

Frank Todisco, Board Chairman called the regular meeting to order in the District Office Board of Education Meeting Room at 7:00p.m. Members present were Heidi Simmons, Board Secretary, Gordon Lord, Craig Esposito, and Jack Morehouse. Members Absent: Farouk Rajab and Alisa Morrison. Also present were Lily Haghpassand, Student Government Representative, Ana de Oliveira, Recording Secretary, Dr. Van Riley, Superintendent of Schools and the Administration Team.

Communications & Recognitions

Jack Morehouse recognized the drama department for a fantastic drama production. He added Dr. Riley also attended and several students were not able to perform so they will be having an extra night performance. He encouraged the Board to attend. Dr. Riley also congratulated the drama department for the drama production and noted the extra performance is scheduled for before Memorial Day.

US News and World Report - Dr. Riley presented the Board Chair, Frank Todisco with a plaque that will be hung at the Stonington High School recognizing the high school for their recent recognition by US News and World Report and he thanked the administrative team.

Dr. Blefeld Recognition – Dr. Riley read a resolution recognizing Dr. Blefeld for his forty years of service to Stonington Public Schools. The resolution read as follows:

A Resolution

The Board of Education of Stonington, Connecticut, at its regular meeting on May 13, 2021, adopted this resolution in respect to:

Michael Blefeld, M.D.

- WHEREAS,** *Dr. Blefeld has completed forty years of faithful and conscientious service as the Medical Advisor to Stonington Public Schools and has now retired;*
- WHEREAS,** *Dr. Blefeld has been a devoted and invaluable Medical Advisor in the Stonington community, providing consultation to school administration and nursing staff for school health issues;*
- WHEREAS,** *Dr. Blefeld continually communicated and provided comprehensive scientific data and information regarding COVID-19 and other major health emergencies;*
- WHEREAS,** *Dr. Blefeld is held in high admiration for his passion towards pediatric services and his dedication to the health of our Stonington student community;*
- WHEREAS,** *the members of the Board of Education wish to thank Dr. Blefeld for his many years of service;*
- RESOLVED,** *that the Stonington Board of Education does hereby, honor, and recognize Michael Blefeld, M.D. on the occasion of his retirement as Medical Advisor for Stonington Public Schools;*

Be it further RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be spread on the minutes of the Board of Education, and that a copy be presented to this honored individual as a testimonial of the sincere appreciation of loyalty, character, and service of this Board of Education and Stonington community.

Comments from Citizens

There were no comments from citizens.

Consent Agenda

- A. Minutes – April 8, 2021
April 22, 2021
May 4, 2021
- B. Checks and Bills – April
- C. Personnel Report

The following motion was made by Craig Esposito and seconded by Jack Morehouse:

Motion 1: To accept the consent agenda as presented.

All: Aye

Second Read/Approval of Curriculum

- A. Unified Physical Education
- B. Unified Music
- C. Anatomy and Physiology
- D. Digital Photography I
- E. Accounting I

The following motion was made by Craig Esposito and seconded by Jack Morehouse:

Motion 2: To approve the curriculum as presented.

All: Aye

Second Read/Approval/Elimination of Board Policies –Policies for Approval: 9000, 9010, 9012, 9020, 9020.1, 9030, 9110, 9121, 9123, 9125/Policies for Elimination: 9122, 9123.1

The following motion was made by Craig Esposito and seconded by Heidi Simmons:

Motion 3: To approve policies 9000, 9010, 9012, 9020, 9020.1, 9030, 9110, 9121, 9123, 9125.

All: Aye

The following motion was made by Craig Esposito and seconded by Gordon Lord:

Motion 4: To eliminate policies 9122 and 9123.1.

All: Aye

Update on Board of Ed Advisory Council on Return to School (BEARS)

Gordon Lord, Chair reported the council had a good meeting. A guest speaker Mary Day from Ledge Light attended and reviewed COVID-19 guidelines and noted they are looking ahead to May 19th for new guidelines by the Governor. He noted that there were not many questions for Ms. Day from the council. A lot of time was spent on discussion surrounding the social and emotional needs of students for the fall. The council also had a discussion regarding the percent of high school students coming back for four days. He shared that the council also talked about the plan moving into the fall, a five day week for students and what the state and what we will do locally. He added there was good input from the council and discussion regarding what needs that need to be addressed for the fall. He shared that overall it was a good meeting and very well received. The next meeting is set for Tuesday, May 18th in the commons at the high school. Heidi Simmons commented the council came up with good ideas and was glad that Dr. Riley was there.

Report of the Superintendent of Schools

Reopening Update – Dr. Riley acknowledged the BEARS Council noting that it was a very productive meeting. Dr. Riley gave an update on the state requirements for remote learning in the fall. This item will be on the next BEARS agenda for discussion. He communicated that his biggest concern is not to have teachers in the classroom and remote at the same time. He reported we have not changed the mask policy in our schools. He reported that the high school recently had vaccine clinics and have sent out notices to middle and high school parents to encourage students to receive the vaccine.

