

Board of Education Regular Meeting
Suffield Middle School Auditorium
and via Zoom
January 3, 2022

Prior to the start of the meeting, Board Chair Sattan made a formal statement regarding the requirement that all individuals, regardless of vaccination status, must wear a face covering in a private or public school building in accordance with the Connecticut Department of Public Health.

Call to Order

Board Chair Sattan called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Board members Terry Antrum, Tracy Cloyd (via Zoom), Jamie Drzyzga, Brian Fry, Glenn Gazdik, Scott Lingenfelter, James Mol and Maureen Sattan; and Superintendent Timothy Van Tassel; Assistant Superintendent Michelle Zawawi, and Business Manager Bill Hoff; and SHS Student Representative Connor Shaw

Absent: Melissa Finnigan and SHS Student Representative Sophia Mormino

Recognition

None

SHS Student Representatives

Connor Shaw reported that this week at Suffield Middle School there will be boys' and girls' basketball games, many clubs are meeting afterschool, and Mrs. Hunt will be holding a winter wellness activity. At Suffield High School, spirit week was held the week prior to break, SAT prep classes are available during Wildcat, the Gay Straight Alliance held a ribbon fundraiser, the Class of 2023 will be holding a Bingo night, mid-terms are coming up in two weeks, Asnuntuck High School partnership applications are now open, and the World Language Society is holding a Three Kings Day celebration on January 6. Even with new COVID safety protocols in place, schools have many fun and exciting events occurring while keeping students and staff safe.

Public Comment

Karl Christian, 450 North Grand, requested documentation of the amount of COVID funding the district received and what the implication is for our students by accepting that money.

Dave Shute, 1165 Halladay Avenue, would like to know the status of the library books. He offered to provide the books for the Board to review.

Board Member Comment

- Board members Gazdik and Drzyzga thanked Dr. Van Tassel, the administration and teachers for their work over the break to address the changing COVID-19 protocols.
- Board member Fry thanked Connor for his presentation, and he also expressed appreciation to the administration and staff for their work in keeping students in school and safe.

- Board member Lingenfelter said in response to the public comment this evening relative to reviewing of the library books, that the Policy subcommittee will be meeting on February 10 and the review of the related policy will be on the agenda.

Reports to the Board

- Superintendent's Report
 - The Superintendent said he reached out to Mr. Christian regarding his inquiry but was not able to connect with him. The Superintendent will provide the information Mr. Christian has requested.
 - He acknowledged seven Suffield Middle School students who competed in the Connecticut Music Education Association Music Festival.
 - He also acknowledged the recent FFA graduates, all of which are recent graduates of the Suffield High School Agriscience program.
 - The Superintendent said schools and offices are closed on January 17 in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.
- Board Chair's Report
 - Board Chair Sattan welcomed James Mol to the Board, who is returning after serving on the Board from 2018-2019.
 - She announced the Chairs and members of each subcommittee, and stated agendas will be developed in partnership with the subcommittee chair, the Superintendent and/or the Assistant Superintendent.
 - She stated Melissa Finnigan will serve as the CAFE liaison. The CREC liaison still needs to be filled and asked Board members to consider filling this role.
 - Board Chair Sattan announced Laura Guerrette has tendered her resignation, she thanked Laura for her exceptional work and announced that Melissa Bielonko will be assuming the role.
- Business Manager's Report
 - Mr. Hoff said the ski club has been canceled this year because the district is unable to provide transportation.
 - He stated over 300 people got COVID tested today. The district will now be offering testing twice a week to students and staff as well as the addition of a drive-up option.
- Board of Selectmen's Report
 - No report
- Board of Finance Liaison's Report
 - No report

Approval of Minutes

MOTION #22-32: Gazdik moved, Fry seconded to approve the Board of Education meeting minutes of December 6, 2021 and December 20, 2021. A Board member stated that the December 6 minutes should reflect that Glenn Gazdik was elected as Vice Chair, not nominated as currently notated and that Terry Antrum's attendance at the December 20 Board meeting should reflect that he attended remotely via Zoom. Board Chair Sattan said those changes will be made. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **8-0-0**.

