

Board of Education Regular Meeting  
March 2, 2020

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:31 p.m. in the Suffield High School Media Center. The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Board members Susan Mercik Davis, Jamie Drzyzga (arr. 6:32pm), Brian Fry, Glenn Gazdik (arr. 6:35pm), Scott Lingenfelter, Michael Sepko, Maureen Sattan, and Debra Dudack; and Superintendent Timothy Van Tassel, Assistant Superintendent Michelle Zawawi, Business Manager Bill Hoff; and SHS Student Representatives Abigail Sperrazza and Akshita Jindal

Absent: Melissa Finnigan

Recognition

- Schools in the Spotlight - Board of Education Appreciation  
In recognition of Board of Education Appreciation Month, Spaulding music teacher, Wyn Jespersen and several second graders sang a few songs for Board members. Also, Ms. Sewall, Secondary Speech and Language Pathologist, and high school students Krystopher Lavoie and Jakob Potter, who are a part of the SHS Coffee Cart service, served coffee and tea to Board members. Mr. Blain gave a brief background of the Coffee Cart service and Ms. Sewall explained that the Coffee Cart business is student-run and part of the life skills class. Students are responsible for inventory, purchasing, online order management, billing, and delivery of the beverages. The students introduced themselves and spoke about their involvement in the program.  
Mr. Blain introduced Anna Blakely, who has started a water bottle business at the high school and is using the manufacturing classroom to engrave the water bottles. After Ms. Blakely presented the idea to Mr. Blain, she developed a business plan and presented her plan to Mr. Blain, Superintendent Van Tassel and Mr. Hoff. Teachers Ms. McCluskey, Mr. Sanchez and Mr. Dudeck have helped Anna with design, manufacturing and business planning. Ms. Blakely presented an engraved water bottle to each Board member. Mr. Blain announced that Ms. Blakely has been awarded the Women of Innovation Award.
- Schools in the Spotlight - SHS Wrestling Team  
Mr. Blain introduced the wrestling team and their coaches who were present to be recognized for winning the Class M State Championship. In addition, eight wrestlers qualified for the semi-finals. Mr. Bosworth thanked the coaches, Matt Mangelli and Bill Taggart for the countless hours they have put in during the season. The coaches said they have had an amazing season and teammates have supported one another.

Suffield High School Student Representatives

Ms. Sperrazza updated the Board on happenings at Suffield High School, including SHS students visited Spaulding today to read to students for Read Across America Day and the spring musical Sound of Music, is in two weeks. At Suffield Middle School, spirit week is being held this week, culminating in a student/faculty game on Friday at SHS, and the production of Peter Pan, Jr. was very successful and involved over 75 students and 10 staff.

Ms. Jinal updated the Board on happenings at McAlister School and Spaulding School, including Spaulding Read Across America Day on March 2<sup>nd</sup> and second grade traditions is occurring next Monday where students will go bowling. McAlister is holding spirit week for Read Across America Day, and they have started the sharing table during lunch.

#### Public Comment

Anthony Monaco, 17 Woodworth Street, expressed concerns over the recent revisions made to the parent involvement policy by the Policy subcommittee. The added language is contradictory to existing language in the policy. He also questioned why there could not be two parent PowerSchool accounts for a student to accommodate nontraditional families. Board Chair Mercik Davis said the Policy subcommittee will review the policy again to clarify the language. Superintendent Van Tassel added that he will extend an invitation to Mr. Monaco to attend that subcommittee meeting. Mr. Monaco asked if there is a policy on FERPA requests. Board Chair Mercik Davis answered in the affirmative and directed him where to find the policy on the district website.

#### Board Member Comment

None

#### Reports to the Board

- Superintendent's Report
  - Mr. Van Tassel said a second notification regarding Coronavirus was sent out last week to families and the community. The district's Pandemic Plan was reviewed and revised in conjunction with town emergency management officials. There has also been an increased level of cleaning in the classrooms.
  - Superintendent Van Tassel said the high school debate team won the exhibition round of their debate.
  - Mr. Van Tassel congratulated all middle school students and teacher coordinators for the successful Peter Pan, Jr. drama production.
  - The ASTE review at the high school is taking place this week. He will share the audit information with the Board once the district receives it.
  - The administration and several Board members have attended two meetings with town boards relative to the district's capital requests. Another meeting with the Board of Selectmen is this Wednesday. Mr. Van Tassel thanked Board members for attending these meetings. The Town is considering conducting a long-range facilities study, which will take six to twelve months.
- Board Chair's Report
  - Board Chair Mercik Davis recognized the students and staff involved in the Peter Pan Jr. production, and noted the high school musical, The Sound of Music is March 12-14.
  - The Board held a retreat on February 20. The main topic was relative to roles and responsibilities of Board members and the Superintendent.
  - She attended CAFE's Board Chair Roundtable last week. The topics discussed were managing decreased enrollment, shared services, unfunded mandates, vaccinations, and the Coronavirus.
- Business Manager's Report - None
- Board of Selectmen Liaison's Report - None
- Board of Finance Liaison's Report - None

### Approval of Minutes

**MOTION #20-47:** Lingenfelter moved to approve the February 3, 2020 meeting minutes, Drzyzga seconded the motion and all members voted in favor, except Sattan who abstained. The motion carried 7-0-1.

