

Board of Education Regular Meeting  
December 3, 2018

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m. in the Suffield Middle School Auditorium.

Present: Board members Susan Mercik Davis, Maureen Sattan, Michael Sepko, Jamie Drzyzga, Matt Service; and Interim Superintendent Mark Winzler and Business Manager Bill Hoff

Absent: John Richter, Debra Dudack, George Beiter

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Executive Session

Service moved to go into executive session, along with Interim Superintendent Mark Winzler and Business Manager Bill Hoff, for the purpose of discussion and review of the tentative agreement between the Suffield Board of Education and the Suffield Education Association. Sepko seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

Board Chair Mercik Davis concluded the executive session at 6:24 p.m.

Regular Meeting

The regular meeting was called to order at 6:31 p.m.

Present: Board members Susan Mercik Davis, Maureen Sattan, Michael Sepko, Jamie Drzyzga, Matt Service, Debra Dudack, and George Beiter (arrived at 6:38pm); Interim Superintendent Mark Winzler, Assistant Superintendent Michelle Zawawi, and Business Manager Bill Hoff; and SHS Student Representatives Sarah Dubocq and Hannah Stack

Absent: John Richter

Recognition

The Board of Education recognized the Farmington Valley Superintendents' Association Student Recognition Award Recipients: Suffield High School Student, Bruce "Max" Wilson and Suffield Middle School Student Alora McClosky. Mr. Blain, SHS Principal and Mr. Smith, SMS Principal, spoke about the qualities and characteristics that each of these students possess, which led to them being chosen for this award.

Suffield High School Student Representatives

Sarah Dubocq and Hannah Stack updated the Board on happenings at Suffield High School this month. Spirit week is occurring at SHS this week; Best Buddies, a club that creates friendships with developmentally disabled students, is going to host a prom this year for the first time; National Honor Society is coordinating a Toys for Tots drive; and auditions for the Spring musical *Mama Mia* are taking place this month.

Public Comment

None

## Presentations

None

## Reports to the Board

- Superintendent's Report - Mr. Winzler stated the special education survey to be administered by CREC is moving forward and he is hopeful administration and the Board will have the results in time for the budget process. The budget review has begun internally with Central Office Administrators meeting with building principals and other departments to review their 2019-2020 budget requests. The Board needs to establish goals and objectives to guide the budget process.
- Board Chair's Report - Board Chair Mercik Davis thanked administrators for their support in the transition to her role as Chairperson. There are four candidates interested in filling Ms. Wiesel's seat on the Board of Education. The Board will use the December 17 Board meeting to interview the candidates and the workshop regularly scheduled for that evening will move to January. In beginning the process of hiring a new superintendent, the Board will need to appoint itself as the search committee. She said the Board will restructure its meetings going forward, specifically the first meeting of the month will be a business meeting format and the second meeting of the month will be a workshop format. She asked Board members to send her topics they wish to discuss at future workshops. One of the workshops will be on the Board's vision and goals. Board Chair Mercik Davis said now that she is the Board Chair she is relinquishing her position as the Curriculum and Instruction subcommittee Chair and is assigning that role to Board member Drzyzga.
- Business Manager's Report - None

**MOTION #19-21:** Service moved to add agenda Item G under Discussion/Action Items to discuss the format of the December 17 Board meeting to interview Board member candidates. Beiter seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion carried 7-0.

*Sepko left the meeting at 6:59 p.m., returned at 7:02 p.m.*

## Consent Agenda

- A. Approval of the November 19, 2018 regular meeting minutes

**MOTION #19-22:** Beiter moved, Sattan seconded to approve the item on the consent agenda. All members voted in favor. The motion carried 7-0.

## Discussion/Action Items

- Approval of SMS History Textbook and Approval of SHS Course Proposals: School to Career Experience; AP Human Geography; AP Computer Science Principles; Probability and Statistics (renamed from Statistics A)

Board Chair Mercik Davis said the textbook and course proposals were presented to the Curriculum and Instruction committee by building administrators and teachers. Ms. Zawawi noted the textbook is going to be piloted and the team will return to the subcommittee with their recommendation.

**MOTION #19-23:** Dudack moved to approve the SMS history textbook pilot and SHS courses as presented. Drzyzga seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion carried 7-0.

- Approval of Tentative Agreement between the Suffield Board of Education and the Suffield Education Association

Mr. Winzler said negotiations began in September with both parties coming to the table with items they would like to change in the current contract. This contract begins July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2022. Board Chair Mercik Davis said both parties negotiated in good faith. She thanked the union for their cooperation. Board member Sepko thanked the administration, Mr. Janick, SEA President, the teachers union, and the Board's attorney.

**MOTION #19-24:** Sepko moved to approve the tentative agreement between the Suffield Board of Education and the Suffield Education Association. Drzyzga seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion carried 7-0.

- Appointment of the Board of Education as the Personnel Search Committee for a Superintendent of Schools.

