

Suffield, Connecticut

Approved by Bd. of Ed.

Board of Education Regular Meeting
Suffield Middle School Auditorium
and via Zoom
June 6, 2022

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 Joshua Barrows, Tracy Cloyd, Jamie Drzyzga, Melissa Finnigan, Brian Fry, Glenn Gazdik, James Mol and Maureen Sattan; and Superintendent Timothy Van Tasel; Assistant Superintendent Michelle Zawawi, and Business Manager Bill Hoff; and SHS Student Representatives Sophia Mormino and Connor Shaw

Absent: Terry Antrum

Prior to the start of the meeting, Board Chair Sattan introduced newly appointed Board member Joshua Barrows.

Recognition

Superintendent Van Tasel and the Board recognized staff members who are retiring at the end of the 2021-2022 school year. Assistant Superintendent/Interim High School Principal Michelle Zawawi spoke of Joseph Migliore, Lori O'Neil, Paula Anderson, Sharon Akkouris and Ann Colie-Lewis. Suffield Middle School Principal Ken Smith spoke of Carol Sewall. A. Ward Spaulding Principal Gina Olearczyk spoke of Lynn Gauthier, Wyn Jespersen and Jacklyn Kirchmeier. The Board thanked them for their many years of service to the Suffield Public Schools.

Superintendent Van Tasel and the Board recognized the 2023 Paraeducator of the Year, Stephen McVey, and the 2023 Suffield Teacher of the Year, Danielle Bennett as presented by Elementary Special Services Supervisor Jana Volpe and Teacher of the Year Committee Chair and Suffield Middle School teacher Cynthia Pfaff, respectively. Superintendent Van Tasel also recognized the 2021 and 2022 Teacher of the Year, Justin Kaput and Kate Sweeney. Superintendent Van Tasel also recognized the 2021 and 2022 Paraeducator of the Year, Sharon Akkouris and Doreen Tapper.

Suffield High School Student Representatives

Connor Shaw, Class of 2022, shared the news and events at Suffield High School and Suffield Middle School. Connor thanked the Board and administration for their guidance over the last two years and for giving him the opportunity to take part in the meetings. He said he was set up for success and that he appreciates the time and effort that goes into every single Board meeting.

Sophia Mormino, Class of 2023, shared the news and events at McAlister Intermediate School and A.Ward Spaulding School. Board Chair Sattan thanked Sophia and said Sophia will be the senior representative next year. Board Chair Sattan said interviews for the Junior representative will be taking place next week.

Public Comment

Dave Shute, 1165 Halladay Avenue, said he is concerned about hearing that Suffield is a racist community. He said he does not know anyone who is racist. He thanked the Board for their hard work and said he supports the Board.

Sal Covino, no address given, is concerned about safety in our schools. He said we need to protect our children no matter the expense.

William Hill, 783 Mather St, said 13 of his children went through the Suffield school system. He said we can do better regarding racism.

Dr. Kristina Hallett, 1211 Newgate Rd, said she wanted to clarify that she is not saying the whole community is racist but that we can do better. She said safety is also important. She said there are members of the community who have been trying to share that some Suffield children of color do not feel safe. She said she wants to work collaboratively with the Board.

Abdilaziz Wehelie, 975 Thrall Ave, said no organization can solve a problem if it is never acknowledged. He said we can do better. He said the existing problems regarding race cannot be ignored.

Board Member Comment

- Board member Gazdik thanked those who provided public comment and said he appreciated all aspects. He thanked the retiring staff and congratulated the Teacher and Paraeducator of the Year. He thanked the Student Representatives for the time and effort they have put in.
- Board member Drzyzga thanked the retirees for their years of service and congratulated the Paraeducator of the Year and the Teacher of the Year. Board member Drzyzga said Mrs. Bennett is truly an incredible educator. Board member Drzyzga thanked those who shared their thoughts and concerns and said we are hearing them and we are listening.
- Board member Cloyd thanked the student representatives, Connor Shaw and Sophia Mormino, and all students and teachers.
- Board member Finnigan thanked all who were recognized and said that the Teacher of the Year is an exceptional educator. She thanked the Student Representatives. Board member Finnigan said the Board is working hard on all things currently going on.
- Board member Fry welcomed Board member Joshua Barrows. He thanked Connor Shaw for the time and effort he put in for the Board. Board member Fry recognized that June is LGBTQ+ month and expressed his acceptance. He extended his thanks to the City of Springfield for offering free preschool to all. Board member Fry said previously the public had voiced concerns regarding our student handbooks and the need for improvements on language with regard to matters of racism. He said the word racism is not listed in our handbooks. Board member Fry said handbooks should be created to correlate with Board policies.
- Board member Mol thanked student representative Connor Shaw and all the retirees, Teacher of the Year and Paraeducator of the Year.
- Board Chair Sattan said budget and policy are the Board's purview. She supports looking at both areas to support the BOE goal to foster respect, civility and nondiscrimination. Board Chair Sattan does not support a rigidly prescriptive policy but said responsibly adding resources and examining founding policy language is a good place to start.

