

Board of Education Regular Meeting  
Suffield High School Media Center  
and Remotely via Zoom  
May 3, 2021

Call to Order

Board Chair Davis called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m. The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Board members Jamie Drzyzga, Debra Dudack, Melissa Finnigan, Brian Fry, Glenn Gazdik, Susan Mercik Davis, Maureen Sattan, Michael Sepko; and Superintendent Timothy Van Tassel, Assistant Superintendent Michelle Zawawi, and Business Manager Bill Hoff; and SHS Student Representatives Akshita Jindal and Connor Shaw (arr. at 7:55 p.m.)

Absent: Scott Lingenfelter

Recognition

SMS students, Samantha Ruggieri and Rowan Milton-Benoit, and SHS students Ben Begley and Aiden Dultz were recognized for receiving this year's CAFE Student Leadership Awards. This award is granted to students who exhibit exemplary leadership skills.

Abby Halasi-Kun and Julianna Service were recognized for being named this year's Suffield High School Salutatorian and Valedictorian, respectively. Mr. Blain spoke to both Abby's and Julianna's academic and extracurricular achievements.

Abby Bowtrucznyk, Lindsay Kaselouskas, Leah Slawinowski, Jessica Cook and Rachel Bergman, Spaulding's TEAM (the Teacher Education And Mentoring program) graduates, were recognized along with their mentors, Penny D'Aleo, Suzanne Wosko, Stephanie Michaud, and Jessica Marzi. Jack Ferraro, the district's TEAM coordinator, spoke about the TEAM process and the quality of the graduate's work.

SHS Student Representative

Ms. Jindal reported on happenings at the high school, including Ms. Melanie Brown being named the Teacher of the Year building finalist, prom ticket sales are underway and the World Language Honors Society induction ceremony is May 6.

Board Chair Mercik Davis gave Connor Shaw's report, which included STAR reading and math assessments at Spaulding, SBAC testing at McAlister, more in person students returning to both schools, many afterschool connections classes are being held at both schools, an informational parent night was held via Zoom for parents of incoming kindergartners, and fourth and fifth graders attended the social media assembly by Scott Driscoll.

Public Comment

None

Board Member Comment

Debra Dudack, Jamie Drzyzga and Melissa Finnigan congratulated all the students who were recognized this evening.

Brian Fry thanked teachers in recognition of Teacher Appreciation Week.

### Reports to the Board

- Superintendent's Report
  - Dr. Van Tassel thanked teachers and administrative assistants in recognition of Teacher Appreciation Week and Administrative Assistants Day.
  - He also thanked the Technology department for the new technology set up in the high school media center to allow for hybrid Board meetings.
  - Superintendent Van Tassel said the Board of Finance approved the 2021-2022 Board of Education budget proposal at a 0% increase. The Town Public Hearing will be May 12, and the Annual Budget Meeting to consider and act the recommendations of the Board of Finance will be May 26. Supporting budget materials are on the district and town websites.
  - A district parent conference call is being held this Wednesday at 6:30pm to update parents on COVID-19 quarantine procedures, end of year events, and department updates.
  - Dr. Van Tassel noted school districts received correspondence from the State Department of Education stating, at this time, they do not anticipate requiring all school districts provide for a remote learning option for students next school year. The district will continue to revisit this topic.
  - Dr. Van Tassel said Phase I of the Portrait of a Graduate/Strategic Plan is just about complete. Phase I included conducting focus groups with all stakeholders to obtain feedback for the development of the Plan. Phase II will begin next school year and will include gathering all the information, forming working groups to synthesize the information and sharing of the findings with the Board of Education.
- Board Chair's Report
  - Board Chair Mercik Davis thanked teachers in recognition of Teacher Appreciation Week.
  - She thanked Board members for attending the meeting in person and thanked Ms. Osleger for installing the technology to make it possible.
  - Board Chair Mercik Davis encouraged subcommittees to meet in person while providing a remote option as well.
  - She said Board members should expect an email asking for their availability to attend the upcoming Tri-Board meeting.
- Business Manager's Report
  - Mr. Hoff said the district will be proposing pricing for preschool tuition and school lunches for next year, which will come to the Board for approval in June. He also noted that we are anticipating that free breakfasts and lunches will be offered again next year.
  - He encouraged parents to have their children ride the busses to alleviate the traffic congestion at the schools during pick up and drop off times.
  - Mr. Hoff said the district has not received any details from the state on the latest COVID relief funding, ARP ESSER, but all other grants have been submitted. These funds can be used for learning recovery, social emotional learning, technology, community outreach, and anything COVID related.
  - He said the facilities department is beginning work on facility projects and planning for summer work.
- Board of Selectmen's Report
  - No report
- Board of Finance Liaison's Report
  - No report

