

Board of Education Regular Meeting  
September 4, 2018

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:31 p.m. in the Suffield Middle School Auditorium.

Present: Board members Kendra Wiesel, Susan Mercik Davis, Maureen Sattan, Matt Service, Michael Sepko, Debra Dudack, Jamie Drzyzga, Interim Superintendent Mark Winzler, Assistant Superintendent Michelle Zawawi and Business Manager Bill Hoff

Absent: John Richter, George Beiter

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. Wiesel introduced Mr. Mark Winzler, the Interim Superintendent of Schools.

Recognition

The Board of Education recognized the 2018-2019 Teacher of the Year, Matthew Dobi and the 2018-2019 Paraeducator of the Year, Jacklyn Kirchmeier. Mr. Ken Smith, Suffield Middle School Principal, shared thoughts about Matt from his colleagues, who said Matt is dedicated, involved in many activities outside of the classroom, has a great ability to connect with students and mentor them, truly cares about kids and everything he does centers around what is best for them. His passion and excitement for teaching is inspiring to those around him. Matt thanked the board and said he loves working in Suffield. Mr. Winzler said paraeducators are an integral part of school system and he is deeply appreciative of their work. He is happy to see Suffield participates in the Paraeducator of the Year program. Dr. Roxanne Pangallo, A. Ward Spaulding Principal, said a few words about Ms. Kirchmeier: Jackie is remarkable and makes a difference in the lives of many of our children. She works with children with the most complex needs but also makes herself available to help any child. She is a leader, ongoing learner, advocates for her students, collaborates with teachers, and gets to know each child as an individual. Everything Jackie does is in the best interest of the students. Board Chair Wiesel presented plaques to both Mr. Dobi and Ms. Kirchmeier.

Public Comment

Tracy Hespelt, 875 Copper Hill Road, presented a petition signed with 142 verified signatures of residents. The petition is seeking (1) administration commission a consultant group to conduct a comprehensive program review of special education services; (2) identify areas of strengths, weaknesses and liabilities within the special education programs, policies, communication, collaboration, transition, appropriately certified staffing and professional development; and (3) communicate the findings of the full review to all stakeholders in the community. Many in the community have concerns relative to communication, transparency, programming, inclusion, consistency and professional development of staff in special education. Ms. Hespelt thanked the board for their volunteer efforts and time spent serving this community.

Minutes

Dudack moved, Sattan seconded to approve the August 6, 2018 regular meeting minutes. All members voted in favor. The motion carried 7-0.

## Consent Agenda

None

### Discussion/Action Items

- 2018-2019 Staffing Report

Mr. Winzler reviewed the staffing report listing staff members who have left the district and new staff who replaced them for the 2018-2019 school year. He also noted the staffing changes internally. He discussed reasons for resignations and noted the new procedure in conducting exit interviews will help better inform administration as to why employees leave Suffield. Mr. Winzler added the teaching profession is very fluid. Ms. Mercik Davis said Ms. Berasi was asked to present to the Board different options for hiring a Human Resources Director, including looking at sharing services with the Town or another school district. Mr. Winzler noted his background is in human resources and said he can help the Board in this area. Board member Sepko said hiring a HR Director has budget implications so a discussion and decision need to occur soon. Board member Dudack was concerned about the moving of a section in second grade to kindergarten this year which has resulted in higher class sizes in grade 2. She noted last year's kindergarten class also had higher class sizes. She stated that she feels all three grades need seven sections and was disappointed that did not occur. Board member Dudack asked if additional supports could be provided to second grade teachers. She also added the Board needs to look at best practice for class size for all grades and that could have budget and policy implications. Mr. Winzler said there is a board policy on class size but the policy is not specific. There is also wording in the teachers' union contract about class sizes but they are considered guidelines. Mr. Winzler cautioned the Board about just adding teachers or additional staffing, and recommended taking a broader view as there are many factors to consider. However, in meeting with Dr. Pangallo and gathering additional information, he does believe adding academic support would be warranted. He would like to present a formal proposal to the Board at its next meeting. Mr. Winzler added that Ms. Zawawi will be meeting with all academic support personnel this week.

- 2017-2018 Educator Retention Report

Ms. Wiesel said in response to concerns to recruit and retain the highest talent, this report came to the Board a few years ago to look at trends and review retention rates. Mr. Winzler said exit interviews will better help determine why people are leaving for "personal or other" reasons. He said in order for exit interviews to be effective, relationships need to be nurtured and an atmosphere of trust needs to be established. Board member Sattan asked how Suffield compares to State retention rates. Mr. Winzler said he has never had a Board look at retention data so he is unsure if there is state data on retention, but he will look into it.

- **MOTION #19-11:** Mercik Davis moved to add a discussion/action item to the agenda to discuss special education relative to the petition presented tonight. Dudack seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion carried 7-0.