Consent Agenda

None

Discussion/Action Items

- Budget Workshop #1 – Technology and Facilities Proposed 2022-2023 Budget Presentation

The Superintendent said department level updates will be presented to the Board over the next several weeks and then the Board will conduct a more detailed review of the budget by object codes. A mechanism will be created for Board members to ask additional budget questions or ask for additional information. In response to a Board member's question, the Superintendent said the document has traditionally been an internal document, but could be shared with the public.

Mr. Plano presented the maintenance budget and reviewed completed projects and future projects. Future projects include safety and security upgrades (he noted the district has applied for a school safety and security grant), replacing Spaulding's classroom floors, renovations to the high school Family and Consumer Science and Agriscience food classrooms. He said next year's budget request includes an additional 0.5 FTE cleaner at the high school who will work a split shift. All building repairs and project expenses are in the Open Choice budget. He reviewed the percentage change increase or decreases broken out by each school, resulting in an overall 8.3% increase over this year's budget. In response to Board member's question as to why safety and security updates are not made public, Mr. Plano said plan specifics are not made known to the public for security purposes. He added that CIRMA did a safety and security audit that went very well and we are currently awaiting the report. The Superintendent added that the safety planning is not made public so that it is not circumvented, but the information could be shared with the Board in executive session. In response to Board member's question relative to how much the safety and security grant may be, Mr. Plano said that is unknown at this time. Mr. Hoff said the district's safety and security grant request is \$760,000 and the district will receive a 46.8% reimbursement rate from the state. A Board member said it would be helpful to see actual expenditures year over year, regardless of whether it was funded out of the BOE or grants. Mr. Hoff stated that information will be forthcoming.

Mr. Hoff reviewed the utilities budget and highlighted the energy saving projects completed throughout the district. In response to a Board member's question relative to any budget impacts from these completed projects on next year's budget, Mr. Hoff said there are no 2022-23 budget impacts of these projects. Mr. Hoff stated the electricity generation price is fixed through December 2024. Natural gas is projected at a 25.5% increase based on current natural gas prices. Mr. Hoff reviewed the percentage increase in next year's budget over this year for: (1) water, an increase of 7.4%, (2), electricity, a decrease of 4.8%, and (3), natural gas, an increase of 11.8%.

Ms. Osleger reviewed her department's 2021-22 accomplishments and explained the 2022-23 projects including a single sign-on dashboard for students, report card/transcript modifications, integration of suffield.org with Google, ongoing infrastructure enhancements and classroom technology upgrades, digital curriculum memberships, secretary collaboration and process improvements, monitoring tool enhancements, and parent/student portal enhancements. She reviewed the role of her staff with the shared services with the town. In response to a Board member's question relative to updating the outdoor school signs, Mr. Hoff said there have been proposals to upgrade the signs but zoning laws may not permit lighted signs. He will work with the Town Planner and the Zoning Board, and the goal is to have electronic signs in front of all four schools if there is interest and support from the board and community. In response to a Board member's question to staffing needs of the technology department, Ms. Osleger said she is continuously monitoring staffing needs and is currently reviewing the workload of the webmaster role which is shared with the town, but she believes currently that her department is adequately staffed. In response to a board member's question relative to preparedness if our system is hacked, Ms. Osleger said there is a well-established plan with an extensive infrastructure and back-up systems in place. She noted the National Guard and CT State Police conducted a technology security audit a few years ago and the district and town scored very well.

