

Board of Education Special Meeting
January 16, 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, 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

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Recognition

None

Public Comment

Julianne Williams, 1870 North Street, urged the board to thoroughly consider the pay-to-play proposal and determine, if instituted, whether it will be a short-term or long-term plan. She also thanked the Board for taping the meetings.

Tammy Nealon, 560 East Street South, said her daughter attends the RISE program in Windsor Locks, and she is disappointed with the lack of communication she receives from faculty and staff. She believes having a Suffield teacher there would be beneficial. She commended the van driver who transports Suffield students to RISE.

Approval of Minutes

Dudack moved to approve the January 8, 2018 meeting minutes. D'Ostuni seconded the motion. All members voted in favor except Beiter, who abstained. The motion carried 8-0-1.

Consent Agenda

None

Discussion/Action Items

- Question & Answer Session - Previous Department Budget Presentations

Board members sent questions in advance to the administration. Superintendent Berasi read the questions and answers (see BOE member follow-up questions at <http://www.suffield.org/page.cfm?p=666>). The questions were regarding the cost of consultants; transportation; technology as it relates to curriculum and resources, the coaching model; revenue estimates for pay-to-park, pay-to-ride, and fees for activities that involve transportation; enrollment, and the number of paraprofessionals in the district. Board members Dudack and Mercik Davis asked for specific costs of consultants hired in the district this year and for the last few years. Board members discussed their desire to reduce the number of textbooks and utilize the online component to complement the 1:1 initiative. Board member Beiter said the Board needs to set a bold, specific vision that the administration can implement and then commit to supporting this endeavor. Board member Service said online subscriptions will be a shift in how the board budgets for these resources and this change will have to be articulated to the Board of Finance.

- Proposed 2018-2019 Special Services & Pupil Personnel Services Budget Presentation

Ms. Donais shared the special services mission and vision statement and highlighted the department's accomplishments. Data was shared on the special education population over the last five years and the population broken out by disability. Erin Shea, SHS special education teacher and Kelly Conroy, SHS school psychologist, shared information regarding the human relations program at Suffield High School which was created to address the increased number of students who tend to avoid school or be disengaged when there. Roughly 20 students attend one or more periods a day receiving instruction based on their social emotional goals established in their IEPs. They showed data on positive trends in attendance, the reduction of the number of visits to, and length of time in, the human relations class, and the reduction in the number of referrals to emergency services (211). In response to Board member Sepko's question as to how they help these students, Ms. Shea said they get to know their students so they can identify their triggers and determine which coping strategies work with each student. They help students implement these coping strategies and guide them in good decision making.

Ms. Donais reviewed the major line item changes to the special education budget as compared to this year's budget which include tuition, professional services, tutoring, legal fees, salaries, ECR and other reimbursements, and special education transportation for a total increase of 1.9%.

Ms. Donais also reviewed the major line item changes to the pupil personnel services which include psychologists, consultants, tutoring expulsion outplacements, nurses, guidance and social workers, and other which includes the ESL tutor, medical advisor, nurse supervisor and nursing supplies. In response to Board member D'Ostuni's questions, Ms. Donais said there were 21 ESL students last year and 26 ESL students this year. The ESL tutor was hired this year and last year ESL students were supported through special education and academic support personnel. This year students are using Rosetta Stone at school and students and families can access it at home as well.

Ms. Donais highlighted the ACHIEVE program and noted that having the program will allow for outplaced students to transition back to Suffield. In response to Board member Dudack's question, Ms. Donais said two to three students are planned to transition back to Suffield from outplacements. Ashley Sheridan, AWS special education teacher, and Denise Rigby, AWS Speech and Language Pathologist, explained the ACHIEVE structure and the philosophy used to improve student outcomes. They noted the collaborative team approach to providing programming for their students and the professional development provided to teachers and support staff to build in-house capacity. They reviewed the different types of assistive technology used and shared data on positive student outcomes in assessments and mastery of skills. In response to Board member Dudack's question, Ms. Donais said CCSN is contracted with the district for five years; three years remaining. She added that without having CCSN in district, six to seven students would most likely be outplaced at a cost of approximately \$100,000 per student. Currently there are three cohorts of students at Spaulding and one cohort of grade 3 and 4 students at McAlister and next year that will expand to grade 5 students.

In response to Board member Mercik Davis' question, Ms. Donais said the fidelity of the program is the same at McAlister as it is at Spaulding. CCSN has provided the same training and support to both faculty and staff, including general education teachers who are part of the collaborative team.