Mercik Davis said she would like a timetable of when the district will hire a new Director of Special Services and when a consultant could audit the special education program. She added that the audit should include a review of CCSN as there has only been self-reporting of that program. Mercik Davis would like the Board to develop a vision and communication plan. Mr. Winzler said he, Ms. Zawawi and Ms. Epps, Interim Director of Special Services, will be reviewing applicants tomorrow for the Director of Special Education. He emphasized that special education directors and supervisors are a shortage area in the state, so there is a smaller pool from which to choose than other administrative positions. Mr. Winzler said he needs to research and gather more information but recommended moving forward with finding a permanent Director as Ms. Epps cannot be in the

district for the entire school year. Board Chair Wiesel said the Board receives special education updates twice a year: once in the fall and then again in the spring, however she finds such reports difficult to understand. She would like to look at other methods to successfully report out on special education so the Board can better understand and support special education endeavors. Board member Mercik Davis said she would like a review of test scores and to look at the model to see if it is working. Mr. Winzler suggested that the Board hold a workshop focused on special education; however, a report from a program review or a director who has been in the district for some time will need to be put in place before the workshop can be conducted so that data and solid foundational information can be presented and discussed. Mr. Winzler said he will be meeting with Ms. Epps to get her impression of the department, process and procedures and any other information she can share.

### Reports to the Board

- Superintendent's Report
  - Mr. Winzler said his first day in the district was Convocation, where he delivered the convocation address to faculty and staff. The first day of school was very positive and there was a lot of excitement among students and staff. Administrators were all very visible.
  - Mr. Winzler said he is in district three days a week and is immersing himself in Suffield; asking a lot of questions. His immediate tasks are to help in the teacher contract negotiations, meet with town officials (i.e. police chief, first selectman, youth services director), and to meet individually with board members if they would like.
- Board Chair's Report
  - Ms. Wiesel attended new teacher orientation and convocation for the first time. She said both events were positive and teachers and staff were excited to start the new year. Board members Service, Sattan and Mercik Davis also attended convocation.
  - Ms. Wiesel and Mr. Winzler have been discussing how the Board can use its time wisely, specifically looking at how we are conducting meetings and the subcommittee structure.
  - The signatures from the petition received at the August 6 Board meeting have been verified. Ms. Wiesel spoke with Mr. Messenger who submitted the petition. Mr. Messenger stated that he feels a public hearing is not necessary at this time but wants an open dialog meeting. A public forum will be scheduled in the coming weeks.
- Business Manager's Report
  - Mr. Hoff said transportation during the first few days of school has been relatively smooth. He thanked Jackie at M&J.
  - He said there have been a few issues in food service with the point of sale system but the problems are being identified and remedied.
  - He thanked all of those involved in getting ready for the start of school, specifically the police for directing traffic, the Town IT department for helping out our technology department when we were short staffed, and our technology and facilities departments for the extra hours of work required to be ready for school. Board member Sepko thanked Mr. Hoff for his work.

### Subcommittee Report

- A. August 7, August 17 & August 24, 2018 Policy Subcommittee Meetings – The following bylaws and policy are being placed on a 30-day read: B#9160 – Student Representation on BOE (*proposed new bylaw*); B#9221 – Filling Vacancies; B #9310 – Development, Distribution, and Maintenance of Policy, Regulation, and Bylaws Manual Policy Dissemination; B#9311 – Formulation, Adoption, Amendment and Suspension of Policies, Bylaws and Regulations; B#9312 – Formulation, Adoption, Amendment of Bylaws (*proposed for dissolution*); B#9314 – Suspension of Policies, Bylaws, Regulations

(*proposed for dissolution*); B#9315 – Board-Administrator Relationship (*proposed for dissolution*); B#9321 – Time, Place, Notification of Meetings; B#9322 – Public and Executive Sessions; B#9323 – Meeting Agenda and Dissemination; B#9324 – Advance Delivery of Meeting Materials (*proposed for dissolution*); B#9325 – Meeting Conduct; B#9325.1 – Quorum (*proposed new bylaw*); B#9325.2 – Order of Business; B#9325.3 – Parliamentary Procedures (*proposed for dissolution*); P#5141.21 – Administering Medication

Ms. Dudack reviewed the changes to all the above bylaws which are all tracked in red. She said the Wellness committee will meet on September 21 to review feedback received and next steps. Ms. Wiesel said Mr. Winzler has reached out to CABC to inquire about having our policy manual audited. Our policy manual has not been audited for over 11 years and is overdue for a review. The cost is \$2200.00 and work would begin around December.

Mr. Winzler said it is paramount in this day and age to make sure policy manuals are up to date. It also makes the task much less onerous for the Board and the information is coming from the experts.

- B. September 4, 2018 Curriculum & Instruction Meeting - Board member Mercik Davis said the committee set goals and timetables, and received expectations from Ms. Zawawi's perspective on what this committee should be doing. The committee will meet monthly with the first few meeting topics being a report from Ms. Zawawi, and then a presentation from teachers on new course proposals. In January and February, topics will include an update on STEAM, a mid-year update from curriculum leaders, a review of gifted and talented programs and getting curriculum online.

#### Future Business

- Update on special education (Sept 17 meeting)
- Academic support (Sept 17 meeting)
- NEASC report (Sept 17 meeting)
- Shared services with the Town
- Report on best practice on establishing class sizes
- Update on bus stop issue from last year
- Police access to school cameras
- 8th Grade World Language field trips

#### Adjournment

Mercik Davis moved, Sattan seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:08 p.m.

*Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of September 17, 2018.*

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Dudack  
Secretary