

Suffield, Connecticut

Approved by Bd. of Ed.

Board of Education Special Meeting
Suffield High School Library Media Center
and via Zoom
July 25, 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 Terry Antrum, Joshua Barrows, Tracy Cloyd, 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

Absent: Jamie Drzyzga

Recognition

None

Public Comment

None

Board Member Comment

- Board member Fry asked that live streaming of future graduation ceremonies be reconsidered.

Reports to the Board

- Superintendent's Report
 - Dr. Van Tasel said that legislation passed requiring certified staff to have a 30-minute lunch break. He said schedules will be adjusted to accommodate this.
- Board Chair's Report
 - Board Chair Sattan said she is looking to schedule a special meeting on August 24 or August 25 to complete the Board of Education Goals and Self-Evaluation. She said Board member Fry will now chair the Policy Subcommittee.
 - Board Chair Sattan stated that Sophia Mormino will return as the Senior BOE Representative and Milo Graham will join as the Junior 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 #22-65: James Mol moved, Glenn Gazdik seconded to approve the Board of Education meeting minutes of June 6 and June 20, 2022. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **8-0-0**.

Consent Agenda

None

Discussion/Action Items

- Discussion and Possible Action on the Teacher and Administrator Evaluation Flexibilities for the 2022-2023 School Year as Recommended by the CSDE and the SPS PDEC
 - Dr. Van Tassel requested the adoption of the TEVAL Flexibilities for the 2022-2023 school year. He explained there will be more frequent informal observations and that teachers will be given performance ratings. TEVAL Flexibilities had been adopted the last two years. Dr. Van Tassel said the CSDE developed and is recommending the flexibilities, and that the PDEC has reviewed and recommends the Board adopt them. He explained the partnership the district has had with Tepper & Flynn on their work with administration on how to best provide feedback to teachers through the evaluation process. Board members discussed the frequency of observations. Dr. Van Tassel explained the number of observations for non-tenured and tenured teachers. In addition, the CSDE will be recommending a new evaluation system for Connecticut educators. Amy Tepper, our evaluation consultant, will assist the district in revising our evaluation plan to align with new CSDE expectations.

MOTION #22-66: Melissa Finnigan moved, Tracy Cloyd seconded to approve the Teacher and Administrator Evaluation Flexibilities for the 2022-2023 School Year as recommended by the CSDE and the SPS PDEC. The motion passed **8-0-0**.

- Discussion and Possible Action on FY22 Budget Transfers and Non-Lapsing Account
 - Dr. Van Tassel recognized members of the Business Office - Business Manager Bill Hoff, Payroll/Benefits Coordinator Eileen Cybulski and Accounts Payable Mary Poit - for their work closing out the 2021-2022 FY.
 - Business Manager Bill Hoff said \$50,000.00 remains in surplus. He said some projects could not be completed as planned due to supply chain issues but should be completed this year. Mr. Hoff said the Open Choice account has \$30,000.00 more than was actually budgeted for the year. A Board member asked about Magnet school tuition.

MOTION #22-67: Maureen Sattan moved, James Mol seconded to approve the FY22 Budget Transfers as presented. The motion passed **8-0-0**.

MOTION #22-68: Maureen Sattan moved, Glenn Gazdik seconded to authorize the Board of Education Chair and Superintendent to submit a formal request to the Board of Finance regarding the allocation in the amount of \$50,000 into the non-lapsing account.

- Board Chair Sattan asked for an overview of the non-lapsing account. Dr. Van Tassel provided a brief history and explained that under state statute, BOEs may carryover 2% of the BOE budget in a special town fund. He further expressed his appreciation to the Board of Finance for their support of the BOE in creating the fund, and explained the process if the BOE were to need to access the funds. Mr. Hoff stated the fund currently has a total of

\$97,079.00. Board members see the value and support the decision. Dr. Van Tassel explained the importance of maintaining open communication with the Board of Finance in regard to this account. Motion passed **8-0-0**.

- Discussion and Possible Action on AWS Kindergarten Teacher and MIS Academic Support FTEs
 - Dr. Van Tassel provided the current number of kindergarten students registered and the current number of kindergarten classes. He said the demographic studies underestimated the number of families enrolling. Dr. Van Tassel recommends keeping the kindergarten classes smaller, which would be about 16 students per class should an eighth kindergarten teacher be approved.
 - Assistant Superintendent Zawawi provided information on English Language Learners (ELL). Mrs. Zawawi said the district currently supports 60 ELL students covering 19 different languages. She said designating one academic support to cover ELL students throughout three schools, grades 3-12, would be beneficial to the program. Mrs. Zawawi said this is a non-certified position and funding is available for the position. Dr. Van Tassel said the district will need to continue to look at ELL numbers and the possibility of adding a certified ELL teacher for the 2023-2024 FY. Board members discussed the identification process for ELL students, current class sizes in grades 1 and 2, and supports for the second grade class as this is the group who entered school during the start of the pandemic.
 - Board members also discussed class sizes at AWS, space for another kindergarten classroom and funding for the position. Business Manager Bill Hoff explained the use of grant funds to support this position.

