

Board of Education Regular Meeting
February 5, 2018

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 p.m. in the Suffield Middle School Auditorium.

Present: Board members Kendra Wiesel, George Beiter, Matt Service, Susan Mercik Davis, Michael Sepko, Maureen Sattan, Debra Dudack, Superintendent Karen Berasi, Assistant Superintendent Brian Hendrickson and Business Manager Bill Hoff

Absent: Lori D'Ostuni and John Richter

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Recognition

None

Suffield High School Student Representative

Zachariah Service updated the Board on happenings at Suffield High School which included National Honors Society events such as the Toys for Tots toy drive during the holidays, holding a blood drive this month and organizing the volleyball marathon in March; the Academic Quiz Team participated in a quiz tournament and won; Rotary of the Month students for December and January were Michael Barron and Anna Mervosh, respectively; an update on winter sports teams and their accomplishments; and information on this year's safe grad party.

Public Comment

None

Approval of Minutes

Dudack moved to approve the January 16, 2018 special meeting minutes. Beiter seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion carried 7-0.

Consent Agenda

MOTION #18-25: Service moved to approve the following on the consent agenda:

- A. SHS Robotics Field Trip Request – Waterbury, CT – March 9-11, 2018
- B. SHS Robotics Field Trip Request – Boston, MA – April 11-14, 2018

Sepko seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion carried 7-0.

Discussion/Action Items

- Possible Action to Appoint an Interim Principal at Suffield High School

MOTION #18-26: Beiter moved to appoint an interim principal for Suffield High School.

Service seconded the motion.

Superintendent Berasi said she recommends hiring an interim principal at Suffield High School from approximately March 1 until last day of teachers' contract, which results in approximately \$15,000 savings over the budgeted amount. If no interim is hired the savings would be about \$32,000. If the Board decides not to appoint an interim, Mr. Hendrickson would assume the interim position but the work in curriculum and instruction would be impacted and progress

would slow down. Board member Beiter asked if an interim could be hired on a part-time basis perhaps three or four days a week and share the responsibilities with Mr. Hendrickson. Ms. Berasi said it is possible but not ideal. Mr. Hendrickson added having the continuity of a single person would be beneficial for students, families and faculty. He believes hiring an interim is a wise investment of resources. Board member Mercik Davis expressed concern that it is for a short time frame and an external person would need some lead time. Board member Service suggested having the interim start earlier than planned to reduce lead time by overlapping with Mr. Moccio for a few weeks. Board member Service added the budget impact is nominal and the Superintendent should have that flexibility to make those decisions. Board member Dudack expressed concern about the impact an external candidate could have on morale. Ms. Berasi said the candidate is very warm and she has articulated to the candidate the importance of continuing the work that is occurring at the high school, specifically on teacher growth and improving student outcomes. Board Chair Wiesel said she sees merit in having a full-time interim to continue the work. Board member Sepko said the Board should trust and support the recommendation of the Superintendent. He also noted if Mr. Hendrickson assumed the role of interim, the work of the PDEC committee could suffer. Board member Mercik Davis said she supports the administration in what will best improve the district, but she would hope the district has the capacity to support this vacancy during the short timeframe. Board member Sattan echoed Board member Mercik Davis' comment relative to internal capacity. Board member Service said 14 weeks is 40% of the school year so it is not that short of a timeframe. Ms. Berasi added that the end of the year is a very busy and demanding time of year. Board Chair Wiesel called for a vote. Beiter, Service, Dudack, Sepko and Wiesel voted in favor, Sattan and Mercik Davis voted against. The motion carried 5-2.

- Approval of Final Spaulding Roof Cost Estimates and Plans

Mr. Hoff said the Board previously approved the Educational Specifications for the Spaulding Roof projects. The state requires the board also approve the final plans and project manual and the cost estimate prior to state approval to bid the projects.

MOTION #18-27: Service moved to approve the final plans and project manual and the cost estimate for Project 139-0059 to replace the East Wing roof at AW Spaulding School as presented. Beiter seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion carried 7-0.