Reports to the Board

- Superintendent's Report

- Superintendent Van Tasel thanked Board member Fry for recognizing LGBTQ+ community. He thanked the retirees for their service and congratulated the Paraeducator and Teacher of the Year. He congratulated Suffield High School teacher Carl Casinghino and his students on the Audio-Visual Team for winning second place for a PSA. Superintendent Van Tasel also congratulated Matthew Sinofsky for taking second place with his PSA on texting while driving.
- Superintendent Van Tasel said we can do better and there is more we can do regarding racism and discrimination. Families need to hear all that the district has done and what we plan to do moving forward.
- Superintendent Van Tasel said there has been significant media coverage and dialogue regarding the district's response to racist and discriminatory remarks.
- Superintendent Van Tasel said racism in any form will not be tolerated.
- Superintendent Van Tasel said student matters that have occurred have been responded to and resolved.
- Superintendent Van Tasel said the teacher matter has been responded to and resolved.
- Superintendent Van Tasel reviewed a three-year snapshot discussing what the district has done in regard to racism and discrimination:
 - June 2020 – family communication noting efforts the district was making to address diversity, equity and inclusion;
 - August 2020 – our first DEI Council meeting represented by administrators, faculty, community, BOE and town leadership;
 - More than 11 meetings were held the last two years, students joined the DEI council;
 - 2020-2021 - BOE created a goal to promote diversity, equity and inclusion;
 - Each school incorporated the BOE goal into their school advancement plan which aligns with our district's advancement plan;
 - Superintendent Van Tasel outlined the many professional development endeavors that have occurred over the last two years to support our faculty and staff in meeting the needs of our diverse population of students;
 - Superintendent Van Tasel outlined several improvements to our curriculum and programming as well as financial resources that the BOE expended on district programs and services that address a wide range of topics relevant to race, gender, disability and religious identity;
 - Seeking new and creative ways to incorporate voices of marginalized communities into our curricular and extracurricular opportunities;
 - Seeking recruitment of teachers of color in the Suffield Public Schools.
- Superintendent Van Tasel said the following are areas of focus for the 2022-2023 school year:
 - Safety and Security planning
 - Redefining the DEI Council
 - Investigations training
 - Professional development on Trauma Informed Practices
 - Supporting the BOE with policy recommendations
 - Facilitation of a SHS Student Support Group
- Superintendent Van Tasel said the district will continue to communicate and collaborate with all families as we work to foster safe and welcoming schools for all.
- Superintendent Van Tasel thanked everyone for listening and to please understand that he and the administration of Suffield Public Schools are listening.
- Superintendent Van Tasel said the district does not condone and will not tolerate racism and discrimination in the Suffield Public Schools.

- Board Chair's Report
 - Board Chair Sattan thanked Board member Gazdik for chairing the May 2 BOE meeting.
 - Board Chair Sattan said this is Connor Shaw's last BOE meeting and in gratitude presented him with a gift.
 - Board Chair Sattan said Board member Joshua Barrows will be given orientation next week.
 - Board Chair Sattan said the Policy Subcommittee will have a new Chair and new member with Scott Lingenfelter's resignation.
 - Board Chair Sattan is communicating on behalf of the Board with the Suffield Race Relations Coalition to organize a small meeting with herself, Superintendent Van Tasel and representatives from the group. She said the intention to keep the meeting small on both sides is to allow for a productive two-way discourse.
 - Board Chair Sattan thanked the Board for their tremendous amount of work this month between the regular meetings, special meetings, subcommittee meetings, vacancy interviews and two student discipline hearings.

- Business Manager's Report
 - Business Manager Bill Hoff said bus transportation forms need to be completed by families.
 - Business Manager Bill Hoff thanked Human Resource Specialist, Kathy Carney, for her work with COVID testing this year as well as her work on the Walking Challenge.

