

Board of Education Regular Meeting  
October 7, 2019

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:38 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, Brian Fry, Michael Sepko, and Debra Dudack; Superintendent Timothy Van Tassel, Assistant Superintendent Michelle Zawawi, Business Manager Bill Hoff, SHS Student Representatives Akshita Jindal and Abigail Sperrazza, and First Selectwoman Melissa Mack

Absent: Matt Service

Recognition

None

Suffield High School Student Representatives

Board Chair Mercik Davis introduced and welcomed this year's Suffield High School student representatives Akshita Jindal and Abigail Sperrazza. Mr. Blain explained the process for selecting the student representatives and said all the students who were interviewed were excellent candidates. Abby highlighted events going on at the high school and middle school. Some events included a Halloween event for children hosted by SHS and proceeds will go to a charity; the National Honor Society induction ceremony is October 24; Agriscience won the landscaping competition at the Big E; senior night for fall athletics will be happening soon; PSATs and senior photos are occurring on October 26; homecoming is November 9; Suffield Middle School held its Back to School Bash on September 27; and over 50 eighth grade girls attended a STEM field trip at UCONN. Akshita updated the Board on events at Spaulding and McAlister. The Suffield Garden Club is partnering with Spaulding School to improve the school's atriums. McAlister students and families read the book, *Wish Tree*, over the summer and families sent in wishes to create their own wish tree outside of the school.

Public Comment

Karen Carpenter Snow, MIS principal and Suffield resident, said due to the efforts of Denise Raymond, a McAlister teacher, First Selectwoman Melissa Mack and other town officials, a multi-use trail connecting all four schools has been approved. She thanked Ms. Mack for her partnership and efforts to make this happen. Ms. Mack said the town applied and was awarded the grant in 2016. The approval was delayed by the State DOT in reviewing plans and we were awaiting definitive State funding in the form of a state bond issuance. The State finally awarded commitment to fund two weeks ago. The project is expected to begin this spring and be completed by October 2020.

Presentations

- Schools in the Spotlight - STEM Program at McAlister Intermediate School  
Ms. Zawawi thanked all the teachers and parents who came to support their students this evening and for bringing the presentation tonight. She introduced STEM curriculum coach, Shannon Inero and Library Media Specialist, Karen Pakula. Ms. Inero explained the

disciplines of STEM and what STEM is and how it is being taught to students. She showed a video that explained the design thinking framework. McAlister students Arnav and Shaunak Ukidwe explained what STEM stands for, the definition of each discipline and why it should be taught in school. Board members visited the students' STEM displays.

- Student Assessments

Ms. Zawawi presented the overview of the 2018-2019 student assessment data to the Board for STAR Math and Reading (Grades K-5), Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) (Grades 3-8), Next Generation of Science Standards (NGSS) (Grades 5,8,11), PSAT (Grades 8-11), SAT, and Advanced Placement courses. She said the STAR universal screening tool is given four times a year. She shared the percentage of students that met or exceeded the benchmark over the last three years in STAR Reading and Math. In response to a Board member's question relative to how we compare to other districts, Ms. Zawawi said it's not included in this presentation but she does have that information. Mr. Van Tassel noted that many districts use different universal screeners so comparing other districts' data could be skewed. Board members asked questions around the trends in data in each grade. Ms. Zawawi next reviewed SBAC ELA and Math results from last year comparing grades 3-8 to state results, and the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the benchmark for the last three years in the district. Mr. Van Tassel said SBAC results state-wide have not shown significant student growth. Ms. Zawawi reviewed the ELA and Math SBAC cohort analysis for students meeting or exceeding the benchmark from 2015-2019. In response to a Board member's questions, Mr. Van Tassel said scale scores are given to track student growth year over year. Ms. Zawawi next reviewed PSAT results for grades 8-11. In response to a Board member's question regarding limited growth in PSATs across cohorts, Mr. Blain said the team is looking at the curriculum to make sure it's aligned and students are exposed to specific curriculum before taking the test. Ms. Zawawi reviewed the SAT results for the class of 2018 and 2019 which compared Suffield's results to the state and national results. She also shared information on Advanced Placement courses for last school year. Ms. Zawawi reviewed next steps, some of which include utilizing professional learning communities, vertical department meetings, Teachers College Readers/Writers workshop, monitor programs for fidelity and continuous training for teachers, professional development for all, and implementing effective Tier I instructional strategies and monitor curriculum implementation and data analysis.