Budget and Staffing Update - Dr. Riley shared a document with a summary of the budget and staffing. Dr. Riley spoke on staffing changes and which will be funded through ESSER II funds. He proposed to use half of the funding to continue what we are doing, with interventionist, tutors and academic and SEL supports that we need. He noted air conditioning and the Board Room new technology equipment are some of the other priorities. Gordon Lord expressed his concerns with regards to funding staff in the second year and future years. Chair Frank Todisco spoke there was an urgency to recruit the positions and asked how that was going. Dr. Riley explained the certified staff were given first choice on these positions and we have been able to fill some with the current teachers and some positions have been posted externally.

American Recovery Plan (ARP) Discussion and Recommendations

Summer School - Dr. Riley reported he has been working with NESS and the COMO regarding summer school programs, enrollment, and busing. He also shared a brochure from each of the District's elementary and middle school summer programs.

Elementary Playgrounds - Dr. Riley shared we had a lot of vandalism especially at the West Vine Street School playground recently where our own students could not use the track. Dr. Riley recommended we keep the playground closed. He also mentioned that Julie Holland who takes care of the sensory garden also strongly recommends keeping the garden closed. We owe it to our teachers to have a nice clean area.

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Heidi Simmons asked if there was signage up during the COVID-19 time. Dr. Riley explained we have signs up but people don't read the signs. Gordon Lord asked if the District could look at low cost cameras. Chris Williston explained we do have cameras but we are looking at the recording retroactively. Kathy Irvine noted we do not have cameras in the garden or the track area. Jenn McCurdy also mentioned that the playgrounds are age specific so we need to add signage that specifies that such as the basketball hoops are made for smaller children.

End of the Year Activities - Dr. Riley shared a list of the end of the year activities throughout the District and which are in person and which are virtually. He noted the graduation will be outside in the stadium which will be Friday, June 18th and a rain date is set if that does not work. Heidi Simmons asked if the summer school programs are voluntary or by invitation. Dr. Riley explained we have two summer programs one is for Special Ed students with an IEP and the other a Regular Ed program that is all voluntary and open to anyone that is interested. Craig Esposito asked the Student Government Representative, Lily Haghpassand if there will be a banquet for the new senior class officers. Ms. Haghpassand the Student Government is planning one but they are still working out a venue and will be in person.

Monthly Reports

Frank Todisco, Chair noted that there were five reports listed but only four in the packet; he did not see a Student Government report included and asked Lily Haghpassand if she wanted to address the Board on anything. Ms. Haghpassand gave an update that there was a couple instances where there was exposure to COVID and there was a bit of animosity from students towards the procedure regarding quarantining of a student who tested positive for COVID-19. She noted the students had a lot of frustration with that system because it fell around the time of the play and AP testing but we are looking forward and just trying to get through this year. She also reported she has noticed an increase of announcements over the loud speaker regarding Title IX alerting the students about the Safe Future counselor. The Board had no further questions on the other reports.

Items for Future Agendas

Frank Todisco, Chair noted that the Committee of the Whole meeting will be held in two weeks and will be the last one that will be virtual. He added with things changing the next one will be in person and the Regular Board meeting will also be in person with people allowed to come into the building. At the Committee of the Whole meeting the Board will address the Superintendent's evaluation format for this year and address the plan going forward. There will be a dialogue with Dr. Riley, and some items such as policy and curriculum. He added the main focus will be the evaluation piece because that needs to be done in June so that by July it is in the books. For the regular agenda in June there will be the medical advisor item. He asked if the Board had any other items for the agenda and if so they are to send them along and he will make sure they are added.

Board Comments/Concerns

Frank Todisco, Chair noted that today the OCA report came out and the Board attorney, Nick Grello is in the process of reviewing the report and will be meeting with the Board probably next Wednesday evening but will keep the Board posted.

Heidi Simmons spoke on the OCA report and some notable commentary on the report. She read a section of the report that spoke on how the District has procedures that are now put in place going forward to address the issue. She spoke about sexual harassment and the effects on students. She commended the District's Title IX coordinators for beginning to create a safe environment in Stonington. She expressed gratitude to those that came forward, it was brave and right to come forward and share their stories. She congratulated Alicia Dawe and Allison Van Etten for creating a model that is sensitive, innovative and comprehensive Title IX program they may become the model to all Connecticut school districts.

Jack Morehouse spoke that one of the Board goals is to promote the good things happening in the school system. He shared his thoughts about putting a video together to highlight some of the schools and programs that make the school system unique to let people know and showcase some of the important things we do. He added he would be willing to fund that and maybe it can be put on our website or advertised at the local cinema. He added if we can come together and put something together it would be good for our town and would go along with one of the Board goals. Frank Todisco, Chair asked Dr. Riley to think about that idea. Dr. Riley added perhaps at the Board retreat this could be one of the goals also. Frank Todisco, Chair noted the retreat will be in July this year.

Adjournment

The following motion was made by Craig Esposito and seconded by Gordon Lord:

Motion 5: To adjourn at 7:50 p.m.

All: Aye

Heidi Simmons, Board Secretary