### Approval of Minutes

**MOTION #21-54:** Finnigan moved to approve the Board of Education meeting minutes of April 6, 2021 and April 26, 2021. Gazdik seconded the motion. Dudack asked to confirm if the process for development of the minutes was as it had been in the past. Board Chair Mercik Davis questioned if the minutes were reflective of the new policy and wants equal representation with a summary of discussion. Superintendent Van Tasel clarified the editing process and that the Recording Secretary does not have the authority to remove or otherwise change the elected Board Secretary's edits. Board members discussed the process for reviewing and revising the minutes after they are completed by the Recording Secretary and if the process is being followed in accordance with the Minutes bylaw that was recently revised and approved by the Board. Board Secretary Sattan favors a structure where summary statements both in support and against a Discussion/Action Item are listed, which follows the new policy if those statements are unattributed. The process of developing a draft will continue as in the past, involving the Board Secretary, Recording Secretary, the Board Chair and the Superintendent before going to the full Board for approval Board Chair Mercik Davis called for a vote. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **8-0-0**.

### Consent Agenda

None

### Discussion/Action Items

- **COVID-19 Update**  
Superintendent Van Tasel gave an update on the school operational status. In person attendance is currently 77% at the high school, 90% at the middle school, 95% at McAlister and 89% at Spaulding. Principal Blain gave an update on the high school graduation planning. The ceremony will be held outdoors on the turf field with all safety protocols in place and a live stream of the ceremony as well. Dr. Van Tasel stated quarantine protocols have changed from a 10-day period to a 7-day period with a negative test after five days. As of next Monday, the district will no longer be contact tracing or quarantining staff members. In addition, fully vaccinated students who provide proof of vaccination will not be required to quarantine.
- **March Financial Report**  
Mr. Hoff said the projected end of year surplus is \$728,450. There were no significant changes to State and Federal grants with the exception of adding the ESSER II grant to the State and Federal grants. There was a Food Service surplus of over \$16,000 for the month of January and a year to date loss of approximately \$87,000. We continue to have a significant surplus which can be reduced by moving expenses in Open Choice to the BOE budget.
- **Approval and Waiving of Purchasing Policy #3320 for SHS Pole Vault and High Jump Mats**  
**MOTION #21-55:** Sepko moved to waive Policy #3320 and allow the purchase of pole vault and high jump mats for SHS at a total cost of \$20,442 based on three written quotes rather than a sealed bid. Fry seconded the motion. Mr. Hoff explained the purchasing policy states anything over \$15,000 requires sealed bids unless the policy is waived. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **8-0-0**.

- Approval and Funding for Suffield Middle School Science Textbooks  
**MOTION #21-56:** Gazdik moved to approve the Suffield Middle School textbooks as presented. Finnigan seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion passed **8-0-0**.

**MOTION #21-57:** Drzyzga moved to approve the use of current available funds to purchase the approved SMS Science textbooks. Finnigan seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion passed **8-0-0**.

#### Subcommittee Reports

- April 19, 2021 Curriculum & Instruction Subcommittee meeting – Board Member Drzyzga said the middle school administration, Ms. Dattey and Assistant Superintendent Zawawi spent two years vetting resources for science materials that best align with NGSS. These are not just textbooks but all materials, including an online component. Justin Kaput also attended and shared about the student sustainability council at the high school and the student sustainability summit that occurred last month.
- April 22, 2021 Policy Subcommittee meeting – Board member Dudack said two policies are being placed on 30-day read. Revisions have been made based on recommendations from legal counsel and the Connecticut Department of Children and Families. The subcommittee is working on a process for requests for policy review by community and Board members.
- April 29, 2021 Finance & Facilities Subcommittee meeting – Board member Sepko said the committee discussed many of the items already covered by Bill Hoff tonight. One additional item that was discussed and was identified during the school facilities walk-throughs last fall was creating transgender bathrooms at the high school. The subcommittee decided to table this item for further review.

#### Board Liaison Reports

- CREC – Board member Sattan said the last meeting was a standard business meeting. She noted the group shared what districts were planning for graduation.
- Agriscience – no report
- CAFE – no report

#### Future Business

- Special Education update, presenting plans for outreach for special education parents and Special Education testing results.
- District-wide testing results (not just SBAC, but also STAR) to measure how students are doing and how much catch up may be required.

#### Public Comment

None

#### Board Member Comment

Board member Sattan said she felt the district should do more to service the Board goal of using data to drive results. In addition to the regularly presented data, she asked that specific district data be shared when making or evaluating district decisions.

Board member Fry addressed the matter of Wellness Wednesdays for the 21/22 school year and stated his opinion about the importance of in-person instructional hours.

#### Adjournment

Fry moved, Dudack seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:18 p.m. All members voted in favor.

Click here to view the meeting:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1a831sywGSWrY9iplvJKh643ZwIwEDRJH/view?usp=sharing>

*Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of June 7, 2021.*

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Sattan  
Secretary