### Reports to the Board

- Superintendent's Report

- Mr. Van Tassel welcomed SHS student representatives, Abby and Akshita, to the Board.
- He said a communication went home to families notifying them of an administrator staff change. Ms. Olearczyk, Suffield Middle School Principal, and Dianna Kolodziej, Elementary Special Education Supervisor, will assume each other's roles on October 21, and he is looking forward to working with them in their new roles.
- Superintendent Van Tassel thanked families and staff for attending the Listen and Learn events and appreciates the feedback he has received from these events.
- The Board retreat will be on October 16 at 6:30pm.
- Mr. Van Tassel thanked First Selectwoman Mack for her partnership and collaboration in dealing with the EEE concerns over the last few weeks. He and Ms. Mack have been in communication with the State Department of Public Health and the North Central District Health Department (NCDHD). He said the state and regional health departments advised

- precautionary measures for another week. Ms. Mack noted their frustration over the lack of initial information coming from the NCDHD.
- Mr. Van Tasel said he will be conducting CIP walk-throughs with the Board on Saturday October 26th and he will invite members of the ACCE committee to join.
  - Superintendent Van Tasel thanked administrators and teachers for the time and effort put in to their open houses.
  - Mr. Van Tasel said he is working on Phase III of his entry plan which focuses on communications and relationship-building, which is being done through meetings and phone calls with families and town officials, coffee hours, and Listen and Learn events.
- Board Chair's Report
    - Board Chair Mercik Davis said she enjoyed interviewing all the high school students who were interested in serving as the student board representatives and wished they could all participate.
    - She commended Mr. Van Tasel for his open communication with families and community members and said it is a first step in improving connections and creating true partnerships. She thanked the administration and Board members who attended the Listen and Learn events and open houses.
    - Ms. Mercik Davis said the Board received a note of appreciation from the Kent Memorial Library staff for the Board's donation of a gift basket for a fundraiser the library was holding this past summer.
    - Board Chair Mercik Davis asked Board members to submit any questions or comments they have for the upcoming social emotional workshop to the Superintendent. Ms. Zawawi shared an outline they intend to share.
  - Business Manager's Report
    - Mr. Hoff said the auditors were in last week and the district will receive a report in December.
    - He said the fall walking challenge is underway which was coordinated by Kathy Carney and Karen Ziemba.
    - Mr. Hoff said the creation of a sharing table is making progress and there is a new salad bar at the high school.
  - First Selectwoman's Report
    - Ms. Mack said the combining of the town and district Technology departments has been a great success and she thanked the Board for its support. The Technology department is currently analyzing several items to reduce redundancies and costs for both the town and district, including recommending a district/town shared server solution, a joint cyber-security response plan and holding budget meetings with all departments. She added that Kent Memorial Library owes Ms. Osleger and the Technology staff a debt of gratitude for their advocacy for technology improvements in the library. The Technology department is also helping to plan for the town hall renovation and technology needs in its temporary locations.
    - First Selectwoman Mack said another collaboration initiative with the district is instituting a time and attendance system which will provide a more accountable, efficient and reliable way to track employee time for payroll and other purposes.
    - Ms. Mack noted the 2019 election is fast approaching. The Town Registrars held a student voter registration session at the high school on October 1 and registered six students. They will hold another session before the April 2020 presidential primary. She is also working with the district to schedule an election day emergency planning meeting to discuss logistics if a polling place goes down on election day.

- Ms. Mack said Suffield is part of the Bradley Development League along with East Granby, Windsor and Windsor Locks. The purpose of the league is to promote economic development in the area and is focusing on manufacturing. An event called the Aerospace Alley Future Workforce Opportunities Fair is occurring in November. Windsor Federal Savings Bank has offered to cover the cost to bus students to the event. Efforts are underway to make arrangements to bus students from all four towns.

#### Consent Agenda

**MOTION #20-14:** Mol moved to approve the following on the consent agenda:

- A. Approval of Minutes – August 29, 2019 Special Meeting
- B. Approval of Minutes – September 3, 2019 Regular Meeting
- C. Approval of Minutes – September 16, 2019 Regular Meeting
- D. Approval of Revisions to the following policies/bylaws: #9271 – Code of Ethics; #9325 – Meeting Conduct; and #9325.2 – Order of Business
- E. Approval of Suffield Middle School Field Trip Request – Quebec City, Canada – May 1-4, 2020
- F. Approval of Suffield High School Field Trip Request – Paris, France – February 10 -19, 2020

***Mercik Davis left at 8:51pm, returned 8:52pm***

Dudack seconded the motion. In response to a Board member's question relative to if the trip was open to all students, Mr. Smith said this trip is for eighth grade students taking French but a separate trip is being planned to New York City for eighth grade students taking Spanish. Also eighth grade students not enrolled in a world language class will be able to attend one of the trips as well. All members voted in favor. The motion carried 8-0.