Mr. Winzler stated that the bylaws give the Board the authority to hire a new superintendent. However, appointing itself as the search committee allows the Board to conduct the search privately. If the Board does not appoint itself as the search committee, the Board cannot conduct non-meetings. There is a need to protect the privacy of those who apply for the position.

**MOTION #19-25:** Beiter moved to appoint the Board of Education as the Personnel Search Committee for a Superintendent of Schools. Sattan seconded the motion. Mr. Winzler added that if the Board decides to use a search firm, the Board makes that decision not the search committee, and a vote would have to be done at a Board meeting. All members voted in favor of the motion. The motion carried 7-0.

- Approval to Continue to use Shipman and Goodwin for Legal Services including Special Education

Board Chair Mercik Davis said in the past, Shipman and Goodwin was used as legal counsel in all areas including special education. In the last few years, Berchem Moses has handled special education matters and Shipman and Goodwin has handled all other matters. Mr. Winzler said he and other Central Office administrators believe having two law firms is not in the best interest of the district and does not serve the students of Suffield in the most efficient manner.

**MOTION #19-26:** Dudack moved to approve the continued use of Shipman and Goodwin for legal services including special education, effective January 1, 2019. Beiter seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion carried 7-0.

- Authorize the Interim Superintendent to Create and Post for a Second Special Education Supervisor

Board Chair Mercik Davis said having two experienced Interim Directors of Special Services in district has provided the district with an outside assessment of the needs of the special education department. Both Ms. Epps and Mr. McGrath believe that an additional special education supervisor is needed in the district. Currently the Director is doing the work of a supervisor in addition to the director role, which is not sustainable and is not serving the students in an equitable manner. The additional supervisor would oversee the secondary level and the current supervisor would oversee PreK-5. Currently, she is overseeing PreK-8. Mr. Winzler added that Suffield lacks programs to serve the special education population and therefore, some students need to be outplaced to provide the programming they need. He

said the Director needs to have the time to devote to developing programs which will lead to students returning to district. Mr. Winzler also stated it is imperative that the district hire an additional special education supervisor now and not wait until the next school year. He noted there are funds in the current budget to hire a supervisor this year. He added that a benefit to hiring a supervisor now is to provide the new supervisor an opportunity to be mentored by the experienced Interim Directors that will be in place and to get a good understanding of the needs in Suffield before a permanent Director is hired. In the administration's assessment, there is a great need to create and sustain better relationships with staff and parents. Mr. Winzler added that in the past there were two supervisors in the district and he recommends returning to that model.

**MOTION #19-27:** Dudack moved to authorize the Interim Superintendent to create and post for a second Special Education Supervisor. Sattan seconded the motion.

The Board discussed the certification and potential candidates that would apply for this position. Board members also asked if the 18-21 population would be overseen by this supervisor. Mr. Winzler stated the 18-21 population would be overseen by a supervisor. The Board and Mr. Winzler discussed the current special education program, the needs and other options besides adding another administrator. Board members noted an additional supervisor can foster relationships and provide stability to families, provide continuity and oversight at the building level, increase communication, and provide support and resources to special education teachers.

Board Chair Mercik Davis called for a vote. All members voted in favor except Beiter, who opposed. The motion carried 6-1. Board member Beiter noted he is supportive of improving the special education department but voted against the motion because he would like to see other alternatives to hiring another administrator be presented to the Board for consideration.

- 2019-2020 Budget Discussion

Board Chair Mercik Davis said the Board needs to take an active role in establishing its vision and goals to focus its efforts in the budget process and guide the work of the Board. Board members shared their priorities which included a focus on early education; special education; mental health; wellness; increase support to teachers through more academic support and paraprofessionals; shared services with the Town, such as an HR director; review of the CCSN program; review of curriculum leader positions; provide resources for talented and gifted; curriculum and instruction including STEAM in the elementary grades; assistive technology; funding for items that came out of the NEASC report; and distance learning opportunities for students. Several Board members suggested focusing on three to five initiatives to focus the work, for example shared services and special education.

*Sepko left the meeting at 8:37 p.m., returned at 8:42 p.m.*

- Format for the December 17 Board meeting to conduct Board of Education candidate interviews

Board members discussed whether the Board of Education candidate interviews should be conducted in a public meeting, in executive session or a combination of both. Mr. Winzler added the Board should have a list of prepared questions and ask the same questions to each candidate for consistency. By consensus, Board members decided to hold the interviews in executive session. Board Chair Mercik Davis asked Board members to send any questions they would like to ask to Mr. Winzler. Board Chair Mercik Davis will be notifying the candidates of the process this week.

*Ms. Zawawi left the meeting at 8:49 p.m., returned at 8:52 p.m.  
Mr. Winzler left the meeting at 8:52 p.m., returned at 8:57 p.m.*

Subcommittee Reports

None

Future Business

None

Adjournment

Beiter moved, Dudack seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:10 p.m.

*Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of January 7, 2018.*

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Dudack  
Secretary

DRAFT