

Board of Education Regular Meeting
January 22, 2019

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Central Office Conference Room.

Present: Board members Susan Mercik Davis, Michael Sepko, Jamie Drzyzga, Matt Service, James Mol, and Interim Superintendent Mark Winzler

Absent: John Richter, Debra Dudack and Maureen Sattan

MOTION #19-32: Service moved to add an executive session to the agenda at the beginning of the meeting. Drzyzga seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion carried 5-0.

Executive Session

At 6:01 p.m., Service moved to go into executive session and invited Interim Superintendent, Mark Winzler and the special education supervisor candidate to join the session for the purpose of interviewing the candidate for the Secondary Special Education Supervisor position. Sepko seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion carried 5-0.

Board Chair Mercik Davis ended the executive session at 6:26 p.m.

Regular Session

The regular meeting began at 6:34 p.m. in the Suffield Middle School Auditorium and opened with the pledge of allegiance.

Present: Board members Susan Mercik Davis, Maureen Sattan, Michael Sepko, Jamie Drzyzga, Matt Service, James Mol, Debra Dudack; Interim Superintendent Mark Winzler, Business Manager Bill Hoff, and First Selectwoman Melissa Mack

Absent: John Richter, Michelle Zawawi, and SHS Student Representatives Sarah Dubocq and Hannah Stack

Discussion/Action Item

- Possible appointment of the Secondary Special Education Supervisor
Board Chair Mercik Davis said based on the recommendation of Mr. Winzler and Mr. McGrath, the Board approved adding a secondary special education supervisor at its December 3, 2018 Board meeting. The interview committee was comprised of administrators, teachers, parents and Board members, herself included. Six candidates were interviewed and the interview committee unanimously moved one candidate forward to the Board.

MOTION #19-33: Sattan moved, Sepko seconded to appoint Michael McDonald to the secondary supervisor position. Board Chair Mercik Davis said Mr. McDonald comes with a wealth of knowledge and 25 years of experience in special education and it was evident in the interview process that his focus is on students. Mr. McDonald thanked the Board.

Budget Workshop

Interim Superintendent Mark Winzler presented the proposed 2019-2020 Superintendent's budget. He said as an interim he comes with an "outside" lens and this budget solely focuses on the education of kids. While this budget was developed with the students' needs in mind, not all of the needs are addressed. This budget focuses on the most decisive points. Mr. Winzler reviewed the projected enrollment for next year, noting the overall projected decrease of 42 students; however, the 10-year enrollment projections show an increase in overall enrollment. Also noted was the projected increase of 19 students K-2. Mr. Winzler spoke about the budget assumptions that have been made, which include items such as health insurance increases, excess cost reimbursement, grant funding, etc. He reviewed the revenue sources that the town receives, totaling \$6,871,560, or 19% of the budget. Mr. Winzler explained the many grants the district receives and how that money is spent; a large portion funds 31.18 FTEs in certified and non-certified staff. He further explained in detail the Open Choice grant expenditures. He noted that five years ago the district had about 100 Open Choice students attending Suffield and the district received \$8000 per student. Currently, there is about half the number of Open Choice students attending Suffield, and due to diminished enrollment, the district receives \$4000 per student, for a loss of over \$600,000 in grant income. Over the last few years the surplus in the Open Choice fund has been depleted due to this loss in revenue. By 2020-2021, the Board may have to add \$500,000 to the operating budget to offset these losses. Open Choice expenditures are projected to be \$704,382 for 2019-2020, leaving a year-end balance projected at \$614. Mr. Winzler discussed the impact on the budget from union contract negotiations and salary increases, which results in a 1.8% increase to the budget. He reviewed the changes in staffing, some of which include an addition of a grade 2 teacher, the special education supervisor the Board appointed this evening, a special education teacher at SMS, and other special education support personnel. He noted that the increase in academic support FTEs is additional hours added to existing personnel, not additional people and funds for CCSN are being reduced by one-third and some of those funds are being used to add the special education teacher at the middle school to solely work with ACHIEVE students. This is in line with the original intent of phasing out CCSN while building capacity in-house. Mr. Winzler reviewed the driving components that increase and decrease the budget, and the budget summary, for a total of a 4.89% increase to this year's budget. Of note, 22.1% of the total budget is for special education and pupil services. Mr. Winzler discussed the budgeted health insurance increase, which is projected at 8.6%. In looking at the total budget, salaries and benefits are 83.3% of the budget. These are fixed costs. First Selectwoman Melissa Mack spoke about the advantage of sharing IT services with the district and was grateful for Ms. Osleger and her staff. Ms. Osleger has found several ways to reduce costs and create efficiencies. Ms. Mack said the town and district are looking at the possibility of sharing other services as well. Mr. Winzler said just to maintain current operating expenses and programs the budget increase is 3.47%. The additional 1.42% is needed to improve programming, specifically in special education personnel, regular education teachers and increases in academic support. Mr. Winzler emphatically stressed that receiving a budget increase of about 1% or lower each year is not sustainable to operate the district. He also noted the direct correlation between a valued and funded school system and higher property values. Mr. Winzler concluded by thanking all administrators and staff in developing the budget.

Discussion/Action Item

- Proposed 2019-2020 school calendar – 1st read

Board Chair Mercik Davis and Mr. Winzler thanked Ms. Zawawi for her time and diligence in developing this calendar. Ms. Zawawi sought input from administrators and teachers. The resulting proposed calendar reduces the number of early release days to increase instructional time and reduce interruptions to the learning environment. Other proposed changes to the calendar are two full professional development days, restructuring the parent conferences to reduce the number of early dismissal days and to accommodate parents' schedules, and changing the early release dismissal times to half-day dismissal times.

Adjournment

Service moved, Dudack seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:44 p.m.

Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of February 4, 2019.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Dudack
Secretary