#### Discussion/Action Items

- Staffing/Retention Report  
The staffing and retention report was presented which showed the overall attrition, migration and retention data for the last four years. The data was also broken out by school and discipline for the same time frame. The last set of data showed internal migration for the last four years as well.

***Zawawi left at 9:04pm, returned 9:08pm***

***Richter left at 9:05pm***

- August Financial Report  
Mr. Hoff said the projected year end shows a surplus of \$139,040, which is less than 0.4% of the budget. All line items other than salaries are projected at the budgeted or actual amount with the exception of professional development, electricity and gas. Since this report the district has received the Title I and II grants. The district will have a better projection for special education tuition and health insurance in September.
- Organizational Chart  
Mr. Van Tassel distributed the district's organizational chart which was requested by Board members. Mr. Van Tassel said it gives a broad overview of how the district is organized and the reporting structure. He reviewed the specific positions and the reporting structure. In

response to a board member's question, Mr Van Tasel said assistant principals do share the responsibility of evaluating teachers.

- Discussion and Possible Action on Establishing the 2020 Suffield High School Graduation Date

Mr. Van Tasel read the legislative update which changes the law on when Boards of Education can set the graduation date. The bill now allows Boards of Education to establish the graduation date any time in the school year but cannot set the date any earlier than the 180<sup>th</sup> day of school in the established school calendar. He added some districts have established the graduation date already for this school year and other districts are waiting. In response to a Board member's question, Mr. Van Tasel said if a date is established and there are more snow days past the established date, students would not officially graduate until the 180<sup>th</sup> day of school and the expectation would be for students to return after graduation. The Board discussed holding graduation on June 13 or June 20, the impact of additional snow days, the ability to set the date but then change it if there are a significant amount of snow days, and the possibility of forgiving student days. Board members decided to wait until February or March to set a firm graduation date. This item will be put on the February Board agenda.

- Approval of the 2020 Board of Education Meeting Dates  
**MOTION #20-15:** Sepko moved, Mol seconded to approve the 2020 Board of Education meeting dates as presented. All members voted in favor. The motion carried 7-0.

- Approval of the Eversource Lighting Project

Mr. Hoff said Eversource completed a project at the high school in the summer of 2012 at a cost of \$487,583 to the district and that promised significant electricity savings. The district never realized the savings promised and in November of 2015 asked for a refund and forgiveness of the \$72,795 balance. Eversource is now proposing a new project to install 1,283 LED light fixtures at the high school, with a projected savings of approximately 145 kilowatt hours; and retro-commissioning work at the middle and high schools. The net cost to the district is \$25,897. Eversource will also forgive the \$72,795 balance on the original loan. The new loan will be paid back over four years.

**MOTION #20-16:** Mol moved, Fry seconded the motion to approve the Eversource lighting project. All members voted in favor except Mr. Sepko, who abstained. The motion carried 6-0-1.

#### Subcommittee Reports

- September 9 & October 1, 2019 Policy Subcommittee Meetings – Board member Dudack said the following policies are being placed on a 30-day read: Policy #5144.4 – Physical Exercise and Discipline of Students; Policy #5145.511 – Sexual Abuse Prevention Program; Policy #6146 – Graduation Requirements; Policy#6146.1 – Grading/Assessment System; Policy #6171.2 – Preschool Students with Disabilities; Policy #6172 – Alternate Education Programs; and Bylaw #9230 – New Board Member Orientation.
- September 16, 2019 Curriculum & Instruction Subcommittee Meeting - Board member Drzyzga said the committee set its meeting dates for the year, discussed future agenda items, social emotional screenings, and the portrait of the graduate.

- October 3, 2019 Finance, Facilities, Negotiations Subcommittee Meeting - Board member Sepko said committee members discussed stipends and their structures and the budget process. He and Superintendent Van Tassel met with Board of Finance members Ryan Anderson and John Sullivan to discuss expectations of the budget process. Board of Finance member Brian Kost will serve as the Board of Finance liaison. Mr. Sepko added that the administrator negotiations are underway with meetings set for October 10, 15, November 5 and 14.

Future Business

None

Adjournment

Dudack moved, Drzyzga seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:42 p.m.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Dudack  
Secretary