

Board of Education Regular Meeting
Suffield High School Media Center
and via Zoom
March 7, 2022

Call to Order

Board Chair Sattan called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Board members Terry Antrum, Tracy Cloyd, Jamie Drzyzga, Melissa Finnigan, 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 Representatives Sophia Mormino and Connor Shaw

Absent: None

Board Chair Sattan reviewed Zoom etiquette with fellow Board members.

Recognition

Dr. Van Tassel began by saying that Connecticut boards of education are recognized in the month of March for their commitment to improve educational programs and services for students as well as families. He thanked the Board and said the evening's special events were planned to show appreciation for Board members. Dr. Van Tassel introduced Laura Noonan, Suffield Middle School chorus and music teacher, and her students. The "Star Spangled Banner" was performed by SMS Elite Voices and "How Far I'll Go" was performed by 7th Grade Chorus. Dr. Van Tassel introduced Mary DiRoberts, Suffield High School chorus and music teacher, and her students. "Non Nobis Domine" was performed. Dr. Van Tassel thanked Laura LaFlamme, Suffield High School Agriscience teacher, and her students for creating the beautiful, tropical floral arrangements for all BOE members.

Suffield High School Student Representatives

Connor Shaw reported that both schools are doing excellent. Suffield Middle School had over 140 6th grade students showcase their writing following a unit on informative writing. SMS will be engaging in their annual family fun night this Friday. The SMS Student/Faculty Basketball Game will be held. Officer Kieselback will referee the game and Dr. Van Tassel will be one of the staff playing against the students. The event will feature SMS Student Council, Pep Band and Elite Voices. SMS is having Spirit Week this week. Nine students will be representing SMS in both instrumental and vocal categories this Saturday at the CMEA Northern Region Middle School Festival. SMS Student Council will sponsor a night of Bingo on March 18, registration is available online. Suffield High School spring sports season is gearing up. SHS Class of 2022 is sponsoring Trivia Night on April 1 with many great raffle prizes. SHS Class of 2024 sold hot chocolate grams last week. SHS National Honor Society is excited to bring back the Volleyball Marathon after a two-year hiatus. The event takes place March 25-26. SHS Drama Club is presenting "Once Upon a Mattress" March 17-19. CT SAT Day is March 23 for all SHS Juniors. Jeff Yalden, teen mental health and suicide expert, will be speaking to SHS students on April 1.

Sophia Mormino reported that A. Ward Spaulding School and McAlister Intermediate School held Spirit Week last week, celebrating Read Across America. The AWS and MIS Super Bowl

Drive collected over 1,000 donations for Suffield Community Aid. The Munson Chocolate Fundraiser, organized by the PTO, will end on March 11. MIS 5th grade Ping Pong Tournament has been rescheduled for April 20. MIS Funky Foot will kick off on April 19 and will be held every Tuesday and Thursday morning. AWS 2nd grade students will be participating in a 28-day Kindness Challenge.

Public Comment

Kera Pixton, 25 Wisteria Lane, shared highlights of her children's positive school experiences. She said that she is a teacher and recognizes how hard the profession can be, especially during the last two years. She thanked Mr. Carl Casinghino, Mr. Ed Huppe, Mrs. Joy Tierney, Mr. Matt Dobi and Mr. Kyle Kibby for the opportunities and relationships they created with her oldest child. She thanked Mrs. Erika Vella for teaching two of her children math and for recognizing struggles. Mrs. Pixton thanked Mrs. Christy Baril and Mrs. Kerri Buckland for making strong connections with one of her children and Dr. Bari DeMichele for listening and choosing tests that would best illustrate her youngest child's learning profile. She said Mrs. Jennifer Underkoffler, Ms. Melissa Oberlander, Mrs. Denise Rigby, Mrs. Elizabeth Jury and Dr. Bari DeMichele deserve to be recognized for their skill and dedication when working with her youngest. She said she hopes dyslexia screenings, and the knowledge to interpret those screenings, become a priority.

Janet Davis, 8 Wisteria Lane, said that she does not like the books that are in the school. She said her daughter was given a book last year, as a high school senior, titled *When Reason Breaks* by Cindy L. Rodriguez. She said it specifically talks about a high school girl who commits suicide. Mrs. Davis said she had contacted the high school last year and was told that it was appropriate for students to read. She knows there are currently books in the school that are sexually oriented and have sexual pictures and they need to be removed from the school and that it is inappropriate for children. She hopes to the Lord that CRT is not being taught in the schools as she heard that there is information about racism being given to the children. Mrs. Davis said perhaps books about religion and Jesus should be placed in school as opposed to pornography.