- Board of Selectmen's Report
 - No report

- Board of Finance Liaison's Report
 - No report

Approval of Minutes

MOTION #22-58: James Mol moved, Tracy Cloyd seconded to approve the Board of Education meeting minutes of May 2, May 11, May 16, May 17 and May 31, 2022. Board member Fry asked for an edit to his Board member's comments in the May 2 minutes to give more detail. Board Chair Sattan edited the motion, without objection, to include those changes. All members voted in favor. Barrows abstained. The motion passed **7-0-1**.

Consent Agenda

MOTION #22-59: Cloyd moved to approve the following on the consent agenda:

- A. Suffield High School AgSci National FFA Convention Field Trip Request to Indianapolis, IN October 25-29, 2022

Fry seconded the motion. All members voted in favor of approving the consent agenda. The motion passed **8-0-0**.

MOTION #22-60: Finnigan moved to approve the following on the consent agenda:

B. Revisions of Policy #6141.322, 6141.321, 4118.51, 5131.111, 9325.1, 9352.1

Mol seconded the motion. Superintendent Van Tasel stated 6141.322 does not remove cell phones from students. The policy denotes that if a parent provides permission, or if the student is at least the age of 18, they will be permitted to have a cell phone. However, the cell phone can only be utilized before and after school or during a lunch wave. Phones must be silenced.

Board members discussed IEP/504s as it relates to student phone use. A Board member said the policy is to help students focus on learning. A Board member was concerned about setting precedent and creating more work for teachers and administrators. All members voted in favor of approving the consent agenda. The motion passed **8-0-0**.

Discussion/Action Items

- Discussion and Possible Action on FY22 Budget Expenditures and Non-Lapsing Account Planning

Board Chair Sattan said these expenses require a motion and a vote and, due to discussions that occurred last month relative to these topics, requested separate motions.

Business Manager Bill Hoff reviewed the 2021-22 EOY possible purchases that included:

- 1) Elementary math (three-year license)
- 2) World Language books
- 3) Utility vehicle
- 4) NewsELA
- 5) SHS power washing
- 6) Interactive screens for K-5
- 7) SHS Courtyard platform
- 8) SHS disc and hammer fencing
- 9) AWS hallway flooring

Board members discussed the AWS hallway tile being replaced at a later date. Board members discussed the 2021-22 projected surplus, Open Choice funds and non-lapsing accounts. Board members discussed future funding options that may be available to replace the AWS hallway flooring. Board members agreed on all purchases, excluding the AWS hallway flooring.

MOTION #22-61: Sattan moved, Gazdik seconded to approve priorities 1 through 8 for a cumulative cost of \$177,277. All members voted in favor. Barrows abstained. The motion passed **7-0-1**.

Superintendent Van Tasel reviewed the SERC (State Education Resource Center) contract in an effort to help support the district's efforts to create an inclusive and welcoming environment in Suffield Public Schools. Superintendent Van Tasel said SERC has offered to work with district school administrators, provide summer training, teacher training and student sessions.

Superintendent Van Tasel said the State Department of Education has recommended SERC to oversee and audit the African American/Black and Puerto Rican/Latino course that will be offered at the high school. Superintendent Van Tasel said the previous contract was much more broad and the current contract has been pared down. Board members discussed the controls over the content of the professional development, the schools intended to be participating, and the content of the consultant's work with the district as a whole. Superintendent Van Tasel explained the district's review of RFPs and competitive quote processes. Board members discussed the merits of holding off on the consultant, with some expressing concerns. Superintendent Van Tasel and Business

Manager Bill Hoff explained the funds would come out of FY22 and that consultants are booking quickly and timing is important. Superintendent Van Tasel explained the booking of equity consultants is happening across the state and firms are busy.

MOTION #22-62: Finnigan moved, Mol seconded to approve \$30,000 from the FY22 budget for the purpose of hiring a consultant to support the district's efforts to create safe and welcoming environments in our schools. Drzyzga, Finnigan, Gazdik, Fry and Mol voted in favor. Cloyd and Sattan voted against. The motion passed **5-2-0**.

Finnigan left at 8:32; Finnigan returned at 8:35
Barrows left at 8:35

- April Financial Report

Business Manager Bill Hoff reported on the projected surplus for the year, state and federal grants, food service and possible end of year purchases.

8:48 Cloyd left, returned at 8:51

8:48 Zawawi left, returned at 8:57

- ESSER Fund Update

Business Manager Bill Hoff reviewed the ESSER II Grant, ARP ESSER Grant and ARP SPED Grant. Overall, \$570,000 is left to allocate.

