

Frank Todisco, Board Chair called the regular meeting to order at 7:06 p.m. Members present in person were Heidi Simmons, Board Secretary, Alisa Morrison, Craig Esposito, Farouk Rajab, and Jack Morehouse. Member present virtually: Gordon Lord. Also present were Ana de Oliveira, Recording Secretary, Lily Haghpassand, Student Government Representative, Dr. Van Riley, Superintendent of Schools and members of the administrative staff.

Board Presentation

Academic Benchmark/Performance Data Part One – Frank Todisco, Chairman explained the presentations from each school on academic benchmarks data will be delivered in two parts, with the second part done at the next Board of Education meeting. Dr. Riley thanked the principals for putting the presentations together. We will be talking about performance data and in December will be looking at follow ups and strategies we are using to improve and where the Board can help our administrators move forward with our student success. Principals from each school gave an overview of reading and math data with comparisons from previous years to present. All presentations are attached to the minutes. The Board had a dialogue with the administration regarding the data comparisons, what attributes to the higher SAT scores, distance learning, distance learners with regards to testing, challenges in math throughout the district, parent frustrations with the hybrid model, lower enrollment numbers, parent access to information regarding Eureka math curriculum and how the district compares with neighboring districts benchmark math scores and what types of curriculum they are using and 504 and IEP student scores comparisons. Lily Haghpassand questioned if the high school has considered using Wednesdays for a five-day plan or to do other things and where the high school stands with that. Mr. Friese we are going to maintain the Wednesdays as is for now, there might be other opportunities moving forward. Lily Haghpassand asked principals if they have considered matching middle school students with high school students. She added it might help to have a peer and maybe in the future have a one to one. The principals noted they would take a look at that option. Gordon Lord questioned as we look to the budget season are there things administrators would have as an ask of the Board. The principals noted they will have those for the Board in December. Gordon Lord asked are other schools dealing with the same percentage drops, numbers are concerning. Dr. Riley noted we have had conversations on this and have a goal, this is where we want our students to be. In talking to other districts and the State they are talking about lowering the bar if they can't get there due to the pandemic. We can lower the bar for our students but we do not want to do that, we keep the standard and the level we want our students to succeed. We do what we can with additional assistance or with summer school but we are not going to lower the bar for our students.

Communications and Recognitions

Frank Todisco, Chairman noted he received three letters, one from Mr. John Turner, which was shared with the Board and will make it part of the record. He is sharing his concerns as it relates to the Timothy Chokas matter. Chairman Todisco noted he did have an opportunity to speak to Mr. Turner and told him it would be part of the record. He also received two from Mr. Ed Purcell that were also shared with the Board. Both letters were concerning the letter that was provided to the Board from Alexandra Kapell that he did not find on the website, it is now attached to the minutes of the appropriate meeting. His follow up letter was concerning comments related to sexting and wanted to make sure we were educating the kids appropriately as it is a Class A misdemeanor and what the punishment could be. (Communications attached) Heidi Simmons recognized the spirit and motivation of the high school girls' soccer and hockey teams and shared the newspaper headline "Stonington Rules". Jack Morehouse recognized the high school drama department who still put on a full production play the *Still Life of Iris*, and did a marvelous job. He added it was sad for them they did all that work only a handful of people attended due to restrictions. Mrs. Stanley voiced she did it for the kids and they enjoyed themselves, it was top notch performance as usual and congratulated the kids involved in the play. Farouk Rajab recognized the Stonington High School band for their small band ensemble play in Westerly on October 25th for the Sunday Fun Day, they did a fantastic job truly awarding to watch them play in public. He also recognized the Stonington Public Schools students for their resiliency in the age of COVID-19 and incredible work they have been doing. He knows some are struggling but some are doing very well and his very proud of them. He recognized the teachers for their adaptability, and commitment to our kids' safety health and education. He added if there was an award for communication he would give it to the administration. He is very appreciative of them, the administration they are fantastic in communicating with teachers. He added he is sure the families appreciate the constant communications. Gordon Lord acknowledged the boys' football team for being creative with the 7v7 league, the boys' soccer team had a great season and would have won another title if not cut short. He thanked everyone, administration and teachers who are doing a tremendous job.

Dr. Riley recognized Gloria Murray-DeBiasi, Health Service Coordinator and Allison Van Etten, Director of Special Services who have spent time working with Ledge Light on our COVID-19 issues. He recognized Tim Flanagan, middle school teacher for receiving the "Transatlantic Cooperation Prize". We were one of the seven German-US partnerships chosen for this award. Peter Anderson shared the new recognition program for the custodian and maintenance group. He explained every three months we award a person in the group. Jim Sousa who has been with the district since 1971 is the first recipient of this award. Kathy Irvine shared a video done by Claire a student at West Vine Street School who was one of the seven finalists in the State for the Connecticut Kid Governor award. The winner of the award will be announced on November 19th.

Comments from Citizens Relative to Items on the Agenda

There were no comments from citizens.

Consent Agenda

- A. Minutes – October 8, 2020
- B. Checks and Bills – October
- C. Personnel Report
- D. Policy 6172.4 – Parent and Family Engagement
- E. Policy 5117 – School Attendance Area

The following motion was made by Craig Esposito and seconded by Alisa Morrison:

Motion 1: To approve the consent agenda as presented A-E.

All: Aye

Monthly Reports

Jack Morehouse asked Dr. Riley if he had any idea or has there been a study along the way that will show when the numbers will level out in regards to the enrollment report, it seems like they just keep going down and down. Dr. Riley reported that every couple of months he updates a ten year projection and will be sharing that enrollment study with the Board.

