

Board of Education Regular Meeting
May 1, 2017

Call to Order

Board Chair Gee called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. in the Suffield High School Media Center. Present: Board members Kendra Wiesel (arrived 6:02 p.m.), Natalie Semyanko (arrived 6:02 p.m.), George Beiter (arrived 6:08 p.m.), Jeanne Gee, Michael Sepko, Lori D'Ostuni, John Richter, Matt Service, Susi Keane, Superintendent Karen Berasi, Assistant Superintendent Brian Hendrickson and Business Manager Bill Hoff

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Recognition

Superintendent Berasi thanked the students and families for coming tonight and said the students are the reason we are all here. Superintendent Berasi introduced Sunny Sullivan and Jackson Davis who received the Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS) Student Art Award.

Mr. Dunn reviewed the criteria to receive the award and said Sunny and Jackson were great representatives of responsible, respectful role models. Mrs. Piellucci spoke about Jackson's art skills and being a responsible student and role model. Mrs. Jespersen spoke about how Sunny is an active learner and a wonderful musician.

Lucie Casinghino was named the National Gold Medal winner in the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, which are the major art and writing awards for students in the nation. Lucie explained what flash fiction is and spoke about her specific writing piece. Mr. Pearce said her writing is impressive and intriguing.

Maxwell Beaudoin and Julianna Service received the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) Student Leadership Award for Suffield Middle School. Mr. Pearce reviewed the award criteria and said the administration and faculty put much time and thought into selecting the students and ultimately chose students who display these character traits on a daily basis. He thanked and congratulated Maxwell and Julianna.

The following students were recognized for the awards they received at this year's Science Fair: Caitie Kirschbaum, Ryan Cleaves, Akshita Jindal, Jason Werenski, Yash Mehta, Tristan Evans, Zachariah Service, and Madison D'Ostuni. Mr. Charkiewicz noted that students from the middle school participated in the science fair for the first time this year, two of whom won awards. Seventeen students completed projects and all of them received either first, second or third honors in the State. Ms. Berasi thanked Mr. Charkiewicz for all his efforts in the science fair and for his work with the students.

The Board took a brief recess at 6:18 p.m., resumed at 6:33 p.m.

Suffield High School Student Representative

Giancarlo Isotti updated the Board on events happening at Suffield High School through the end of the year.

- AP testing is occurring this week and next week
- Today was college decision day
- World Languages Honor Society inducted 47 new members
- The Guidance department is preparing schedules for next year
- The Ag Expo was held on April 19 & 20. High school students were able to attend various demonstrations and an alumni event was held. May 24 is the FFA banquet and BOE members are invited.
- Boys Golf team is undefeated
- Girls track won the Stafford Invitational
- SHS Prom is May 12 at the Hartford Marriott
- Project Purple 5K Run is happening May 31 for the Heron Project where proceeds go toward substance abuse prevention
- Class council elections are May 30
- The senior class trip to High Meadow is May 15
- The Scholars' breakfast is May 17.
- Four new televisions will be installed in the Commons to create a more positive learning environment. Events can be live streamed from the auditorium and gymnasium.
- The Wildcat Advisory Group is creating a new freshmen welcome video.
- Project Keep Me Safe, an initiative by the Foundation for Exceptional Children of Suffield (FECS) to help raise awareness for students with disabilities, is selling t-shirts and held Light Suffield Up Blue on April 28
- May 19 is family night out and money raised will go to a local charity.

Giancarlo thanked the Board for allowing him to report to the Board for the last two years. Board Chair Gee thanked Giancarlo and wished him well in his future endeavors.

Public Comment

None

Approval of Minutes

Semyanko moved to approve the April 4, 2017 meeting minutes. Richter seconded the motion and all members voted in favor except Beiter, who abstained. The motion carried 8-0-1.

Consent Agenda

MOTION #17-46: Service moved to approve the following on the consent agenda:

- A. Approval of SHS Agriscience Field Trip Request – Indianapolis, IN – October 24-29, 2017

Semyanko seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion carried 9-0.

