

Board of Education Regular Meeting
March 5, 2018

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:08 p.m. in the Suffield Middle School Auditorium.

Present: Board members Kendra Wiesel, George Beiter, John Richter, Susan Mercik Davis, Michael Sepko, Maureen Sattan, Debra Dudack, Lori D'Ostuni, Superintendent Karen Berasi, Assistant Superintendent Brian Hendrickson and Business Manager Bill Hoff

Absent: Matt Service

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Recognition

Superintendent Berasi said March is Board Member Appreciation and she thanked the Board of Education for their work and support.

Suffield High School Student Representative

Zachariah Service updated the Board on happenings at Suffield High School which included, updates on winter sports, specifically mentioning wrestling, girls' basketball, cheerleading, track, girls' ice hockey and boys' swimming. The Science Fair Club took part in national science fair bowl at UCONN; 17 students and chaperones recently went to Costa Rica; the Pops concert was last week and the band also performed during the eighth grade orientation; the musical, Mary Poppins, performances are March 15-17; SHS held a blood drive and 31 pints of blood were donated; the senior students will be making breakfast for senior citizens on March 28; and students are selecting their courses for next year.

Public Comment

Nikki Lengyel, the Town's Youth Services Coordinator and Suffield Local Prevention Council (SLPC) Chair said the youth assessment survey administered to high school students last year indicated that vaping is the most sought after drug by youth. The SLPC requested that a short survey be sent to faculty and staff to determine their knowledge base of vaping but that request was denied by administration. She said training for staff on vaping was going to be done by the SRO but never was done. She also requested the Board institute the SADD program in the schools. Ms. Lengyel offered to staff this program at no cost to the district and hoped it could be instituted for the 2018-2019 school year. She asked the Board the best way for the SLPC to present ideas and getting approval for programs. Board Chair Wiesel said the Board will discuss with the Superintendent.

Board Chair Wiesel said the Board received communications via email from:

- 1 Tracy Hespelt, 875 Copperhill Road, relative to the budget, specifically the cost of consultants in the district.
- 2 Sandy Carroll, 185 N Main St, relative to the elimination of 7th grade ELA accelerated classes.

Approval of Minutes

Dudack moved, Sattan seconded to approve the February 5, 2018 meeting minutes. All members voted in favor. The motion carried 8-0.

Consent Agenda

None

Discussion/Action Items

- School Security Update

Ms. Berasi said many improvements have been made in the district relative to safety and security in both infrastructure and procedure over the past five years. A security assessment was done and the district followed the recommendations of that assessment. Ms. Berasi said there has been talk in community about video surveillance of school cameras by the Police Department. Chief Rick Brown was in attendance to speak about the Police Department's role in the district's safety and security. He said there are three phases of a school-based violence incident: prevention, detection, response when an incident does occur, and post incident actions and reactions. Chief Brown said the first phase is the area of focus: prevention. By having a plan in place and developing relationships with students, school administrators, staff and the SRO can identify students who are struggling or at risk. Chief Brown noted that since most details about the school safety and security protocols are not publicly discussed, the perception in the community may be that not much is being done; however, that is not the case. The District's All Hazards Plan is a continually changing document to improve safety protocols and procedures. Chief Brown said having access to the schools' cameras is imperative to limiting casualties in the event of the unthinkable. He stated emphatically that his officers would put their lives on the line to protect Suffield students. Chief Brown noted his officers are all trained in crisis intervention. They will also be trained in crisis intervention for youth, and SRO Kieselback will be the first to receive this training. Training is also occurring for district employees, such as a Stop the Bleed training occurring later this month. In response to questions from Board members relative to other improvements to security, Chief Brown recommended another security audit be conducted and possibly adding another SRO. Chief Brown explained the role of the SRO, who serves as an advisor to the administration, assists with investigations, and has training in juvenile-related matters. The presence of a SRO in the schools deters acts of violence. The SRO builds relationships with students and trains the student population that the SRO is no different than other officers. Chief Brown said the community forum next week is an avenue to partner with parents and is a starting point. Board member Mercik Davis suggested having SHS students serve on the panel. In response to Board Chair Wiesel's question relative to social media surveillance, Superintendent Berasi said the district monitors all that goes through the district's server and Chromebooks. In response to Board member D'Ostuni's question as to whom students should go to if they see something troubling on social media, Chief Brown said students should contact the police. Superintendent Berasi said physical changes to the school buildings to further increase safety can be made and the district is getting financial estimates to add more security infrastructure. The district plans to apply for grant funds available from the state.