MOTION #18-28: Service moved to approve the final plans and project manual and the cost estimate for Project TMP-139-TFFC to replace the West Wing, Gym and Multipurpose Room roofs at AW Spaulding School as presented. Beiter seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion carried 7-0.

- 2018-2019 Proposed School Calendar

Ms. Berasi said a third draft of the calendar was created at the request of the Board at its last meeting to change the first day of school to August 29. At the request of Board member Dudack, Superintendent Berasi explained the rationale for adding an additional early release day to the calendar. An additional day was added in September because in the current calendar the first collaboration day did not occur until October. Having a PD day in September, will allow teachers to continue the professional development work done in August. Board Chair Wiesel asked when other districts will be starting school next year. Ms. Berasi said most districts are starting before Labor Day. Board member Mercik Davis noted having two shorter weeks to start school is beneficial for students who have trouble transitioning back to school. Board members Dudack and Mercik Davis thought the additional PD day should be removed. Board Chair Wiesel said the Board could vote tonight on the calendar. Board member Dudack was

concerned about voting on the calendar tonight as it was not specifically listed as an action item on the agenda. Board Chair Wiesel pointed out that the calendar is listed under Discussion/Action items on the agenda and the Board can vote on any item listed under this category. Board members discussed starting school the same day as Windsor Locks since the districts share services. It was noted a day or two difference in start dates is not critical.

MOTION #18-29: Service moved to adopt Draft 3 of the 2018-2019 school calendar as presented. Beiter seconded the motion.

MOTION #18-30: Dudack moved to amend the motion to remove the September early release professional development day. Davis seconded the motion. Dudack, Davis, Sepko, Sattan, Wiesel voted in favor, Service and Beiter opposed. The amendment to the motion passed 5-2.

Board Chair Wiesel called for a vote to adopt Draft #3 of the 2018-2019 school calendar with seven early release professional development days, removing the September PD day. All members voted in favor. The motion carried 7-0.

- Discussion of the 2018-2019 Proposed Superintendent's Budget

Board Chair Wiesel said all school and department budget presentations have been presented to the Board. Several questions have been asked and answered. Since the last Board meeting Board members sent Board member Sepko additional budget questions and those questions were sent to the Superintendent. Those questions will be asked and answered tonight, except for those pertaining to CCSN, which will be answered at the Budget subcommittee meeting scheduled for February 8. Board members Sepko, Sattan, Mercik Davis and Dudack asked their questions and Superintendent Berasi and Mr. Hoff answered the questions. Questions were related to the number and cost of consultants in the district, number of special education students unilaterally outplaced and the cost of those outplacements, excess cost reimbursement, the possibility of consolidating services, the number of students attending the RISE program and the cost, what services make up "professional services" in the special education budget, class size, how the Board should prioritize items in the budget, pay-to-play, and the timeframe of potential new insurance company and the impact to next year's budget. See specific questions and answers here: <https://www.suffield.org/page.cfm?p=666>. The Board further discussed enrollment and class size. There was concern that class sizes are increasing at the elementary level. Ms. Berasi said class size has not increased but has remained relatively the same over the last four to five years. Enrollment is declining and she assured Board members that administration monitors enrollment and class size closely, and if there is a need to hire a teacher to keep class sizes reasonable that will be done. Board Chair Wiesel asked if there is any research that looks at class size in relation to behavioral issues in the classroom. The Superintendent said social emotional issues are a big concern across the country. District Management Group is conducting a workshop in April for leadership on this very subject. Dr. Pangallo shared the systems and services in place at Spaulding to support students with social emotional issues and behaviors. In response to Board member Sattan's question regarding how to get maximum return on student achievement, Ms. Berasi said we need to spend time and money to ensure teachers know the standards and on teaching quality instruction. Board member Sattan also asked how the Board should identify those items that are priorities and those the district could cut. Board member Beiter said the Board of Finance will ask for cuts and that is the time the Board will have to make those difficult decisions. Ms. Berasi noted that the leadership team does a lot of prioritizing before the budget is even presented to the Board. Ms. Berasi said everything in the budget is everything that is needed. Service said the budget process has improved tremendously; the information given is more comprehensive and detailed. Board member Sepko encouraged Board members to advocate for those items that are important to them and dialog with one

