

Board of Education Regular Meeting  
September 3, 2019

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m. in the Suffield Middle School auditorium and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Board members Susan Mercik Davis, Maureen Sattan, John Richter, Jamie Drzyzga, James Mol, Matt Service, Brian Fry, and Debra Dudack; Superintendent Timothy Van Tasel, Assistant Superintendent Michelle Zawawi and Business Manager Bill Hoff

Absent: Michael Sepko

Recognition

- Introduction of New Suffield Public School Teachers  
Building Principals and Assistant Principals introduced the new teachers in their buildings. Spaulding School: Rachel Bergman, Laura Chicorka, Molly Deneen, Brett Kaselouskas, Shelly Malanson, Samantha Schwartz, Kevin Smaglis, and Anthony Zaremba; McAlister School: Shannon Bostiga, Shannon Gawron, Abigail Harrington and Diane Juzba; Suffield Middle School: Jennifer Cardines, Christina Janssen, Nicole Mott, David Orie, Julia Porter, and Alexandra Zapatka; Suffield High School: Kyle Candia-Bovi, Rebecca Ferguson, Tim Percoski, and Gregory Smedberg
- 2019-2020 Teacher of the Year and Paraeducator of the Year  
Ms. Carpenter Snow introduced Carol Frost, Paraeducator of the Year, and Mr. Blain introduced Erin Shea, Teacher of the Year. Superintendent Van Tasel and Board Chair Mercik Davis presented a plaque to Ms. Frost and Ms. Shea.

Public Comment

None

Presentations

- Suffield High School Agriscience Program  
Laura LaFlamme, Agriscience Director, and Agriscience teachers and staff Rachel Ferguson, Leah Leach, Sara Oliver, Celia Wagner and Maryellen Mercik were in attendance. Ms. LaFlamme gave an overview of what the program consists of, enrollment data, course offerings and requirements, and the three key components of the program: classroom laboratory experience, Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE), and Future Farmers of America (FFA). Agriscience students, Sam Petrucci, Carson Strout, Renee Tautic and Alexis Ceppa spoke about the reasons they applied for the Agriscience program, their field of interest and the benefits of being in the program, including the leadership skills they have acquired. They spoke highly of their teachers, the information they have learned and the experiences they have had the opportunity to get involved in through the SAE and FFA. Student Ezra Audet was also in attendance.

*Drzyzga left the meeting at 7:23p.m., returned 7:27p.m.*

## Reports to the Board

- Superintendent's Report
  - Mr. Van Tasel said the start of school went very smoothly. Many schools held meet and greets. The first fire drills of the year have been scheduled in all four schools. The high school parking lot paving is complete, with minor landscaping still being done.
  - Mr. Van Tasel said last Friday he issued a parent alert due to a report of a suspicious person following a school bus. It turned out to be a false alarm, as it was a family member looking for a student. He was appreciative of the bus company and police department's quick response to the situation.
  - Superintendent Van Tasel noted several parent communications being sent from each of the schools in the first few days of school. The School Messenger system will be used regularly and parents should make sure their contact information is current to receive notifications and emergency closing information.
  - Mr. Van Tasel said the district should be receiving the 2018-19 state assessment reports soon. These include assessments such as Smarter Balanced and SATs. The results will be sent to families.
  - Mr. Van Tasel would like to schedule capital improvement project walk-throughs in each of the buildings with Board members this fall to help Board members get a better understanding of the district's facilities and to help prioritize projects. Board member Service suggested inviting Board of Finance members to join these walk-throughs, which has been done in the past.
  - Superintendent Van Tasel said he is beginning Phase III of his entry plan which includes communications with all stakeholders. He will be holding Listen and Learn events at each school with staff and parents and monthly coffee hours on Friday mornings.
  - He said administration will begin work on the 2020-2021 budget.
  - Mr. Van Tasel has provided each Board member with a copy of the *Speed of Trust* which the Board will read as part of their work together. At this year's Convocation, he gave all staff a carabiner pin, which represents the theme for this year: making connections. Each board member received one as well.
  - Superintendent Van Tasel acknowledged Manda Dingley, McAlister's school nurse, for her handling of a student who was stung by a bee today and needed medical treatment. He also acknowledged Mr. Hoff for the timely submission of the district's financial report to the state. Mr. Van Tasel said he will share the report with the Board.
- Board Chair's Report
  - Board Chair Mercik Davis said she and other Board members attended the new teacher orientation and Convocation. She noted the new teacher orientation had a great sense of community because in attendance were town hall employees and police officers in addition to district faculty and staff. She said Convocation was fantastic and the energy was contagious.
  - She said Mr. Van Tasel, Mr. Blain and she will be meeting with a number of high school students who have expressed interest in being a student representative on the Board of Education. She hoped to have the students selected by the first meeting in October.
  - Ms. Mercik Davis said the town will be celebrating its 350th anniversary next year. There is a fundraiser being held and she has tickets if any Board member would like to purchase one.
- Business Manager's Report
  - Mr. Hoff said the school year is off to great start. He thanked Mary Poit for her help in compiling the state financial report. He noted the teamwork that took place in Central Office to complete hiring and getting all the paperwork in place for a successful first