- Update on School Improvement Plans and Special Services Improvement Plan

Mr. Hendrickson said the information provided highlights the progress towards key measures from School & Department Improvement Plans. He summarized the findings saying the district has continued to build on the strength of the faculty and staff through the use of early release PD days and PLCs. Dr. Pangallo, Ms. Carpenter-Snow, Mr. Pearce, Mr. Moccio, Ms. Olearczyk and Ms. Donais were all in attendance to give an update on their School and Department

Improvement Plans. All principals noted the rise in chronic absenteeism this year due to many cases of influenza and other winter ailments. Principals reviewed the areas of strength and areas where improvement is needed. They all discussed their specific plans for addressing the areas that need improvement and explained the process of analyzing data, knowing their students to identify areas of need, feedback on school climate and teacher and administrator growth. Dr. Pangallo and Ms. Carpenter-Snow credited Responsive Classroom and teachers knowing their students to improved student behavior and reduced office referrals. Mr. Pearce noted strong growth in student achievement, especially in grade 6. He addressed the concerns regarding the elimination of the accelerated ELA classes in 7th grade. Accelerated classes are the same as the regular ELA classes and data shows that leveling has a negative impact on students. He will be hosting a parent forum to explain the rationale for eliminating those classes. Mr. Moccio said the high school is seeing positive trends in most areas. Ms. Olearczyk spoke of the role of the discipline committee and SHS and the low results for teachers reporting clear expectations for handling disruptive student behavior was due to inconsistencies among teachers' handling of student behaviors. Mr. Moccio clarified that the issue of vaping was addressed at a faculty meeting. Officer Kieselback was not able to be there; however, Officer Osowiecki conducted the training. He informed staff what to look for and showed faculty the different vaping devices students may be using. As a result of this training, office referrals for vaping have risen because teachers now can identify the devices, which can resemble pens. Ms. Berasi noted it is important that teachers and school administrators should decide what training and information is needed in their schools. Board member Beiter said Mr. Moccio knows every student's name and he is a bold presence at Suffield High School and he will be sorely missed. Ms. Donais said all students are making gains on their IEP goals and objectives as a result of teachers knowing their students. STAR reading data shows significant gains for many students from the fall. She reviewed the DESSA scores and how it is administered in each school and discussed the positive impact of the new ELL coordinator.

In response to Board member Sattan's question, Dr. Pangallo said the survey questions in last year's data were the same as this year's. Board member Mercik Davis said that the data comparisons were not for the same time frame. This year's mid-year data should be compared to last year's mid-year data, resulting in more meaningful measures of program effectiveness. She also suggested comparing cohort data. Board member Sepko said having a target would also be helpful in measuring effectiveness. Mr. Hendrickson said many districts are setting progression targets but the downside to that is not reaching targets can create anxiety or stress. A target range was suggested so it is not so rigid and would lessen anxiety. In response to Board member Dudack's question regarding gaps between grades, Dr. Pangallo said that is common and many factors can contribute to that. In addressing the gaps, Dr. Pangallo said data is reviewed, it becomes a focus of a PLC, get input from the math coach, and teachers work collaboratively on improving instruction and assessments. Ms. Carpenter-Snow said teachers knowing their students and using the workshop model is another way to address the gaps. Board member Sattan expressed concern over the number of teachers who feel they don't get the feedback they need. Board member Mercik Davis said it would be important to review the feedback from data over the last three years from the same teachers for consistency and to know the number of survey participants. Mr. Hendrickson said the lower percentage point could be due to the fact that student performance is on the increase, administrators are having difficult conversations with teachers to improve their instruction, and it is only the third year teachers are receiving direct feedback from administrators. In response to Board member Mercik Davis asking for clarification on what improved scaled scores mean, Ms. Donais said that means any gains in what their scale scores were from September. Data on the number of special education students who are performing at proficiency was request by Board member Mercik Davis. She also

requested that SPED PAC get back to the parent advisory model or put parents on the special service school governance team as parent feedback is important. Board Chair Wiesel said she understood this is the first year of the Special Services Improvement Plan, but would like to see data presented in other ways.