- Preschool Tuition Update

Superintendent Van Tasel said the district continues to make improvements to the preschool program. Business Manager Hoff discussed the history of preschool tuition.

MOTION #22-63: Mol moved, Cloyd seconded to approve the \$100 increase in Preschool tuition for the 2022-2023 school year making the cost \$1,700 annually as presented by Business Manager Bill Hoff. Board members discussed providing preschool at no charge. Cloyd, Drzyzga, Finnigan, Gazdik, Mol and Sattan voted in favor. Fry voted against. The motion passed **6-1-0**.

Subcommittee Reports

- May 16 – Curriculum and Instruction – Board member Drzyzga said an update on Digital Citizenship was discussed and that a Social Media Open Forum was held at Kent Memorial Library. A new history course is required at the high school level beginning next year. The EL Program has a total of 66 students enrolled and receive services from a total of three reading specialists and four academic support staff at all four schools. The World Language Program is currently being reviewed.
- May 26 – Finance and Facilities – Board member Finnigan said EOY surplus and EOY planning were discussed. Grant for HVAC is coming up that will be reviewed. Repurposing SHS Hall Monitor positions was discussed and was presented at the May 31 meeting. Construction has begun on the AgSci Food Room. Food Consumer Science Room and Large Animal Facility are also being reviewed. RFP for food service is being extended for a year.

Board Liaison Reports

- CREC – Board member Sattan said CREC is looking into creating an Open Choice Subcommittee group to examine such topics as funding, lottery placement, transportation and

academic and behavioral outcomes. Any interested Board members should see Board Chair Sattan.

- Agriscience – no report
- CABE – Board member Finnigan said she attended the Legislative Update and was pleased that district is already doing a lot of the things discussed, particularly in regards to social/emotional learning topics. There will be a new process for determining Excess Cost Sharing. Diversity in the workforce and teacher retention was discussed. For the 2024 school year another course elective to be offered will be on Asian Pacific Islanders. Rules for hybrid meetings were also discussed. Current technical pathways were discussed and how professionals in the tech world could be provided permits to teach such topics.

Future Business

- Special Education (RTS/C&I, TBS)
 - Transition Program
 - 504 Profile
- Nursing Review (HLD)

Key: RTS (Referred to Subcommittee), SNT (Scheduled Near-Term),
TBS (To Be Scheduled), HLD (On Hold)

Public Comment

Sonia Hill, 783 Mather Street, said she graduated from Suffield High School in 2004 and that she is part of the Suffield Race Relations Coalition. She said she chose her work as a teacher and understands policy. She asked that the Board and district be more courageous, more brave and that there is a request for a meeting. She said her whole life she has most often been the only black girl in a room and simply asks people to learn more about her. She requested to please invite everyone to the table.

Lesley Aryee, 190 East St S, thanked Brian Fry and Sonia Hill. She thanked Superintendent Van Tasel for his work over the last three years, but nothing has changed and no policy is in place. She said children do not feel safe and that the Board and district need to have the courage to have the difficult discussions. She said she demands the school system to stand behind her children.

Dr. Cassandre Victor Vega, 2 Melrose Lane, said as a black female and black physician, racism does exist and we need action and accountability. Dr. Victor Vega thanked Superintendent Van Tasel for the efforts and for all he has done but it is not working. She is asking to do things differently, to see action. She said it is hard to be a black and brown student in Suffield and this is about the children.

Abdilaziz Wehelie, 975 Thrall Ave, said he appreciated the preschool information shared this evening and the information on hiring diverse staff. He said policy, accountability and incident reporting need to be reviewed and that we can learn from other schools. He said the Board and district are being selective on what is shared with the community.

Amy Morales, 888 North Grand St, requested that her written correspondence be read by the Board Chair. Amy Morales wrote that as a parent of an incoming kindergarten student, it was upsetting to

hear of racial incidents in the school. She wrote that she hopes the Board will take action. She wrote that all students of color need to feel safe and that we are all responsible.

Board Member Comment

Board member Gazdik thanked all for sharing their concerns and prospective.

Board Chair Sattan said that the context of her vote on the consultant was not done in reluctance to putting money toward the student climate work but rather a desire to make sure all Board members had the information they need to make a decision. She said she was not entirely comfortable not knowing the plan.

Adjournment

Cloyd moved, Drzyzga seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:29 p.m. All members voted in favor.

Click here to view the meeting: [06JUN2022 BOE MEETING](#)

Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of July 18, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

Jamie Drzyzga
Secretary