payroll last week. He thanked Eileen Cybulski, Mary Poit, Kathy Carney and Laura Guerrette.

- Mr. Hoff also acknowledged Jackie at M&J for her hard work, especially accommodating almost 300 bus changes in a short time. He added the bus drivers have been great as well. Mr. Hoff said the food service department is fully staffed and off to a great start.
- Mr. Hoff said Eversource has a project proposal for the district and this proposal will be discussed at the September 26 Finance subcommittee meeting and then be brought to the full Board for review.
- In response to a Board member's questions, Mr. Hoff said pay to park refunds were processed very quickly. The Board made the decision on a Monday night and all refund checks were in the mail by that Wednesday. He thanked Mary Poit and Jamie Neilson for their hard work and quick turnaround.

### Consent Agenda

**MOTION #20-12:** Mol moved, Drzyzga seconded to approve the consent agenda item: approval of the regular meeting minutes of August 19, 2019. All members voted in favor. The motion carried 8-0.

### Discussion/Action Item

- **Staffing Report Planning**

The Superintendent reviewed the reports that have been presented to the Board in the past. The purpose of this discussion was to understand what Board members would like to see in this report. In referencing the retention report, he discussed the categories for why people leave and that these categories can be subjective. He used the advancement reason as an example. A lateral move could be a potential advancement opportunity and not necessarily a personal reason. Board member Dudack appreciated the effort in trying to categorize the reasons people leave but preferred to see the total attrition, migration and retention data. In response to a Board member's question, Mr. Van Tassel said the current process for exit interviews is conducted by the building administration, however, that could be conducted by Central Office. Board member Drzyzga also said she would like to see the total numbers in the retention report. Board member Sattan said she is looking for patterns so the total numbers is what she is interested in being reported. Board Chair Mercik Davis said the retention report was first created due to distrust in the district. She added that losing 20 teachers each year is not good, but the Board should rely on the administration to share that information. Mr. Van Tassel then reviewed the current way the total attrition/migration is represented by school which is somewhat misleading because the breakout by school should be compared to the total number of teachers in each school versus a comparison of the data set. Many Board members said they would like to see the breakout further by departments and disciplines. Board member Fry said that there is nothing notable when looking at each school as a whole, but if you break it down more, it may reveal noticeable trends. Mr. Van Tassel said that this much turnover in the district is worth looking into further. He summarized what the Board would like to see in the retention report: total attrition, migration and retention columns, data by school, departments and subject areas and a graphic to represent these data points.

