

Board of Education Special Meeting  
July 8, 2019

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:35 p.m. in the Central Office Conference Room.

Present: Board members Susan Mercik Davis, Maureen Sattan, John Richter, Michael Sepko, Jamie Drzyzga, Brian Fry, Debra Dudack, and James Mol; Superintendent Timothy Van Tassel

Absent: Matt Service

Executive Session

At 5:35 p.m. Sepko moved, Fry seconded to into executive session for the Board of Education to conduct a board self-evaluation. Superintendent Timothy Van Tassel was invited to join the executive session.

The executive session ended at 6:39 p.m.

Regular Session

The regular session began in the Suffield Middle School auditorium at 6:43 p.m. and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Board members Susan Mercik Davis, Maureen Sattan, John Richter, Michael Sepko, Jamie Drzyzga, Brian Fry, Debra Dudack, and James Mol; Superintendent Timothy Van Tassel; Director of Special Services Diana Kelley, and Business Manager Bill Hoff

Absent: Matt Service and Assistant Superintendent Michelle Zawawi

Recognition

None

Public Comment

None

Presentations

None

Reports to the Board

- Superintendent's Report
  - Superintendent Van Tassel said he was looking forward to working with the Board and he also thanked the Board for appointing Diana Kelley to the Director of Special Services. Mr. Van Tassel thanked the Interim Co-Directors Helen Donaher and Glenn McGrath for their work in the district and in ensuring a smooth transition for Ms. Kelley. He also thanked the interview committee.
  - Superintendent Van Tassel said current vacancies are being filled and he anticipates all hiring will be complete before the start of the school year.
  - Mr. Van Tassel will be sending a formal communication to parents in early August. He will share the Board's goals, key programming initiatives and a request for parent involvement in developing the five-year strategic plan. He discussed his entry plan with

BOE members and explained the details and timing of each phase of the plan. Mr. Van Tasel has begun meeting with various stakeholder groups: community members, collective bargaining members, Central Office staff and administrators. The administrator leadership retreat is scheduled for mid-August and he will hold listen and learn events with staff and the community throughout the school year.

- Board Chair's Report
  - Board Chair Mercik Davis acknowledged Mr. Winzler's work in helping with a smooth transition to Mr. Van Tasel. She also noted Mr. Van Tasel's commitment and loyalty to both Suffield and Hebron during the time of transition. She was grateful to the Hebron School District for its flexibility in allowing Mr. Van Tasel to spend so much time in Suffield before his official start on July 1. Ms. Mercik Davis welcomed Mr. Van Tasel and Ms. Kelley.
  - She said the SHS graduation was a well-organized, student centric ceremony.
  - She said Central Office is in the process of setting up meetings with the Board of Finance Chair and First Selectwoman, she and Mr. Van Tasel to discuss the budget process going forward.
- Business Manager's Report
  - Mr. Hoff thanked Mary Poit and Eileen Cybulski for their work in closing out the fiscal year. He will give a year-end financial status report at the August Board meeting.

#### Consent Agenda

**MOTION #19-62:** Dudack moved, Fry seconded to approve the following items on the consent agenda:

- A. Approval of Minutes – June 3, 2019 Regular Meeting
- B. Approval of Minutes – June 10, 2019 Special Meeting
- C. Policy Revisions to #1180- Memorials to Deceased Students and Staff; #5125.11 – Health/Medical Records; #5131.6 – Drugs, Tobacco, Alcohol; #5144.4 – Physical Exercise and Discipline of Students; #6146 – Graduation Requirements
- D. SHS Field Trip Request – Orlando, FL – April 5-9, 2020

All voted in favor. The motion carried 8-0.

#### Discussion/Action Item

- Report on Extended School Year

Ms. Diana Kelley, Director of Special Services, gave an update to the Board on the extended school year (ESY) program. Students are recommended for ESY through the PPT process. Approximately 80 students PreK-12 are attending ESY this summer and the program is fully staffed with 8 ½ teachers and about 30 paraeducators. ESY began on June 24<sup>th</sup> and there are two sessions: 4 weeks and 6 weeks. The program runs Monday through Thursday from 8-11:30am. There is also an extended day program at Camp Sunrise for students who qualify.
- Adoption of the Board of Education's 2019-2020 District Goals

Board Chair Mercik Davis said the Board goals were developed during the Board's work with NESDEC consultant, Dr. Elizabeth Osga and Superintendent Van Tasel. Five goals were developed: 1) Establish healthy channels of outreach, communication, engagement, and collaboration with town government and the community; 2) Systematically use meaningful data to drive, improve and track student success; 3) Continue to design and implement an integrated plan for professional learning aligned with district needs; 4) Continue the implementation of revised curriculum with an emphasis on alignment and consistency between documented curriculum and delivered curriculum; and 5) Develop a five-year Strategic Plan.

