

Farouk Rajab, Board Chairman called the regular virtual meeting to order at 6:30p.m. Members present were Craig Esposito, Daniel Kelley, Kevin Agnello, Christopher Donahue, and Sara Baker. Late Arrival: (6:33pm) Heidi Simmons, Secretary. Also present were Ana de Oliveira, Recording Secretary, Dr. Van Riley, Superintendent of Schools, Student Government Representative Kyle Lowry and members of the administration staff.

Comments from Citizens Relative to Items on the Agenda

Michael Evering commented regarding mental health of students and return of field trips at the elementary level. He added once the busing situation is taken care of perhaps outdoor field trips such as the Nature Center or Aquarium could take place. He also added we need to bring back music concerts and afterschool extracurricular activities, which are crucial to the mental health of students.

Darren Hayward commented on the proposed budget. He voiced he would like to see more funds budgeted for extracurricular activities and field trips. He questioned the current restrictions that are preventing extracurricular activities and field trips at the elementary level. He would like to see a plan for field trips to resume and voiced we are selectively putting sports ahead of other activities at other schools.

Dr. Riley noted he will do some research regarding field trips and busing and will bring back information regarding this issue. He shared that currently some of the sports teams have had to charter private buses for away events due to the shortage of bus drivers.

Budget Discussion

Dr. Riley reviewed the proposed budget. He answered the Board's questions which were submitted ahead of time regarding specific items in the proposed budget. He explained the proposed teaching staff cuts and how they are dependent on enrollment. He explained the proposed additional custodian position and HR director position and a justification for each position. Heidi Simmons had questions regarding departmentalization and declining enrollment. Dr. Riley answered her questions. She also voiced the importance of drama and music classes for students. Dr. Riley commented all music programs will be maintained even with the declining enrollment and only if we need to lower the proposed budget will that be looked at closer. Dan Kelley questioned the current unfilled 0.5 music position. He asked if administration had considered increasing it to full time. Dr. Riley noted according to both principals at the elementary school there is not a need for that. Mr. Kelley asked that administration revisit that idea and feels that if it was increased there would be more people applying for the position. Chris Donahue asked if there is a reduction of five teachers what the class sizes would be. Dr. Riley explained the class sizes at each school with these reductions. Mr. Donahue had questions regarding the HR position's salary and questioned why the position couldn't be a management position instead with a lower salary and why we would need that position to have that many hours and salary. Dr. Riley explained the position needs a state credential to evaluate teachers and administrators. It will also handle contract management and negotiations and having someone with that expertise is very important. Mr. Donahue asked if the district has researched what other school districts have. Dr. Riley will share information on other districts regarding this position and a job description also. Mr. Donahue also had questions regarding First Student charges for transportation. Farouk Rajab, Chair noted the Board will have two weeks to review the budget and get back to Dr. Riley with questions. Dan Kelley questioned the position for HR director. He asked if the administration could revisit the concept of doing a combined HR person with the town. He commented we have done without for nine years why it is a need now. He asked for more information regarding the need of the position before he can move forward. Dr. Riley noted the district has looked at combining with the town but there was no interest in that.

Dan Kelley asked Farouk Rajab, Chair to go over the budget process and how the Board passes the budget. Mr. Kelley asked for a forecast for next year of what is being paid out of ESSER funds. Dr. Riley explained the ESSER funds and how the budget would be affected for the following year. Craig Esposito spoke on the budget process and his past experience with the approval of the budget from the Board of Finance. Farouk Rajab, Chair noted he wants all Board members to be in agreement with the HR position and the proposed budget so that the Board has a budget they have confidence in. Dr. Riley explained if the Board has a particular percentage increase they would like to see for the proposed budget he can bring options back to the Board reflecting that change and the impacts it has.

COVID-10 Discussion

Dr. Riley spoke on the traffic issue and appreciated the work Peter Anderson has done putting back some of the bus stops. He noted the traffic at Deans Mill School and Stonington Middle School has gone down. Dr. Riley shared that the staff absences have also gone down, unfilled positions are down and classrooms are being covered. He noted we are still down six bus drivers. He suggested giving employees a referral reward if an employee refers an applicant. The reward would be \$500 if the district hires the applicant. He noted he would like to implement this referral program on Monday and congratulated Allison Van Etten for the idea. Dan Kelley thanked Dr. Riley for starting the program and looks forward to seeing other incentives. Mr. Kelley also suggested administration look at the student pick and drop off at the high school because it is creating a long line of traffic. Farouk Rajab, Chair thanked Dr. Riley for bringing the referral program and noted he appreciates all SPS staff.

Board Goals and Timeline

Farouk Rajab, Chair noted we will start the conversation regarding Board Goals with the new superintendent. This item will be moved to the end of March, so that the Board can set the goals for the next year in July.

SHS Principal New Timeline

Dr. Riley shared the new timeline with the Board which has been extended to March 16th. He will meet with the new superintendent and share where we are in that process at that time.

Board Comments/Concerns

The Board had no comments or concerns.

Adjournment

The following motion was made by Sara Baker and seconded by Craig Esposito:

Motion 1: To adjourn at 7:55p.m.

All: Aye – Motion Passes

Heidi Simmons, Board Secretary