Jeff Davis, 8 Wisteria Lane, said he watched the previous meeting and there were many speakers speaking out against book banning. He said that is not what he is looking for. He said he is looking for adults to make decisions to make sure the children are getting what is appropriate for them at their age level. He said children need boundaries.

Board Member Comment

- Board members Gazdik, Drzyzga, Antrum, Cloyd and Mol thanked each of the chorus groups for their performances and the Agriscience students for the floral arrangements.
- Board member Finnigan thanked the student groups for their performances and for the floral arrangements. Board member Finnigan said there were many great events over the weekend such as the travel basketball championships. She said it has been a tough two years and that it was great to see everyone's faces and she is excited for things to come.
- Board member Fry thanked the students for coming forward for the Board. He thanked Mrs. Pixton for her positive comments and said he was glad her family had that kind of

experience. He thanked and appreciated his fellow Board members for the work, time, effort, participation in subcommittees, meetings, emails and so forth.

- Board member Lingenfelter said that it was just over two years ago, at one of the last BOE meetings before COVID hit, that his son's 2nd grade class was singing for the Board. He said this is the first time so many students have been back and it was great to see their faces and how happy they were to be here and to perform. Board member Lingenfelter said Joanne Sullivan passed away last week. He said she was a longtime member of this community who did so much for the town, serving on several boards and commissions. The Board recognized and took a moment for her.
- Board Chair Sattan expressed gratitude for the McAlister Read Across America event. She said she and Board member Finnigan were the BOE representatives. Board Chair Sattan said they read to a classroom and it was a joy. She thanked the team at MIS for making it happen.

Reports to the Board

- Superintendent's Report
 - Dr. Van Tassel recognized the elementary principals and assistant principals for being asked by EASTCONN to be a part of two professional videos on what is called *Five Minute Drop-in Evaluation Process*. Our elementary administrative team has conducted well over 100 of these five minute drop-ins and have shared their experience using this process with colleagues across the State of Connecticut. This is an honor and is well deserved.
 - Superintendent Van Tassel said the SMS Student/Staff basketball game is Friday.
 - Dr. Van Tassel said we continue to move forward with the Suffield High School Principal search process. Focus group sessions with faculty, parents and students were hosted and key characteristics were identified. Team Leaders have worked with administration to synthesize the information and to select the interview committee. A committee of BOE members, parents, faculty, staff and students has been developed and the interviews are set to begin the last week of March. He said he anticipates the Board interviewing finalists the evening of May 2.
 - Superintendent Van Tassel invited Todd Zenczak, Director of Athletics and Student Activities, to give an update on winter sports. Mr. Zenczak said SMS had great seasons by the boys' and girls' basketball teams. The high school hockey team had an upsetting loss in the first round of States. Boys' basketball and swimming will be going to States. Five indoor track students are going to Nationals this weekend in New York City. Eighteen students made All-Conference. Mr. Zenczak said it was a great winter season and the spring season starts March 19.
- Board Chair's Report
 - Board Chair Sattan attended a CAFE sponsored Board Fundamentals meeting where she learned how to lead civil and productive meetings.
 - Board Chair Sattan and Board member Gazdik will be on the SHS Principal Interview Committee.
 - Board members Sattan and Finnigan met with Business Manager Bill Hoff and Superintendent Van Tassel to discuss insurance issues and to prepare the budget presentation for the Board of Finance meeting on March 28.

- Board Chair Sattan said the Wellness Committee is in need of a BOE representative.
- Business Manager's Report
 - No report
- Board of Selectmen's Report
 - No report
- Board of Finance Liaison's Report
 - No report

Approval of Minutes

MOTION #22-43: James Mol moved, Scott Lingenfelter seconded to approve the Board of Education meeting minutes of February 7, 2022, February 17, 2022, and February 23, 2022. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **9-0-0**.

Consent Agenda

MOTION #22-44: Melissa Finnigan moved to approve the following item on the consent agenda:

- A. SHS Robotics Team Field Trip Request – Houston, TX – April 20-24, 2022

Glenn Gazdik seconded the motion. All members voted in favor of approving the consent agenda. The motion passed **9-0-0**.