Approval of Board of Education 2021 Meeting Calendar

The following motion was made by Farouk Rajab and seconded by Craig Esposito:

Motion 2: To approve the Regular Board of Education 2021 Meeting Calendar as presented.

All: Aye

Approval of Stonington Middle School Roof Specs and Estimate Cost – Farouk Rajab, chair of the Building Committee shared information regarding the roof project, specs and cost estimates.

Jack Morehouse asked about the warranty on the roof and specs. Farouk Rajab and Peter Anderson explained the warranty and specs of the roof. Craig Esposito asked about the reimbursement from the State. Peter Anderson answered it is 31% of the cost. Farouk Rajab noted there is also approximately \$500,000 in town reserve for this project.

The following motion was made by Farouk Rajab and seconded by Craig Esposito:

Motion 3: Move that the final plans and project manual(s) as prepared for bidding and dated October 16, 2020, and the professional cost estimate, completed in accordance with Level 3 of ASTM International Standard E1557, Standard Classification of Building Elements and Related Sitework-UNIFORMAT II for this project, dated October 16, 2020, have been reviewed and approved for this project on the dates shown above for this project on the dates shown above.

All: Aye

CIP Preview – Dr. Riley noted we usually present a preview to the Board of the CIP and shared the CIP summary and backup information for each item on the CIP list. We will come back in December for approval. The Board had no questions. Dr. Riley thanked Peter Anderson, Gary Shettle and Chris Williston for putting the CIP information together.

Superintendent's Report

Board Supports for Hybrid Model and DEI Work – Mary Anne Butler reviewed the work that has been done on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) in the district, supports needed from the Board for this issue and items that the administration would like the Board to assist faculty and staff in sustaining the hybrid/distance learning model. Heidi Simmons asked for more information regarding the senior class meeting with the Curriculum Specialists to discuss curriculum development. She also had questions on the VOICE activities at the high school. Mrs. Simmons commented how we as the Board can be better educated without micromanaging, is there a way we can participate. Mary Anne Butler suggested there be a Board Goal on inclusion and workshops and directed the Board and community to visit the DEI web page of the district. Mrs. Butler also asked the Board to support shifts in the hybrid model, direct parents to the teachers with questions and ask that they support a summer school program next year in the area of reading and math. Chairman Todisco asked if the Board would receive more details on the following bulleted items in the DEI update; 1) Publicly support proactive shifts in the use of time within the current schedule to support teaching and learning; 2) Publicly support proactive strategies to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus and maintain sufficient staffing for the hybrid model and celebrate the successes afforded by the current model, 3) Support funding of supplemental resources (teachers, paraeducators, supplemental resources) to provide support the optimum instruction under the current instructional model, 4) Refer parents and families to the appropriate classroom teacher or building administrator should they voice concerns or have questions, 5) Support a budget that will afford us to offer a robust 6 week summer school program for grades K-12 with transportation and supplemental instruction, especially in reading and mathematics during the 2021-22 school year. Dr. Riley noted the Board will receive more information at the December Board meeting.

COVID Costs Update

Dr. Riley shared his cost sheet of expenses related to COVID-19. We have added costs for a summer school program, added para help at the high school library for students that are falling behind. They costs will be covered by State COVID-19 money and money that was returned to the Town. Farouk Rajab had questions regarding the expenses and ending balance. Gary Shettle, Director of Finance explained the balance is affected by the encumbrances.

Discussion/Direction Regarding December Schedule

Dr. Riley explained the change in schedule. We are making a change having the two days after Thanksgiving be distance learning for all and the Wednesday which is already a distance learning day also. Dr. Riley commented on the affect and status of positive COVID-19 cases throughout the district. Dr. Riley explained Ledge Light had been doing all the contact tracing. All the administration and nurses participated in a zoom workshop on COVID-19 contact tracing, which is another responsibility we have. Heidi Simmons asked how the contact tracing is being done and if it is a committee. Dr. Riley explained with the athletics we are having the coaches help, but we monitor, nurses are also involved in all the work in the contact tracing.

Chromebook Insurance/Parent Square

Dr. Riley thanked Chris Williston for putting together the option for parents to purchase Chromebook insurance for \$25 and pay through parent square.

Jack Morehouse commented that a couple of child care facilities have shut down and how does this affect staff. We had discussions in the past on how we would help staff. Dr. Riley noted we were attempting to have a child care for staff here, but have worked that out with Beth Stewart at the COMO. There were only a few staff that asked and we told them to contact the COMO.

Dr. Riley reported to the Board that he receives a report each day of employees that are out and how many substitutes are needed. We have had in one day approximately 40 individuals out and there have been some we cannot fill. He added there are a number of districts that have closed because they could not cover staff. We will put a para in the classroom or an administrator to cover classes.

Items for Future Agendas

- A. Academic Benchmark/Performance Data – Part Two
- B. CIP Approval
- C. Food Service Department Report - December

Chairman Todisco noted all three items for future agendas will appear on the December Board agenda.

Board Comments/Concerns

There were no comments or concerns from the Board at this time.

Executive Closed Session - Superintendent's Evaluation

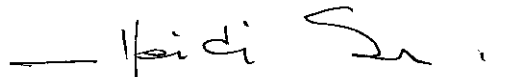
Chairman Todisco noted the Executive Closed Session for the Superintendent's Evaluation has been moved to Thursday, November 19th.

Adjournment

The following motion was made by Farouk Rajab and seconded by Alisa Morrison:

Motion 4: To adjourn at 9:14 p.m.

All: Aye


Heidi Simmons, Board Secretary