

Board of Education Meeting
October 15, 2013

Call to Order

Board Chair, Robert Eccles, called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. in the Suffield High School Media Center. Present: Board members Robert Eccles, Sue Porcello, Mary Lou Sanborn, Mary Roy, Scott Schneider, George Beiter, Michelle Zawawi and Jeanne Gee; Superintendent of Schools, Karen Baldwin; 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 reported that a letter was received from Christine Mercadante, President of the Suffield Foundation for Excellent Schools. The SFES thanked the Board of Education for their contribution to the silent auction at this year's Foundation fundraiser.

Approval of Minutes

Porcello moved, Roy seconded to approve the minutes of the October 1, 2013 Board of Education meeting as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Consent Agenda

None

Discussion Action Items

- Approval of three roof projects
MOTION #13-62: Roy moved, Porcello seconded **to approve the plans and specifications for the partial roof replacement at Suffield Middle School.**

RESOLVED, that the Suffield Board of Education approves the plans and specifications for the partial roof replacement (E-wing) project #139-TKTJ at Suffield Middle School.

The motion passed unanimously.

MOTION #13-63: Beiter moved, Zawawi seconded **to approve the plans and specifications for the partial roof replacement at Suffield Middle School.**

RESOLVED, that the Suffield Board of Education approves the plans and specifications for the partial roof replacement (media center) project #TMP 139-HJJJ at Suffield Middle School.

The motion passed unanimously.

MOTION #14-64: Porcello moved, Sanborn seconded **to approve the plans and specifications for the partial roof replacement at McAlister Intermediate School.**

RESOLVED, that the Suffield Board of Education approves the plans and specifications for the partial roof replacement (4 classrooms) project #TMP 139-RCNS at McAlister Intermediate School.

The motion passed unanimously.

- September 2013 Financial Report

Phil Russell, Interim Business Manager, provided financial reports for the period ending September 30, 2013. He focused on the six categories driving the budget deficit: Health Benefits, Transportation (Special Ed), Tuition for Out-of-District Placements, Food Services, Substitute Services, and Electricity.

- Capacitors were installed last week at Suffield High School and appear to already be lowering electricity demand charges. There will another meeting with CL&P and Powerpoint by the end of the month.
- Board member Beiter asked how a delay in implementing the Affordable Health Care Act will save the district the anticipated \$25,000. The Board's H.S.A. deductible was less than expected and we have saved some money on positions that have not been filled as of this date.
- Board member Gee asked about the changes in substitute usage for paraprofessionals and academic support and the general efficacy of our 2012 switch to Kelly Services. She would like to see this as a future agenda item for a more in-depth discussion. Board member Sanborn raised concern that students who need one-on-one para's might not be getting the appropriate sub coverage. The Superintendent assured the Board that all IEP's were being followed and sub coverage is provided for para's of those students who are in one-on-one situations.
- Board member Beiter stated that some in the community feel we are communicating the deficit through not funding items like textbooks and needed staff. The Chair stated that we need to be transparent with the community when having these budget discussions. The Superintendent assured the Board that while a portion of the supply budget was frozen, we are not withholding funding for items needed, including textbooks. Board member Beiter asked why the anticipated grant monies can't be used to close the deficit. The Superintendent replied that the policy framework directs where grant money can be used. Chair Eccles stated that it is still early in the school year and there is still an opportunity to improve the monthly reporting tool to reflect grant money assumed expenditures. The operating budget statement contains a little more than \$5M of estimated expenditures. The actual amount will likely vary from that. To the extent that it is lower, this will reduce or eliminate the projected deficit. A Budget Subcommittee meeting will be scheduled to address that issue. Board member Schneider stated that, based on historical data, the budget can be further affected by such things as weather and special education costs and inquired as to the board having a "safety valve" if needed. The Chair explained that we have a long standing relationship with the Board of Finance and that funds can be obtained

from the Contingency Fund if we should find ourselves in an emergency budget situation due to unforeseen factors.