**MOTION #19-63:** Mol moved, Fry seconded to adopt the five Board of Education 2019-2020 district goals. All members voted in favor. The motion carried 8-0.

- **Healthy Foods Certification**

Mr. Hoff said the Board approved the Healthy Foods Certification at its June meeting, but the state now requires specific language to be included in the motion.

**MOTION #19-64:** Mol moved, Dudack seconded that the Board of Education approve participation in the Healthy Food Certification program for the 2019-20 school year. The Board of Education will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards and beverages not listed in Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the food and beverage items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An “event” is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The “regular school day” is the period from the midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. “Location” means where the event is being held. All members voted in favor. The motion carried 8-0.

- **Approval of Grade 6 & 7 Social Studies Textbook and SHS AP Human Geography Textbook**

Board member Drzyzga said teachers presented the textbooks to the Curriculum and Instruction subcommittee. She explained the process for selecting and piloting the textbooks. The purchase will include a set of classroom textbooks and an online subscription for both.

**MOTION #19-65:** Mol moved, Richter seconded that the Board approve the Grade 6 & 7 Social Studies Textbook: Discovering Our Past: A History of the World at a cost of \$37,847.02, and the SHS AP Human Geography Textbook: The Cultural Landscape, An Introduction to Human Geography, 2017 at a cost of \$4,309.10. All members voted in favor. The motion carried 8-0.

- **Discussion of Personnel Changes**

Superintendent Van Tassel gave an update on personnel changes. He said currently the turnover savings is approximately \$93,000, far below the budgeted amount of \$185,000. He added that the majority of new hiring is complete. Mr. Van Tassel noted it is very difficult to budget for unknown factors such as vacancies. He said there may be other areas in the budget to realize savings such as in health insurance.

- **Discussion of Pay-to-Participate/Park Implementation**

Board Chair Mercik Davis said going forward the term “pay-to-participate” should be used instead of pay-to-play so that it is not interpreted that students will receive equal playing time. Mr. Van Tassel said Mr. Blain, Mr. Hoff and Mr. Bosworth have worked diligently on the details of implementing pay-to-participate and pay-to-park which will be rolled out at the start of the 2019-2020 school year. Mr. Hoff highlighted the work that has been done to date on the implementation process and specifics on instituting the payment process, communications, and collecting funds. Mr. Van Tassel spoke about the need to create an administrative regulation to establish clear procedures. He said if the Board would like a policy, that could be added later, but for time’s sake, the regulation needs to be written for the start of the school year. The Board and administration discussed specific options for how payment would be made, when payment would be made, and waivers for families with financial hardships. Mr. Hoff said he has researched several online payment processors, including our current provider, MySchoolBucks. Mr. Hoff also noted all waiver requests will go through his office to ensure student

confidentiality. Superintendent Van Tasel will have an administrative regulation ready for the next Policy subcommittee meeting for its review. Board Chair Mercik Davis also requested that the Board see the communication that will be sent to parents relative to pay-to-participate. Superintendent Van Tasel said communications will be sent to parents and students through several different avenues. Language will also be added to the student handbooks. Board members discussed the fundraising that is done around school sports. Mr. Hoff said the money that is raised by coaches through fundraisers is managed through student activities accounts.

*Sattan left at 8:03 p.m., returned at 8:07 p.m.*

- Discussion of Board Workshop Items

Board Chair Mercik Davis said the second meeting of the month will be dedicated to Board workshops. Board members previously gave their preferences for workshop topics which are, CCSN, 6-12 scheduling, middle school team model, 6-12 guidance model, social emotional learning and PBIS, preschool, gifted and talented and VoAg. Board Chair Mercik Davis said she would like to add STEAM and the co-teaching model to the list. Board member Dudack said she would like more information on special education caseloads. Board member Sepko would like to meet with the Board of Finance earlier in the year. Board member Mol asked if the administration could conduct school walk-throughs with Board members. Mr. Van Tasel said he conducted capital improvement plan walk-throughs in his previous district with board and community members and he would be happy to do those here. Board Chair Mercik Davis said these workshops will give the Board greater understanding, help shape and form ideas not only relative to budgeting but also as to how they align with the Board's goals, and will help the Board make informed decisions. Board Chair Mercik Davis said she and Superintendent Van Tasel will prioritize the workshop topic list and share it with Board members for a final review.

#### Subcommittee Reports

June 10, 2019 Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee Meeting: Board member Drzyzga said the teachers presented the textbook recommendations that were adopted this evening. The teachers did their due diligence in evaluating and presenting to the subcommittee.

Board Chair Mercik Davis said the Kent Memorial Library is open again and running a summer reading program. The Board contributed a raffle prize basket to the program.

#### Future Business

Review of substitutes

#### Adjournment

Dudack moved, Mol seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 p.m.

*Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of August 19, 2019.*

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Dudack  
Secretary