

Board of Education Regular Meeting
November 4, 2019

Call to Order

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

Present: Board members Susan Mercik Davis, Maureen Sattan, Jamie Drzyzga, James Mol, Brian Fry, Matt Service, John Richter, Michael Sepko, and Debra Dudack; SHS Student Representatives Abigail Sperrazza and Akshita Jindal; and Superintendent Timothy Van Tassel, Assistant Superintendent Michelle Zawawi, Business Manager Bill Hoff

Absent: None

Recognition

Schools in the Spotlight

- CAPSS Student Recognition Award Recipients
Anna Washburn and Kati Davis were recognized for being selected as this year's CAPSS Student Recognition Award recipients. Mr. Smith and Mr. Blain spoke about Anna's and Kati's involvement in school, character traits, and leadership abilities that led to them being selected for this award.
- Responsive Classroom
Ms. Zawawi introduced Ms. Goldstein and Ms. Popeleski who are certified Responsive Classroom teachers and were present tonight along with six McAlister students to demonstrate how Responsive Classroom is incorporated into the classroom. The students ran a morning meeting and invited Board members to participate.
- Board Recognitions
Board Chair Mercik Davis recognized the outgoing Board members: Matt Service and John Richter, and she thanked them for their expertise and service. She presented each of them with a gift.

Suffield High School Student Representatives

Abby Sperrazza gave an update to the Board on events at Suffield High School and Suffield Middle School: she congratulated Kati and Anna on their awards; homecoming is this week at Suffield High, culminating with a dance on Saturday; spirit week started today with a different theme every day; Halloween was a success with many participating; the FFA convention was held last week in Indianapolis and the Suffield team came in 25th in the nation in the poultry division; state tournaments for fall sports are underway; and performances of the fall play, *BFF*, is December 5, 6, & 7. At Suffield Middle School, the boys and girls Cross Country teams competed this past weekend and placed first and second, respectively; this Thursday a guest speaker, David Flood, will be at the middle school to talk to students about respect and resiliency, as well as holding an evening event; and next Tuesday the seventh and eighth graders will be taking the PSATs.

Akshita Jindal gave an update on events at Spaulding and McAlister schools. Spaulding held its first STAR assembly of the year, which focused on kindness; 47 students were nominated for kindness awards. McAlister students participated in the Final Mile at Rentschler Field last week.

Public Comment

None

Board Member Comment

Ms. Dudack explained the new agenda format which fosters more public engagement at board meetings including two public comments and two board member comments. Ms. Dudack said she attended some of the Listen and Learn events and found them very informative. She also reminded everyone to vote tomorrow.

Reports to the Board

- Superintendent's Report
 - Mr. Van Tassel congratulated the CAPSS student award recipients, Anna Washburn and Kati Davis.
 - Election Day tomorrow is a professional development day for teachers.
 - School conferences will be held at Suffield High and Suffield Middle schools on November 13, 14 and 15; and elementary conferences will be held on November 20, 21 and 22.
 - With winter weather in the forecast this week, Mr. Van Tassel encouraged parents to review the emergency protocols on the district website under the Emergency tab.
 - School administrators, Board of Education members, Board of Finance members, ACCE members and First Selectwoman Melissa Mack attended the school building walk-throughs on October 26 as part of the Capital Improvement Plan and the start of a long-range facilities needs assessment. Mr. Van Tassel will be meeting with the Town Planner and Ms. Mack later this week.
 - The November Board of Education workshop topic will be special education programming and EASTCONN will present its findings and proposals for special education in the district.
 - Risk assessment walk-throughs have been completed by the Suffield Police Department. Mr. Van Tassel thanked Officer Kieselback, Captain Canon and Lieutenant Burrell for conducting the risk assessments. These assessments are required every two years and are a part of the district's Safety and Security Plan. The Safety and Security Plan has been submitted to the State as is required each year by November 15. Mr. Van Tassel said if there are proposals to enhance safety measures within the schools as a result of the risk assessment, these discussions with the Board will take place in executive session.
 - Mr. Van Tassel congratulated the FFA students on placing 25th in the poultry division at this year's convention. He said 18 Suffield students attended, and over 70,000 students across the country attended.
 - He also congratulated the Suffield Middle School Cross Country teams for the boys winning states and the girls placing second.
- Board Chair's Report
 - Board Chair Mercik Davis thanked the administrators, Board of Education members, ACCE members, Board of Finance members and Ms. Mack for participating in the school walk-throughs on October 26.
 - She has attended all of the Listen and Learn events and believes these events have enhanced communication with parents, staff and community members.
 - She said she has received positive correspondence from community members about seeing board members and administrators at many events in town.
 - She congratulated the athletic teams mentioned this evening and the FFA students. She added she enjoys watching sporting events under the lights.

