passed 7-1-1 (Beiter against, Sanborn abstaining).

Adjournment

D'Ostuni moved, Porcello seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:23 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori D'Ostuni
Secretary

LD/ajk