### Consent Agenda

**MOTION #20-48:** Lingenfelter moved to approve the following items on the consent agenda:

- A. Approval of Policy #6159 - IEP/Special Education Program; Policy #6146 - Graduation Requirements; Policy #0200 - Goals and Objectives; and Bylaw #9130 - Committees
- B. SHS Robotics Field Trip Request to Detroit, MI - April 28-May 3, 2020.

Fry seconded the motion. Mr. Van Tassel said there have been recent legislative updates which affect Policy #6159, specifically the timeframe to conduct initial evaluations of students now must be within 45 days of receiving written parental consent, not 60 days. The Board decided to approve the proposed changes to the policy and revisit this policy at the next subcommittee meeting to make that change. All members voted in favor of approving the consent agenda. The motion carried 8-0.

### Discussion/Action Items

- January 2020 Financial Report

Mr. Hoff said the end of year net surplus is \$12,190. He noted that since this report was written, the district has been notified by the state that the excess cost reimbursement rate will be 74.8%. The final request for reimbursement will be received in May. Mr. Hoff noted the negative balance in athletics under purchased services of approximately \$29,000 is due to removing pay-to-participate. There were no significant changes to grants this month. The Sharing Table is now at all of the schools.

*Lingenfelter left at 7:44, returned 7:46 p.m.*

*Ms. Sperrazza and Ms. Jindal left the meeting at 7:43 p.m.*

- Discussion and Possible Approval of the 2020-2021 School Calendar

Board Chair Mercik Davis said the school calendar was presented to the Board in February and discussions revolved around teacher conferences. Mr. Van Tassel said the calendar committee created two calendar proposals; however, the calendar the committee preferred was not presented to the Board because it was in violation of the teacher's contract in regards to after school hours relative to parent/teacher conferences. Superintendent Van Tassel thanked the teachers' union for agreeing to the calendar that is being presented tonight, which is the primary calendar the committee selected. Ms. Zawawi said the difference between the first calendar proposed and tonight's calendar, is the parent/teacher conferences schedule. There will now be one evening and two day conferences both in the fall and the spring per school instead of all evening conferences presented in the first calendar. All other calendar details remain the same.

**MOTION #20-49:** Sepko moved to approve the school calendar as proposed. Drzyzga seconded the motion. Board Chair Mercik Davis proposed the Board discuss and vote on a three-hour delay schedule and setting next year's graduation date as part of approving the school calendar. Board members discussed their reasons in support or against the three-hour delay and setting the graduation date now. All Board members, except for Board member Sattan, were in favor of setting the 2021 graduation date now for June 12, 2021. Board members Dudack, Drzyzga, Gazdik, Fry, and Sepko were in favor of having a three-hour delay option when need

for inclement weather. Sattan, Lingenfelter and Mercik Davis were not in favor of a three-hour delay option.

Sepko amended the original motion to approve the calendar as presented and establish the high school graduation date as June 12, 2021, and add a three-hour delay option to the calendar. Fry seconded the amended motion and Sepko, Fry, Drzyzga, Gazdik and Dudack voted in favor. Sattan, Lingenfelter and Mercik Davis voted against. The motion carried 5 to 3.

*Sattan left at 8:08pm, returned at 8:14 p.m.*

*Dudack left at 8:12, returned at 8:14 p.m.*

- Discussion and Possible Action on the 2020-2021 Proposed Budget

Superintendent Van Tasel said the Finance subcommittee met and created a cumulative list and potential adjustments to the budget based on Board member questions and discussions. The current budget request is a 2.64% increase compared to the original request of a 2.71% increase. The difference is mainly a result in salary changes due to retirements and tuition expenses. In response to questions relative to offering a summer school program, Ms. Zawawi shared a proposal she developed for summer school programming at Spaulding, McAlister and Suffield Middle School. Each program will run four weeks during the month of July, Monday through Thursday, in the morning with exact times still to be determined. The total cost of summer school will be \$16,000, which will include certified and non-certified staffing.