- **Class Size and Staff Accounting Report Planning**

Superintendent Van Tassel reviewed the current format of the Class Size report that has been given to the Board over the last few years, and he asked the Board how they would like the information presented. Many Board members said they would prefer receiving more general

information such as giving the mean, median and range of class sizes. Board member Dudack said she finds the breakout by grade/subject helpful in finding disparities and helps to make informed decisions. Board member Sattan said it is helpful to break out the high school data by teacher but the other schools could be more general averages.

- **Suffield Middle School Teaming Workshop Planning**  
Board Chair Mercik Davis said this discussion will help the administration team focus on what the Board would like to hear relative to the middle school team model. Ms. Zawawi said Superintendent Van Tasel, Principal Ken Smith, Assistant Principal Gina Olearczyk, and she met to plan what information they wanted to present to the Board. Ms. Zawawi presented an outline of topics they would like to prepare so the Board can see the model more clearly, breaking out the special education schedule, specials, unified arts and the vision of where the middle school is going. Board member Mol asked for data comparing student/teacher ratio of other districts and how other district's middle school schedules are constructed. Ms. Zawawi said they spoke to 12 other districts to inquire as to whether they had a teaming model or not. She could ask for this information as well. Board members asked for an explanation in the change to a six day rotation as well as benefits and the impact on meeting IEP service hours. They also would like information on the structure of the eighth grade ELA program and implications of staffing which will inform the Board during the budget process. Board members would also like information on homeroom occurring at the end of the day, the continuity of students being assigned to the same team throughout middle school, the challenges of the teaming model and declining enrollment, information about the special education service model, and the use of chromebooks in addition to textbooks.
- **Board of Education Meeting Venue**  
Superintendent Van Tasel asked the Board if they would like to continue holding board meetings in the middle school or move to the high school media center, which is a brighter, smaller venue. The only issue is not having the same video set up as is in the middle school auditorium which is not mobile and is used for productions and other town meetings that are live streamed. There will be the capability to tape and live stream the meetings from the high school but not at the same level as is in the middle school auditorium. Several Board members said they prefer the high school as it is a more relaxed and intimate setting. Board member Dudack expressed concern over new technology being used versus the tested and successful technology at the middle school. She said live streaming is important and it should be tested before the Board makes a decision to move its meetings to the high school. Mr. Van Tasel noted the livestreaming viewership is very low, typically three or four people watch a meeting. However, he noted livestreaming will continue at the high school if the Board chooses to hold its meetings there. Board Chair Mercik Davis added that it may be possible to have the high school students who are enrolled in the video production class to tape the meetings.
- **July 2019 Financial Report**  
Mr. Hoff did not present a formal report as most budget accounts are projections in July. He said there is a \$236,000 turnover savings; \$185,000 was budgeted. He said a few line items are of concern; the phone expense is \$18,000 more than projected and gas and electric expenses are \$126,000 more than budgeted. Mr. Van Tasel noted that because of the age of many of the district's buildings, some of the systems may be at the end of their life spans.

Upgrading is costly but we may get some of these recommendations from the Eversource proposal.

- Approval of the Tentative Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Suffield Board of Education and the Food Service Union – UE Local 22, CILU #38  
Mr. Van Tassel said the board held an executive session in September as it relates to this union agreement and the agreement has since been ratified by its general membership.  
**MOTION #20-130.:** Mol moved to approve the Tentative Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Suffield Board of Education and the Food Service Union – UE Local 22, CILU #38. Dudack seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion carried 8-0.

#### Subcommittee Reports

None

#### Future Business

- Department Head Stipends – Superintendent Van Tassel said the positions were posted, interviews held and the majority have been filled. Board Chair Mercik Davis asked for a list of the department heads and an end of year update on how these positions enhanced the schools.
- Foodshare program – Mr. Hoff said Ben Gashi is working on setting up the program
- Organizational Chart - October meeting

#### Adjournment

Service moved, Richter seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:46 p.m.

*Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of October 7, 2019.*

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Dudack  
Secretary