Discussion/Action Items

- SHS Field Trip Request - Costa Rica - February 17-25, 2018
Superintendent Berasi said Ms. Cossman, SHS World Language teacher, has put in tremendous amount of time in planning this trip. Ms. Cossman explained the details of the trip which will include many outdoor activities and tours to learn about the ecology, economy and culture of Costa Rica. The students will be fully immersed in the Spanish

language while in Costa Rica. In response to a Board member's question, Ms. Cossman said the trip is open to students other than seniors if they are taking Spanish IV, V or AP Spanish. In response to other Board members' questions, there is much interest among students to attend this field trip and the classes will be taught by a substitute for the three school days the teachers are absent due to chaperoning the field trip.

MOTION #17-47: D'Ostuni moved to approve the SHS field trip request to Costa Rica as presented. Semyanko seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion carried 9-0.

- **Grade 8 Social Studies Core Textbook Adoption**

Mr. Kinel said eighth grade social studies curriculum has changed dramatically resulting in the request for a new core textbook. The committee did exhaustive research and chose three textbooks as finalists. Mr. Kinel reviewed the three options and explained the selection process. Mr. Hendrickson noted the current core text was published in 1997. He said the selection process has been structured and intentional and initiated because faculty have expressed a need for new core textbook as a main resource. Mr. Kinel said the committee looked at a variety of pricing options and ultimately decided on the Pearson textbook because it had the most exhaustive online component with the textbook. Therefore only classroom sets of textbooks will be purchased instead of one for each student, as the students can use their Chromebooks to access the online component. Board member Semyanko thanked Mr. Kinel and the teachers for their comprehensive work in selecting a textbook and negotiating a favorable price. Board Chair Gee echoed Board member Semyanko's comments.

MOTION #17-48: Semyanko moved to adopt the Grade 8 Social Studies textbook, Sepko seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion carried 9-0.

The Board took a break from the discussion/action items to continue the student recognition portion of the meeting.

Ms. Berasi thanked the students and families for attending and said it is a great pleasure to recognize student achievements such as these.

Madison Fahle and Giancarlo Isotti received the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) Student Leadership Award for Suffield High. Mr. Moccio said these awards are not only about achievements, but also leadership skills that put an emphasis on helping others. He said Madison is driven, ambitious and passionate about her education and is a model of leadership. In addition to her many academic accolades, Madison has received many athletics awards and is involved in many clubs and activities as well as volunteer work. Madison will be attending Merrimack College in the fall and majoring in athletic training. Mr. Moccio said Giancarlo was the obvious choice for this award as he is a leader in the building. He is a representative to the Connecticut State Advisory Board, the student Board of Education representative, serves on the Commissioner of Education roundtable. In addition to these leadership roles he is involved in many clubs and service activities at SHS, a member of the golf team and involved in outside community service in his church, tutoring other students, and with Habitat for Humanity. Giancarlo will be attending Boston College in the fall studying business.

Ms. Berasi congratulated this year's Salutatorian, Lindsey Connolly, and Valedictorian, Rachel Roncaioli. Mr. Moccio said not only has Lindsey earned many academic accolades but she is also involved in many clubs and activities which give back to others. She has earned many scholar athlete awards and is a varsity soccer player and a captain this year, received the All

Conference award in her junior year, and is on the varsity lacrosse team. Lindsey also volunteers her time as a referee in the youth soccer organization and at a hospital. Lindsey will attend Bentley University in the fall and will study finance, accounting or actuarial sciences.

Mr. Moccio said in addition to being an outstanding student, Rachel is involved in many service clubs at SHS, student senate, has worked on a variety of different events, is a member of the National Honors Society, Spanish Honors Society, is a writing center coach, and is the recipient of multiple scholar athlete's and academic awards. Rachel also volunteers her time to the youth soccer organization and church and community service organizations. Rachel is currently doing an internship at UCONN health center. Rachel will be attending UCONN in the fall and pursuing a degree in allied health or nursing. Board Chair Gee thanked them all for coming and wished them well in the future.