- Business Manager's Report
 - Mr. Hoff said the school food service department will provide food for poll workers during tomorrow's election at Suffield Middle School.
 - Mr. Hoff said many streets were closed last Friday due to storm damage but it was a great team effort to get all students home safely.
- Board of Selectmen Liaison's Report
 - None
- Board of Finance Liaison's Report
 - None

Approval of Minutes

Mol moved, Richter seconded to approve the minutes of October 3, 2019; October 7, 2019; October 16, 2019; October 21, 2019 and October 26, 2019. All members voted in favor. The motion carried 9-0.

Consent Agenda

None

Discussion/Action Items

- 2019-2020 Class Size and Staffing Report
Mr. Van Tassel presented the Class Size and Staffing report. This report is utilized during the budget process in regards to staffing, course offerings, and class sizes. He said the Board policy does not reflect recommended class sizes; however there are contractual agreements that do denote class sizes, and this topic can be discussed during upcoming budget discussions. Mr. Van Tassel said he has used the Class Size report in all of his budget meetings with administrators to look at class sizes and offerings. He said providing a variety of offerings to our students sometimes results in smaller class sizes. Board members questioned why not all students were in core classes at the middle school. Mr. Smith said some special education students are getting those classes in the special education resource room. The challenge is some students have high service hours each week required in their Individual Education Programs and those hours have to be fit in somewhere. The administration is looking at changing the model to more of a push-in model. With a more inclusive model, there will be a smaller number of students who will require pull-out services. Board members and the administration discussed course offerings at the high school and adding counselors and social workers to address social emotional learning. Mr. Blain said seven new courses are being proposed for next school year.
- September Financial Report
Mr. Hoff said the projected year end surplus is \$1,341 but there is an Open Choice surplus to offset unexpected expenses. All grants funds have been received for 2019-2020 and were included in the report.

Subcommittee Reports

- October 21, 2019 Curriculum and Instruction subcommittee meeting – Board member Drzyzga said the committee discussed the virtual high school classes with Jim Blain and Patrick Brintle. The policy subcommittee will need to review and revise applicable policies relative to virtual high school courses.
- October 28, 2019 Policy subcommittee meeting – Board member Dudack said the following policies are being placed on a 30-day read. #1331 – Smoke Free Environment; #4118.231/4218.231 – Alcohol, Drugs, and Tobacco; #5131.6 – Drugs, Tobacco, Alcohol; #5131.911 – Bullying Prevention and Intention Policy; #6142.101 – Wellness; and #6172.6

– Virtual/Online Learning. She stated the first four policy revisions are due to changes in language from state law. The district wellness policy was revised to clarify classroom celebrations, and the virtual/online learning policy was revised to clarify language relative to virtual classes. Board members discussed provisions for medical marijuana and smoking cessation devices and school lunch times.

- October 31, 2019 Finance, Facilities and Negotiations subcommittee meeting – Board member Sepko said the committee discussed the negotiations process with the administrators group, the work of the Stipends committee with the SEA, and the budget process and planning.

Board Liaison Reports

- CREC – Board member Sattan said CREC is an advisory board that meets once a month. CREC runs the magnet schools, the Open Choice program and offers administrative services to districts. She said the major topic of discussion has been regarding the State not honoring its obligation to fund CREC. She also stated that Suffield was one of two districts noted as significantly decreasing its participation in the Open Choice program over the last three years. Mr. Van Tassel said he received notification from CREC that districts need to budget a 4% increase in magnet school tuition for next year due to lower State funding to CREC.
- Agriscience – Board member Mol said the Agriscience department is holding its eighth grade open house this Thursday at 6:30 p.m.
- CABE – Board member Drzyzga said the CABE/CAPSS convention is being held on November 15 and 16. There is also a new Board member workshop being offered on December 10.

Future Business

World Language Program Review

Public Comment

None

Board Member Comment

Board member Sattan said she appreciated all that she has learned from Mr. Richter and Mr. Service. Board member Richter said he has learned and experienced a lot in his time on the Board and was proud to serve on the Board. He encouraged the Board to recognize the progress that has been made in building relationships. He thanked the board, administrators, staff and teachers for their dedication to Suffield students. Most importantly he thanked his wife, Marie. Board member Service said it has been challenging and enjoyable to serve with everyone, and he has learned much in his time on the Board. He said serving on the Board requires a huge time commitment and much energy, but it was well worth it. He said the current Board represents diverse perspectives which are conducive to great discussions. He wished the Board well.

Adjournment

Richter moved, Service seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:27 p.m.

Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of December 2, 2019.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Dudack
Secretary