*Sattan left the meeting at 8:15 p.m.*

Ms. Zawawi said approximately 10 -12 students from each of the elementary schools will be invited. She shared the criteria for identifying the students. She also noted attendance will be monitored as that has been a concern in past years. The summer school program will be structured differently at the middle school; it will be a credit recovery program. Students who have failed math or ELA for the year will be expected to attend summer school in order to pass the course and advance to the next grade level. Ms. Zawawi estimated that 10-15 students would qualify. Mr. Van Tasel reviewed the pros and risks of offering the summer school program. Mr. Van Tasel noted if the Board approves the summer school program, a policy will need to be developed as the district does not have a policy on summer school credit recovery programming. The Board discussed how the credit recovery program will work and other logistics of all three programs. The Board discussed the list of possible additions and reductions to the budget that was presented by administration. All Board members were in favor of adding summer school, resulting in a budget request of 2.69%. All members, except Board member Fry, were in favor of eliminating the proposed new high school guidance counselor position, resulting in a 2.51% budget request. Mr. Van Tasel said he is comfortable reducing a STEM instructional specialist at the elementary level since there will be one STEM teachers at each elementary school and there is internal interest for these positions. All Board members were in favor of reducing one K-5 STEM instructional specialist. The administration and Board discussed eliminating a Humanities instructional specialist at the elementary level since there is currently a vacancy at McAlister for this position. This would result in one STEM and one Humanities elementary instructional specialist K-5 next year. With the elimination of these two positions, the result would be a 2.12% budget request.

**MOTION #20-50:** Dudack moved to approve the 2020-2021 Board of Education budget in the amount of 36,301,023, or a 2.12 % increase. This reflects adding summer school programming, eliminating the proposed new guidance counselor position at the high school, and eliminating one elementary STEM instructional specialist and one elementary Humanities instructional

specialist. Drzyzga seconded the motion. Board member Fry was concerned with eliminating the guidance position as one of the district's priorities is the social emotional wellbeing of students. Mr. Van Tassel said the district has a very strong social emotional support structure in place. The proposed guidance counselor position was going to focus on college and career planning and alleviate the case load of the guidance coordinator so he could focus on guidance 6-12. All members voted in favor of the motion. The motion carried 7-0. The Board of Education will now present its budget to the Board of Finance on March 23, 2020.

- Approval of Waiving Purchasing Policy #3320

Mr. Hoff explained the policy requires sealed bids for purchases above \$15,000. The four-year copier leasing proposal is for \$280,000. This is a group purchasing program with nine other area districts. The Office Works has been a great partner, providing quality copies and superior service.

**MOTION #20-51:** Lingenfelter moved to waive Purchasing Policy #3320. Fry seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion carried 7-0.

- EASTCONN Update

Ms. Kelley thanked the Board for their support. Dr. Stein and Dr. Jaffery, EASTCONN consultants, are meeting twice a month with the team, which has been productive and the staff is very engaged. The other two days of month the consultants meet with our BCBA's to define roles and responsibilities and provide staff training.

***Lingenfelter left the meeting at 9:10 p.m.***

#### Subcommittee Reports

- February 6, 2020 Policy Subcommittee Meeting - Board member Dudack said Policy #1110.1 – Parent Involvement; Policy #11820 – Memorials of Deceased Students and Staff and Bylaw #9120 – Board Officers are being placed on a 30 day read. In light of the public comment this evening, the subcommittee will revisit the Parent Involvement policy to clarify proposed changes.
- February 10 & February 27, 2020 Finance, Facilities, & Negotiations Subcommittee Meetings - Board member Sepko said the budget conversations tonight summarized what took place in these meetings. He thanked subcommittee members, Mr. Hoff and Mr. Van Tassel for their work on the budget.
- February 24 & March 2 - Community Engagement & PR Subcommittee Meeting - Board member Fry said the committee discussed the manner in which the committee will function and established its purpose, which is to inform the community of who the Board of Education is and its role. The committee will develop quarterly communications to be sent to families and the community. A draft budget flyer was developed by the Superintendent and reviewed by the committee and finalized at tonight's subcommittee meeting. Board members chose the hashtag, #SPSsmartspending, to be included in Board communications.

#### Board Liaison Reports

- CREC - None
- Agriscience – Board member Fry said the ASTE review is off to a positive start. Agriscience students forced 72 roses into bloom and had them on display at the Connecticut Rose Society event. Asnuntuck hosted an Agriscience summit which was attended by five of our students. On March 18, the Agriscience department will welcome the class of 2024, 24 new students

for an orientation. An Agriscience student brought her own pregnant pig to school and she had her piglets in the large animal facility.

- CAFE – Board member Drzyzga reminded Board members of CAEs Day on the Hill event on March 30; legislators will be in attendance and pending legislation impacting districts will be shared.

Future Business

None

Public Comment

None

Board Member Comment

None

Adjournment

Fry moved, Drzyzga seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:23 p.m.

*Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of April 7, 2020.*

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Sattan  
Secretary