- **March 2017 Financial Report and Budget Transfers**

Mr. Hoff reviewed the financial report noting an increase in projected legal, heating and electricity expenses that results in a projected year end net surplus of \$13,184. In response to board members' questions, Mr. Hoff said the increase in non-special education legal fees is due to union negotiations, and issues with the Town Building department. Grant payments from the state have been slower than last year overall, not just food service grants. With increased food service losses this year, the board discussed the food service program, participation and quality of the food. Mr. Hoff noted the district is currently in the process of renegotiating the contract for next year. Mr. Hoff included in the financial report a request for budget transfers. These transfers are needed to match available funds with projected expenses.

MOTION #17-49: D'Ostuni moved to approve the budget transfers as presented. Richter seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion carried 9-0.

- **2016-2017 Budget Surplus Discussion**

Mr. Hoff said funds for items such as textbooks will be moved from the Open Choice account to the general fund, so that there are more funds available in the Open Choice account for next year. He will give a final update at the July meeting.

- **Discussion and Possible Approval of Revised 2017-2018 BOE Adopted Budget**

Ms. Berasi said the Board can wait to vote on the revised budget until after the Town budget vote. Superintendent Berasi reviewed the changes to the BOE budget as a result of the Board of Finance (BOF) meeting and the impact from the proposed State budget. At this point, the Board would be approving a 1.11% increase which includes the \$300,000 reduction from the BOF, approximately \$2.4 million reduction in the state special education grant, and approximately \$1.8 million cost for the Teachers Retirement Payment. The Board discussed the impact of the State budget uncertainties on the BOE budget and the timing on their vote. Unfortunately, the State's funds will not be settled until September or October.

- **District Professional Development Report**

Mr. Hendrickson said this report provides an overview of professional development (PD) offerings as well as curriculum highlights. He reviewed the participation rates of PD offerings and a comparison to last year. He highlighted PD protocols and the major themes for the year. In response to a Board member's question, Mr. Hendrickson said the district does not offer outside PD for teachers to go into the business world to gain field experience to improve teaching practice. Ms. Berasi noted the district brings the business world into the district and used the District Management Group as an example. Mr. Hendrickson and Ms. Carpenter-Snow spoke about how people from the business world visit classrooms to

speak about their careers. Mrs. Oliver, Agriscience teacher, spoke about opportunities she has attended that were related to business operations in the field of Agriscience.

Reports to the Board

- Superintendent's Report
 - Superintendent Berasi said the district dashboard is now published on the website. It is not a finished product and will be updated periodically.
 - Ms. Berasi is going to the SHS prom on May 12.
 - Mr. Autieri has received the Robert E. Yager Foundation Excellence in Teaching Award from the National Science Teachers Association.
 - Superintendent Berasi said the April 28 was Light Up Suffield Blue event on the Town green and was well attended.
- Board Chair's Report
 - Board Chair Gee expressed gratitude to Superintendent Berasi, staff and the board members who worked on the data dashboard.
- Business Manager's Report
 - Mr. Hoff said the district has reached a tentative agreement with the Food Service Union. It is anticipated to come to the Board for approval at the June meeting.

Subcommittee Reports

April 20, 2017 Policy Subcommittee meeting - the subcommittee reviewed and revised the following policies which are being placed on a 30-day read: (1) #6113 – Senior Privileges; (2) #6172.6 – Virtual/Online Learning; (3) #6146 – Graduation Requirements; (4) #6146.1 – Grading/Assessment System. Board member D'Ostuni said the reason for the revisions was to provide students more choice in pursuing their core interests. She noted one change since the subcommittee meeting which was to remove "Grade 9-12" on Policy #6172.6, expanding the grades that can use online learning. These policies are anticipated to be approved at the June BOE meeting.

April 21, 2017 Budget subcommittee meeting – Board member Beiter said all members were present at the meeting; nothing further to report.

April 27, 2017 Teaching & Learning subcommittee meeting – Board member Semyanko said the committee discussed the social studies textbook approved tonight and the next generation science standards. Mr. Autieri and Ms. Baranauskas gave a detailed report to the subcommittee on the standards and will give a report to the full board at a future Board meeting.

Future Business

- Rescheduling special education workshop
- Evaluation of superintendent

Adjournment

Beiter moved, Semyanko seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 p.m.

Minutes are subject to approval at the next meeting on June 5, 2017.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori D'Ostuni
Secretary