another. Board members discussed the pay-to-play proposal in the budget and possibly reducing the fees or eliminating them altogether and increasing the budget request. Mr. Hoff noted several districts in the area already have or are instituting pay-to-play. He added there was no drop in participation when fees were instituted. It was again suggested by Mercik Davis to consider pay-to-park at the high school. In response to Board member Sepko's question relative to the timeline of a possible new insurance carrier, Mr. Hoff said number of RFPs were just received on January 31 and are currently being reviewed. It is a 6-8 week process, so a possible new insurance carrier would not be determined by the time the BOE votes on the budget but there could be a decision by the time the Board of Finance votes. Board member Dudack asked for the goals and benchmarks that were set for the district's work with DMG and CCSN. Ms. Berasi said she will send that information to the Board. The Board discussed holding a public forum on the budget to inform and engage the community. Board members discussed the challenge of holding a forum on the budget at this point with the tight schedule it has. It was suggested this could be scheduled into next year's calendar and the ad hoc communications committee could schedule periodic public forums and different avenues for communicating Board items. Board member Service added that the Board has been discussing the budget for several months and regular and special meetings are posted well in advance and the public is welcome to attend. The consensus of the Board was to use different media avenues to communicate and engage the public.

Mercik Davis left the meeting at 7:51 p.m., returned at 7:56 p.m.

Mercik Davis left the meeting at 8:16 p.m., returned at 8:28 p.m.

Reports to the Board

- Superintendent's Report
 - Superintendent Berasi said there is a pep rally on Friday at SHS and she invited Board members to attend.
 - Ms. Berasi said the number of students out sick last week doubled from the week before. Cleaning will continue on the weekends and additional cleaning is being done during the week on "high touch" areas.
 - The Superintendent informed the Board of the principal hiring timeline. Several stakeholder focus groups have been scheduled for mid-February and communications sent out. The position will be posted after focus group feedback is compiled. First round interviews will be conducted in late March and second round performance task and meetings with staff, parents and student groups will occur in early April. Finalist candidates will interview with the Board in mid-April.
- Board Chair's Report
 - Board Chair Wiesel said Mr. Beiter will remain as the Agriscience liaison and Ms. Sattan will be the CREC liaison. Ms. Wiesel will serve as the CABA liaison until a new liaison is chosen. There is a legislative breakfast on February 15 and CABA Day on the Hill is in March.
 - Tomorrow there is a FOI workshop for all town boards and commissions.
 - Ms. Wiesel will be finalizing the ad hoc communications committee and will send to Board members
 - She said the Board will conduct its self-evaluation on February 26 with Nick Caruso
- Business Manager's Report
 - Mr. Hoff said progress is being made with Eversource on electrical issues.
 - He said the auditors presented to the Board of Finance tonight and there were no issues.
 - The Governor will be presenting his budget on Wednesday.

Subcommittee Reports

January 22 & 29, 2018 Policy Subcommittee - Board member Dudack said the committee has begun the work of reviewing and revising the Bylaws. The following Bylaws are being placed on a 30-day read: #9000 – Role of Board and Member; #9005 – Statement of Integrity; #9010 – Limits of Authority; #9012 – Legal Responsibilities of the BOE; #9020 – Public Statements; #9030 – Committees; #9040 – Board-Related Responsibilities; #9050 – Board-Superintendent Relationship (being dissolved due to redundancy). The committee will also be revising the wellness policy and plans to engage various stakeholders to get their input. Board Chair Wiesel said she received an email from Board member D’Ostuni, who could not be in attendance tonight, relative to bylaw #9030. Board member D’Ostuni said the term “staff teams” should be defined. Board members discussed clarifying this sentence and it was determined the sentence should read, “At the request of the Superintendent, the chairperson of the Board of Education may assign board members to staff committees.” Board member Beiter suggested the Policy subcommittee review the policy on the hiring of administrators. The Board was in consensus to move this policy to the Policy subcommittee for review.

Future Business

Report on the RISE program

Adjournment

Beiter moved, Sattan seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 p.m.

Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of March 5, 2018.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Dudack
Secretary