Discussion/Action Items

- Discussion with State Representative Tami Zawistowski
 State Representative Tami Zawistowski thanked the BOE for their hard work and dedication. She said she got to know students at McAlister through the Kid Governor and Read Across America programs. She said she likes to involve students in the legislative process and had the opportunity to do so as co-chair of the Rural and Agricultural Caucus. Representative Zawistowski said the SHS Agriscience Department was the lead in this program. She said she serves on the Planning & Development, Appropriations and Transportation Committees. She said she does not serve on the Education Committee but pays close attention to what is happening and that the committee did vote thru the approval of Sheff v. O'Neill. Representative Zawistowski said that a children's mental health bill will be going through the Public Health Committee and that it is currently in draft form. She said the impact on boards of education to adopt and implement a truancy intervention model, and to provide resources for mental and behavioral health for truants, is something to be aware of. Representative Zawistowski said Section 26 of the draft bill allows any teacher to request the Safe School Climate Specialist. She said this would be a behavior intervention for any student whose behavior caused serious disruption for the instruction of other students or caused self-harm or physical harm to such teacher or another student or staff member in such teacher's classroom. She said the committee has been trying to pass this for the past few years. She said each year local and regional boards of education must submit a strategic school profile report to the Commissioner and there is a

needs assessment section that identifies resources necessary to address the level of student trauma impacting students and staff in each school. Representative Zawistowski said she is in support of better funding for the Excess Cost Grant for special education. She said there are several education mandates being considered this year and her concern is that she does not want special programs put in place that detract from core learning. She said an Asian American and Pacific Islander social studies course is being considered as well as a course on climate change. Representative Zawistowski thanked the Board for the opportunity.

- COVID-19 Update

Dr. Van Tassel said weekly testing continues and that we have not had any student positive cases since February 7. He said he would like to scale back on protocols next week. Superintendent Van Tassel said he appreciates the BOE and the community for supporting the gradual phase and process and that we will continue to monitor the statistics to see if there is any shift.

- Portrait of a Graduate

Dr. Jeanine Rose, Interim Pre-K – 12 Coordinator, gave a presentation on Portrait of a Graduate. Dr. Rose said POTG identifies 21st century skills that our district believes students should embody and exemplify by graduation and will now work to establish strategies for implementing and measuring these skills. She said POG is a great way to align school operations in pedagogy around a collective vision for student success. Dr. Rose said the District Theory of Action suggests that if we establish clear expectations for students with the focus on academic achievement, positive citizenship and civic engagement, then we will engage, inspire and create the likelihood that our students will become lifelong learners, responsible citizens and productive members of the communities in which they live. She said BOE Goal #2 is to systematically use meaningful data to drive, improve and track student success and instructional practices. Dr. Rose said as a district, through our mission statement, theory of action and BOE goals, we have identified the importance of 21st century skills and our need to measure and track those skills. Dr. Rose said various stakeholder groups, including students, teachers, instructional coaches, administrators, BOE members and parents worked together on what skills and attributes are needed by graduates. Students will graduate with the skills to be a collegial collaborator, a clear communicator, a civic-minded contributor, a conscientious learner and a creative and critical thinker. Next steps were shared. Click [HERE](#) to view the presentation.

- January Financial Report

Business Manager Bill Hoff reported the projected year-end shows a net surplus of \$235,662 which is a significant increase from the December projection of \$13,920. There was an overall gain of \$292,960 in SPED Tuition. The Excess Cost Reimbursement increased by \$138,910 based on the report submitted to the state on March 1. We are still using a projected 75% reimbursement rate as the state has not provided any updated guidance. There was also a gain of \$153,596 in RISE tuition. It was projected at budget, but the actual invoices are less due to having only three students rather than the six budgeted and the cost per student is lower than budgeted. Overall the combined SPED Tuition lines show a slight projected year end surplus of \$12,614. The only other significant change was an increase in the Total Salaries of \$47,930. This was due to filling two SPED teacher vacancies and a paraprofessional vacancy. There were no significant changes in projected grant revenues or expenses. The Food Service report for January shows a surplus of \$43,216. The year-

to-date surplus is \$111,618 compared to a \$109,847 deficit at this time last year. We do expect to run a surplus for the remainder of the year.