- Discussion and Possible Action on the Capital Improvement Plan

Mr. Hoff said the Capital Improvement Project descriptions are for 2022-23 requests to ACCE and the spreadsheet are the project requests proposed for the next 10 years. He noted the district is awaiting the results of the town's Master Facilities Plan to better inform the district's 10-year Capital Plan. The ACCE request for next year is broken out by priorities and the top three priorities are all safety and security related. Additional priorities are the addition of a generator at McAlister, replacement of Beneski field, special education van replacement, an open bay storage building, district technology projects, a 15-passenger activity van, McAlister gym restroom foyer update, and Spaulding parking lot repaving and additional parking spaces. In response to a Board member's question regarding consensus of the priorities, Mr. Hoff said there was a consensus. In response to a Board member's question relative to the safety grant, Mr. Hoff said he does not know the likelihood of the district receiving the grant because it is unknown how many requests have been submitted. In response to a Board member's question relative to the life expectancy of Beneski field and how long it would take to replace it, Mr. Hoff said the original projection was 10 years and the field could be replaced over a summer. In response to a Board member's question relative to impacts on the budget if technology projects are funded through ACCE, Mr. Hoff said there is no impact on the budget as those technology projects were not included in the operating budget request.

MOTION #22-33: Mol moved, Antrum seconded to approve the Capital Improvement Plan as presented by administration. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **8-0-0**.

- Approval of SHS Course Proposals: Mathematics for Machine Technology, Financial Literacy and Analysis, Comics and Illustration, and Introduction to Animation

Assistant Superintendent Zawawi said these four courses will be implemented for the next school year and there is a minimal financial impact. The mathematics courses allow for students to take a different path in math offerings to the typical math courses. The art courses are being offered as a result of student interest. Board Chair Sattan said the course proposals were reviewed by the Curriculum and Instruction subcommittee and they fully supported the addition of these courses.

MOTION #22-34: Drzyzga moved, Gazdik seconded to approve the SHS course proposals: Mathematics for Machine Technology, Financial Literacy and Analysis, Comics and Illustration, and Introduction to Animation as presented by the administration. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **8-0-0**.

- COVID-19 Update

The Superintendent said he hosted a conference call for families Sunday evening as well as a follow up communication today relative to the changes in the COVID-19 health and safety protocols by the Department of Public Health (DPH) and the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), and he thanked the community, Board and staff for their support. Quarantines have been reduced from 10 days to 5 days. The district has created a self-reporting tool for parents to complete regarding their child's health status as it relates to COVID-19. He said he was hopeful there would be an unrestricted remote option for parents, but that is not permissible by the state at this time. The district is implementing many mitigation strategies including testing, social distancing, etc. in order to keep schools open. In response to a Board member's question regarding staffing, the Superintendent stated about 20 staff members were absent today. He noted we have a good pool of substitutes to help with staff absences.

- November Financial Report

Mr. Hoff said the end of year projected surplus is \$113,282, a reduction of \$339,395 from October. This is mainly due to an increase in projected health expenses and projected special education costs for tuition and transportation. The only significant change in grants was a reduction in Open Choice

funds due to transferring some building repair expenses to Open Choice. The Food Service report was not available. In response to a Board member's question as to the amount of building repair expenses moved to Open Choice, Mr. Hoff stated about \$70,000.

Drzyzga left at 8:24 p.m., returned 8:27 p.m.

Subcommittee Reports

None

Board Liaison Reports

- CREC – Board member Sattan reported that CREC had closed four schools today because of staffing shortages due to COVID-19. In December, CREC reported an uptick in dysregulated behaviors. CREC is making legislative advocacy movements for magnet school funding and a mechanism for capital improvement funding.
- Agriscience – Board member Fry congratulated the FFA graduates.
- CABA – no report

Future Business

Board Chair Sattan asked that the link to the future agenda items be sent to BOE members and add a column for which BOE member requested the item.

- Board member Fry asked for an executive session to discuss school safety and security.
- Board member Fry questioned if the book review should also go before the Curriculum and Instruction subcommittee and not just the Policy subcommittee.

Public Comment

None

Board Member Comment

Board member Fry was pleased to hear a drive-through option for COVID testing is being offered for students and staff. He again asked people to consult with their medical professionals and if they are a candidate for vaccine to pursue receiving it.

Adjournment

Lingenfelter moved, Drzyzga seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 p.m. All members voted in favor.

Click here to view the meeting: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DOHf7gdhGIXVX5-157urUAju8LnjtOX5/view?usp=sharing>

Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of February 7, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

Jamie Drzyzga
Secretary