Sattan left at 8:56 pm, returned at 8:59pm

- Report on Full Day Kindergarten

Mr. Hendrickson reported on the effectiveness of full day kindergarten. Megan Blais, Erin Grasso, and Penny D'Aleo were also present. Board member Sattan said data for the 2012-13 school year would have been helpful as that was the last year of half day kindergarten. Ms. Grasso noted that when the district moved to full day kindergarten, there were also other major changes such as moving to the Common Core State Standards. Ms. D'Aleo added there was a major shift in curriculum and student expectations. Ms. Blais said one of the benefits of full day kindergarten was ELA instructional time doubled from half to full as well as additional time for other core subjects. The extra time allows for differentiated instruction. In response to Board Chair Wiesel's question relative to support staff in kindergarten classrooms, Ms. Grasso said the ELA and math coaches are often present to conduct screenings and there is academic support staff in each kindergarten classroom. In the full day program, students also have opportunities for socialization and extra social emotional supports for students that may need them. Ms. D'Aleo also stated there is less of a transition from kindergarten to first grade.

Richter left at 9:15, returned at 9:17pm

- January 2018 Financial Report

Mr. Hoff reviewed the January financial report, noting a projected year end net surplus of \$183,331. He said the electricity cost projections increased based on year-to-date usage compared to budget and an increase to special education tuition due to an estimated Excess Cost reimbursement rate from the state of 73%.

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

Ms. Berasi reviewed the changes to the budget since she presented the budget in December. Reductions to pensions, salaries and transportation results in a 1.1% increase over this year's budget, which includes pay to play in the amount of \$75,000. If the pay to play revenue is removed from the budget, the result would be a 1.3% increase over this year's budget. Board member Sepko said he was opposed to fees to participate in sports. The Board and administrators discussed the budget process and the positive dialogue and collaboration among all stakeholders. Board member Sattan asked for clarification on the line item document that was distributed to board members. The Board discussed the possibility of adding an additional SRO to the budget. It was determined the role of the SRO needs to be reviewed more carefully before making that decision. They also discussed the addition of a Human Resources Administrator in the future.

MOTION #18-31: Sepko moved to approve a budget without the \$75,000 sports participation fees included in line 3200 for 2018-2019 in the amount of \$35,069,732 which is 1.3% from the 2017-2018 budget. Dudack seconded the motion.

MOTION #18-32: Beiter moved to amend the motion to approve a budget for 2018-2019 in the amount of \$34,994,732 and reduce line item 611 by \$150,000 and use district surplus funds to buy supplies for next year in advance and increase line 3200 by \$75,000. D'Ostuni seconded the motion. Beiter voted in favor of the motion, all other members voted against. The motion failed 1-7.

MOTION #18-33: Beiter moved to amend the motion to approve a budget for 2018-2019 in the amount of \$35,019,732. D'Ostuni seconded the motion. Beiter voted in favor of the motion, all other members voted against. The motion failed 1-7.

Board Chair Wiesel called for a vote of the original motion (#18-31). All members voted in favor except Beiter who voted against. The motion carried 7-1.

Reports to the Board

Superintendent's Report

- Superintendent Berasi invited all to attend STEM night on March 28.
- She said the delegation from China will be visiting Spaulding to observe the special education program and tour the school
- Ms. Berasi thanked Board members for attending the NEASC review yesterday.

Board Chair's Report

- Board Chair Wiesel said she and the Superintendent attended the CAFE legislative breakfast. Area Superintendents expressed concern over unfunded mandates
- Ms. Wiesel asked if any Board member is interested in serving as liaison to the District Safety & Security Committee to contact her

Business Manager's Report

- Mr. Hoff said Eversource is close to having a proposal for the district

Subcommittee Report

January 22 & 29, 2018 Policy Subcommittee – Ms. Dudack said the following bylaws/policies are being placed on a 30-day read: #9110 – Number of Members, Terms of Office, Oath of Office; #9120 – Officers; #9121 – Chairperson; #9122 – Vice Chairperson; #9123 – Officers and Auxiliary Personnel; #9124 – Recording Secretary/Clerk (dissolve); #9125 – Use of Legal Counsel (proposed); #4117.6/4217.6 – Exit Interviews; #5144 – Student Discipline
She added a Wellness committee has been formed and will be revising the district's wellness policy. Board member D'Ostuni suggested that the fourth bullet down in bylaw #9121 should say, "appoint board members to committees" and in bylaw #9123 the word "supervise" in the last bullet should be changed as the BOE secretary does not supervise the clerk.

February 8 & 27, 2018 Budget subcommittees – nothing further to report

Future Business

- ELA leveling
- RISE program update
- Costa Rica Trip - Recognition of WL teachers
- SADD program
- Two BOE meetings a month

Adjournment

Beiter moved, Sattan seconded to adjourn the meeting at 10:28 p.m.

Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of April 3, 2018.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Dudack
Secretary