- Proposed 2018-2019 General Services & Insurance Budget Presentation

Mr. Hoff said general services is made up of central office salaries and other expenses, non-special education legal fees, benefits, property and liability insurance and the school resource officer. He reviewed the major line item changes to the general services budget as compared to

this year's budget which is a 6.2% increase over this year. Mr. Hoff discussed the increase to benefits which is projected to increase by 9.3%. He added employee insurance is projected to increase by 15%; however, the HSA expense is projected to decrease by 13.6% due to the reduction in employer contributions to the deductible. Mr. Hoff reviewed the utilities budgeted for next year: water, natural gas, electricity, WPCA fees and rubbish removal.

- Discussion of Capital Improvement Plan

Board member Sepko said this plan was discussed at the budget subcommittee meeting prior to tonight's board meeting. Items were prioritized and he said the board needs to vote on the plan before the ACCE meeting on February 8.

MOTION #18-23: Service moved to approve the Capital Improvement Plan as presented. D'Ostuni seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion carried 9-0.

- Proposed 2018-2019 School Calendar - 1st Read

Superintendent Berasi said two draft calendars are being proposed: one option proposes the first day of school starts before Labor Day and the other proposes the first day of school starts after Labor Day. Ms. Berasi noted spring vacation is proposed for the week of April 15, which is the same as Windsor Locks' spring vacation. Since we collaborate and share programs with Windsor Locks it would be best to have the same vacation week. Other districts are proposing the week of April 8 for spring vacation as that week follows the CREC calendar. Eight early release days for teacher collaboration are included in both calendars. Mr. Hendrickson gave examples of early release professional development provided to staff at the October and November early release days. Penny D'Aleo and Megan Blais, Spaulding teachers, Alicia Pitocco, McAlister teacher, and Tina Reiser, SHS teacher thanked the Board for approving the collaboration time and shared their experiences with the professional development offerings and the advantages of having this time to collaborate with their colleagues and improve their instruction. In response to Board Chair Wiesel's question, Ms. Berasi said professional development on the last day of school could include such activities as reviewing common assessments, determining the type of technology they would like to embed into the curriculum next year, or reviewing student data. In response to Board member Dudack's question, Mr. Hendrickson said teacher attendance on early release days is very high and in fact is better than a typical school day. In response to Board member Mercik Davis' and Board member Dudack's questions relative to a change in PLC time at the elementary level, Mr. Hendrickson said there was a change at McAlister in which the specials teachers were conducting their activity time with students. This year some of these activities were being done outside and it was perceived by some parents to be an extra recess. Communication was sent to parents in the fall explaining the change. Mr. Hendrickson said specials teachers are not being used to cover regular education teachers' PLC time or impacting their planning time. Board members and administration discussed the pros and cons of starting school before or after Labor Day. Board Chair Wiesel asked for a draft calendar with a start date of August 29, 2018.

Beiter left the meeting at 8:55 p.m.

- December 2017 Financial Report

Mr. Hoff reviewed the financial report highlighting increased cost of non-certified substitutes to reflect current usage. Heating costs were also increased based on year-to-date usage. The projected year end net surplus is \$206,430. He also noted the food service loss for December is similar to the same time last year.

- Approval of M&J Contract Extension

Mr. Hoff recommended a three year extension to M&J's contract for transportation services. The cost increase of 2% the first year and 2.25% for the subsequent two years is competitive and M&J has been very responsive and has provided good service.

MOTION #18-24: D'Ostuni moved to approve the three year extension to M&J's contract. Dudack seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion carried 8-0.

Reports to the Board

Superintendent's Report

- Superintendent Berasi said guidance department personnel are back in their offices and the ceiling has been repaired. The carpet tiles still need to be replaced.
- She said SPS's Grade 6 science units have been selected by the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) as model exemplars and will be presented at the National Conference in Atlanta, GA in March. Thank you to Steve Autieri and the science teachers on achieving this very high honor.
- Superintendent Berasi attended the DMG Superintendent's Summit last week and received some great ideas. The key note speaker's topic was on how to engage parents more in regards to student behavior. She suggested a BOE workshop on social emotional issues.

Board Chair's Report

- Board Chair Wiesel reminded board members of this Saturday's workshop with Nick Caruso from CAFE
- She has more information on the board liaison positions and asked board members to reach out to her if they have interest in one of the positions.

Business Manager's Report

- Mr. Hoff thanked Central Office staff for their work on the budget.

Subcommittee Report

January 16, 2018 Budget Subcommittee - Board Chair Wiesel said the details of the budget subcommittee were covered under the Capital Improvement Plan discussion item. The next policy subcommittee meetings are January 22 and February 5.

Future Business

None

Adjournment

Sattan moved, Richter seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:17 p.m.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Dudack
Secretary