Subcommittee Reports

- February 10 - Policy – Board member Lingenfelter said four sets of policies and regulations were reviewed. The first was the immunization policy and no changes were made as the subcommittee felt the current policy covered everything necessary. The second policy reviewed was regarding materials in the library media center. The subcommittee did not feel there were any necessary changes needed as it currently allows for a mechanism for those who have concerns about materials to challenge those materials. Board member Lingenfelter said one of the changes with respect to the regulation, not the policy, was that if a material is challenged and goes through the challenge process, it cannot be challenged again for another five years. The subcommittee briefly discussed the mask policy, this was prior to the mask mandate being eliminated. Board member Lingenfelter said the policy regarding Exemption from Instruction is on a 30 Day Read. He said language regarding a firearm safety program was added as well as language that states that any student who is excused from a project or unit of study per this policy may be required to complete an alternate assignment at the discretion of their teacher or administrator.
- March 3 – Finance & Facilities – Board member Finnigan said surplus money was discussed as well as the RISE program. She said RISE is a program for 18-21 year olds that children attend. She said it is a transitional program held in Windsor Locks. Board member Finnigan said ACCE provided insight in regard to priority items, especially in regard to safety issues in the schools. She said the subcommittee will be applying for grants to address those issues. Board member Finnigan said the subcommittee discussed the presentation that will be given to the Board of Finance on March 28. She said Larry Plano, Director of Facilities, gave an update on the SHS Agriscience Food Lab and the price came in a bit higher than expected. She said Mr. Plano is reworking that and contacting some of the preferred vendors that have been used on other projects in the school.

Board Liaison Reports

- CREC – Board Chair Sattan reviewed a report from the Executive Director of CREC, Greg Florio. Board Chair Sattan said CREC is seeing momentum related to the legislative agenda, specifically a magnet school grant increase and a mechanism for funding capital improvements for CREC school facilities.
- Agriscience – Board member Fry reported that students competed in the Connecticut Floral and Garden Show. Greenhand degrees were recently given to 44 of our agsci students, FFA degrees were given to 42 of our agsci sophomores. Ceremonies were held in the auditorium during National FFA week. He said there is going to be a make and take St. Patty's Day floral event. There will be a FFA dance on Friday. Board member Fry said SHS is going to be hosting district speaking competitions later this month and will host Bloomfield, EO Smith, and Vernon agriculture centers. A number of the agsci students are bringing their dogs to school each week as part of their behavior and training coursework in order to develop the dog agility and handling schools. FFA will be hosting an accepted student day on March 17.

- CAFE – no report

Future Business

Board Chair Sattan reviewed the key she created for future business. She said the safety and security update is scheduled for March 21. Some of the future business will be rooted through Curriculum & Instruction. The student achievement review and special education are routinely requested. The preschool program review is also to be scheduled and could be covered at a BOE meeting rather than a subcommittee meeting. The nursing review is on hold at this time. Board member Finnigan would like to add World Language Prek-5, 6-12 level. Board member Antrum would like to add an update on ASTE. Board member Fry would like to ensure that the nursing review is remembered.

Public Comment

None

Board Member Comment

- Board member Gazdik said he is president of the ice hockey team and a parent of a son in high school sports and that he crosses paths with Mr. Zenczak frequently. He said he sees an increase in student engagement and with the fans and thanked Mr. Zenczak.
- Board member Drzyzga echoed Board member Gazdik and said Mr. Zenczak was going above and beyond. She said she was at the FFA degree ceremony and it was great. She said there are so many wonderful opportunities offered in the agsci program and the resources, experiences and courses are incredible. She said she wanted to give a shout out to the students because they are pretty impressive.
- Board member Cloyd asked to see the SHS agriscience area.
- Board member Fry thanked State Representative Tami Zawistowski for taking time out of her schedule to join the BOE meeting. He welcomed her to attend anytime.
- Board Chair Sattan thanked Rebecca Osleger, Director of Technology, and her technology team for creating a BOE meeting space in the SHS Library Media Center.

Adjournment

James Mol moved, Tracy Cloyd seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:21 p.m. All members voted in favor.

Click here to view the meeting:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GGxRCRYqR7GN4RyHreiFX_9UPmv41dVI/view?usp=sharing

Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of April 5, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

Jamie Drzyzga
Secretary