

Farouk Rajab, Board Chairman called the special virtual meeting to order at 6:30p.m. Members present were Heidi Simmons, Secretary, Craig Esposito, Daniel Kelley, Kevin Agnello, Chris Donahue, and Sara Baker. 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.

Communications & Recognitions

Dr. Riley thanked Dr. Mel Collier-Meek and Dr. Stephen Kilgus for their delivery of informative webinar explaining of screening and social emotional well-being efforts at Stonington middle School and Stonington High School. Webinar can be viewed by visiting SPS YouTube Live. He also recognized Mary Anne Butler, Alicia Dawe and AnneMarie Houle for their leadership in partnering with the Munali Girls Secondary School in Lusaka, Zambia to bring the VOICE programming model to students there.

Dan Kelley recognized students that graduated this past month and are invited to the ceremony in June. He also recognized and congratulated the boys and girls indoor track team for being the ECC champions. Dr. Riley noted we had four mid-year graduates, the highest number ever, this is quite an accomplishment.

Farouk Rajab, Chair recognized Betty Osga who has done a fantastic job with the superintendent's search. He noted that he has heard so many positive comments from the community. He added your Board is working for you and will share more information about the search on our website. He also recognized community members for taking the time to share their opinion with the Board. He spoke about the Governors' and Senates' information regarding masks. Until a decision is made schools will stay with the masking through the 15th but should masks stay until the 28th, schools will also stay with masks. Chair Rajab commented there will be a special meeting either on February 15th or 17th that will be dedicated only to discussion regarding mask mandates and will be held at the high school to listen to families.

Comments from Citizens Regarding Items on the Agenda

Nick Tewell spoke on the 2022-23 school calendar. He commented on the number of no school days on the week of November 7th and would like to have those days stacked or suggested moving a no school professional development day to the week earlier.

Katie Quinlan spoke on the 2022-23 school calendar noting it is better than this year's calendar. She commented on the professional development days in November, suggested taking the days on the week of 7th and do back to back for long a weekend. She commented about policies and the need to have them set in every school. She noted a lot of things are not equal at each school.

Ashley Tewell commented on discussions regarding masks in the classroom with students and teachers.

Karen and Kenyon commented they look forward to a return to normal, and field trips. He would like students to be able to go to class without fear of surveys on COVID-19 vaccinations. He commented on school policy regarding wearing masks.

Nicole Babin commented on the school policy discrepancies between each elementary school.

Board Presentations - State of Connecticut FOIA Training – Thomas Hennick

The following motion was made by Chris Donahue and seconded by Sara Baker:

Motion 1: To suspend the Board presentation at this time for later in the agenda.

All: Aye – Motion Passes

Consent Agenda

The following motion was made by Dan Kelley and seconded by Chris Donahue:

Motion 2: To accept the consent agenda as presented

All: Aye – Motion Passes

Board Presentations - State of Connecticut FOIA Training – Thomas Hennick – Resumed at 7:15pm

Thomas Hennick gave an overview of the FOIA law. He shared a discussion with the Board regarding different rules and regulations under the law. The Board shared their concerns and questions. Mr. Hennick answered their questions and provided examples in answering their questions. The discussion focused on areas such as public records, posting of Board meetings, Board minutes, executive sessions, FOIA requests and FERPA.

First Read – New Algebra II Textbook

Farouk Rajab, Chair noted this is the first read, the Board will have an opportunity to look at the information and send questions to Dr. Riley. This will be added to the Board agenda next month for approval. Mary Anne Butler gave an overview of the textbook, noting there are copies available if the Board would like to see the text book. Mr. Kelley asked how often are text books replaced. Ms. Butler answered his questions.

Report of the Superintendent of Schools

COVID-19 Update - Dr. Riley reported on the positive effects of the substitute pay increase. He commented on the number of staff absences. He shared information regarding First Student increase in bus driver salary. He reported on status of bus hubs and bus driver shortage. The Board had questions regarding driver shortage, First Student invoices and staff absences. Dr. Riley gave an overview of the First Student contract. Dr. Riley will add First Student invoicing item to the next Finance and Facilities Sub-Committee agenda and will give an update on this item each month. Dan Kelley would like an educational session on how the bus system works, perhaps from Gary Shettle or First Student.

Approval of 2022-23 School Calendar

Dr. Riley explained information used in generating the school calendar, such as using the LEARN calendar and the state required days of 180 for students. Dr. Riley noted that November 8th is Election Day and because Deans Mill School is used as a polling site we will not have school that day. He will be reaching out to the Selectman suggesting polling be moved to another location. Dr. Riley asked for the Board's approval of the calendar. Farouk Rajab, Chair reminded the Board the calendar can always be brought back if the November date is changed. The Board discussed the issue of accommodating religious holidays and if a student misses a day due to religious holidays is that type of day held for students. Heidi Simmons questioned where families can view the new calendar.

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

Motion 3: To accept the 2022-23 school calendar as presented.

All: Aye – Motion Passes

2022-2023 Budget Approval

Dr. Riley noted the additions to the 2022-23 proposed budget which stands at a 2.5% increase. Additions were a 1.0 music teacher, a middle school teacher and the increase of four para positions to full time. Farouk Rajab, Chair noted if the budget is approved tonight it will be presented to the Board of Finance on March 8th.

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

Motion 4: To approve the 2022-23 budget as presented with a 2.5% increase.

Vote:

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| Farouk Rajab - Yes | Chris Donahue – No |
| Sara Baker – Yes | Dan Kelley - Yes |
| Craig Esposito – Yes | Heidi Simmons – Yes |
| Kevin Agnello – Yes | |

Motion Passes: 6-1

Discussion: Chris Donahue thanked all who worked on the budget and explained his rationale for voting no for the budget presented. He voiced he was not sold on the HR position of \$152,000 and gave an explanation for his decision. He also commented of the reduction of the five teacher positions. Farouk Rajab, Chair spoke on enrollment as it relates to class sizes and teachers. He commented on the use of the ESSER funds, and the importance of the HR position.