- McAlister Breakfast Program

McAlister Intermediate School has qualified as a “severe need” school based on student free/reduced lunch data. Interim Business Manager Phil Russell, asked the Board to approve the startup of a breakfast program at McAlister. Once approved, letters would be sent to parents announcing the new program. There would be no effect on the current budget with implementing this program which would begin on October 2.

MOTION # 13-65: Porcello moved, Beiter seconded **to approve the proposed McAlister Breakfast Program as presented.** The motion passed 7-1 (Sanborn against).

- Class Size Report

The Superintendent provided information on the number of students per class in grades K-5 and the number of students per course in grades 6-12. There was a discussion on Agriscience enrollment. We are competing with magnet schools and that is reflected in enrollment numbers. Opening the Large Animal Facility would help to strengthen the program. The Agriscience Consulting Committee is scheduled to meet next Monday and recruitment is listed as an agenda item. Board member Sanborn asked about the number of Suffield resident students enrolled vs. out of town enrollment. This information was provided by the Superintendent. Board member Zawawi asked if Choice students attending schools in other districts could enroll in our Agriscience Department. The Superintendent stated that they could not. Board member Gee asked what Agriscience enrollments in other districts looked like (town vs. non-resident). The Superintendent stated that this information could be researched and provided to the Board. Board member Sanborn stated that each Agriscience center offers different types of courses, so enrollment depends on the interests of the students.

Board member Zawawi asked if we were planning to condense levels of grade 8 Algebra like we did when we eliminated grouping for math and ELA in grade 6. Assistant Superintendent, Jim Collin, stated that this was not planned for next year, but may be considered in the future. Board member Zawawi thanked the Superintendent for the class size report and asked if it could be made available earlier in the school year. The Superintendent reported that October 1 was the official enrollment count for state reporting, so this would be the best time to generate this type of report.

Board member Gee asked about English III and electives at Suffield High School. This topic will be discussed further at a Programs and Services Subcommittee meeting.

Reports to the Board

Superintendent's Report

- The Superintendent reported that a high degree of cooperation has been seen from M&J Bus Company in response to our transportation concerns. As of last week, there has been a noticeable change in the transportation situation. A meeting will be set up with M&J to reiterate our expectations.

- To assist the district in communication and transparency, Superintendent and Principal newsletters have been made available on the website as well as through email. Also, the Superintendent will be holding office hours on October 27 (7:45 – 9 a.m. and 5-7 p.m.) and on November 7 (5-7 p.m.) for community members who wish to speak with her. A survey has been sent to the community to provide feedback on PowerSchool, the new Learning Management System and the website.

Chair's Report

- The Board of Finance met today. An item on their agenda was Board of Education finances. Chair Eccles will contact the Board of Finance Chair within the next few days for an update on the meeting.
- A meeting with Jeff Ziplow from BlumShapiro regarding combined services with the Town has not yet been set. We hope to have a joint Steering Committee meeting within the next few weeks. Target date for the next meeting is October 24.

Subcommittee Reports

- Policy – A policy will be coming to the next Board of Education meeting for a 30 day read.
- Programs and Services – K-12 Math and ELA Supervisors shared curriculum revisions and performance based assessments at the last subcommittee meeting. That information was emailed to Board of Education members today. At the November meeting, a closer look will be taken at grade 6 Math and ELA. The Committee members toured the facility to see infrastructure needs. Board member Gee suggested that a future Board of Education meeting be held at Suffield Middle School with a tour of the facility for Board members before the meeting.

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
- Gender Gap Writing/SRBI
- PALS Program – 2013/13 student data and parent survey results – June 2014
- CL&P/ Power Point Update
- Academic Integrity
- Kelly Services
- SMS Infrastructure

Public Comment

None

Other

- The Chair acknowledge the Boy Scout representative who had attended this evening's meeting.
- Board member Roy asked if the future Kelly Services discussion should first be held with the Programs and Services Subcommittee before coming to the Board. Board member Gee stated that this topic touches on many of the subcommittees, so all Board members should share the discussion.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Allyson Kehoe
Secretary pro tem