MOTION #22-69: James Mol moved, Terry Antrum seconded to approve the Spaulding Kindergarten FTE and McAlister Academic Support FTE for the 2022-2023 school year. Antrum, Barrows, Cloyd, Finnigan, Fry, Gazdik and Mol voted in favor. Sattan voted against. The motion passed **7-1**.

- Discussion and Possible Action on the CHCA AFSCME Nurses' Collective Bargaining Agreement
 - Discussion and Possible Action on the CHCA AFSCME Nurses' Collective Bargaining Agreement will occur at the August Board of Education meeting in executive session.
- Discussion and Possible Board of Education Appointment to the Cable Advisory Council
 - Board Chair Sattan said previously Deb Dudack was the BOE representative on this council and Carl Casinghino was on as a town appointee. She said Carl Casinghino has agreed to represent the BOE on this council.

MOTION #22-70: Maureen Sattan moved, Melissa Finnigan seconded to appoint Carl Casinghino as a member of the Cable Advisory Council. Motion passed **8-0-0**.

- School Grants Update
 - Business Manager Bill Hoff provided an overview of the district's total grants that are rolling over to the 2022-23 SY. He said grants currently total \$2.6 million, of that \$1 million is in Open Choice, \$850,000.00 is in ESSER and \$400,000.00 in ASTE. The ESSER grant money will need to be spent by September 2024.
 - Dr. Van Tassel said he has recently received communication for two additional grants, one for HVAC systems and one for Social Emotional Learning. A Board member asked where

the balance of \$380,000.00 in ESSER came from. Mr. Hoff said that the current balance of \$850,000.00 less the \$450,000.00 projected to spend in 2022-23.

- Suffield High School Attendance and Loss of Course Credit Presentation
 - Dr. Van Tasel introduced the Suffield High School administrative team – Principal Carrie Apanovitch, Assistant Principal Matt Dobi and Assistant Principal Shannon Insero. The administrative team provided a presentation outlining the significant impediment that is standing in the way of student performance – attendance. The principals said they believe making some changes and minor tweaks to policy language should build positive habits of mind which in turn should boost student outcomes. The principals said a policy will be brought forth to the Policy Subcommittee for review. The principals discussed how tardiness and absences affect instruction time and school climate and that more needs to be done to hold students accountable. The administrative team said an action plan has been created and measures will be put in place to change the culture to increase student attendance. The principals stated COVID-19 is not the only reason for high rates of absenteeism. The team stated interventions will be put in place and that having a well-defined policy would be helpful in working with families. They said enforcing this policy would be a school-wide effort involving not only the administrative team but the school counselors, psychologists and the school-family liaison. [SHS Attendance Policy Review Presentation](#)
 - Board members discussed how the policy would be enforced and if it would further disadvantage students. They discussed if it should have a punitive approach and how it will be communicated to families. Board members also discussed truancy versus chronic absenteeism and if data on students with anxiety could be reviewed as well as MTSS referrals. Board members asked about the impact enforcing an attendance policy would have on administration, and were wondering how other districts are dealing with the issue. The Board members were very appreciative of the presentation and looked forward to seeing the policy recommendation at the next Policy Subcommittee meeting. Board members found the data presented concerning.

Tracy Cloyd left at 8:25pm, returned at 8:29pm

Glenn Gazdik left at 8:49pm, returned at 8:53pm

- Facilities Update
 - Dr. Van Tasel met with Tecton Architects, Bill Hawkins and Colin Moll to review the long-range study and the proposals will be shared. The Joint Facilities Committee will be meeting on August 3rd at 7:00 pm, and a tri-board meeting where Tecton will present the plan and designs will likely follow. Dr. Van Tasel said he is excited for what is in store for Suffield.

Subcommittee Reports

- Board member Fry said a Policy Subcommittee meeting is tentatively planned for Wednesday, July 27, 2022.

Board Liaison Reports

- CREC – no report
- Agriscience – Board member Fry did not have a formal report but said he was pleased that his son will be attending the AgSci program at the start of the school year. He said current AgSci students were provided the opportunity to earn SAE hours over the summer by participating in various activities such as team building, general maintenance of the AgSci center, learning to

properly identify fruits, vegetables, weeds and bug species. Board member Fry said landscape equipment operation, engine repair and pest management were also offered.

- CAFE – Board member Finnigan said the CAFE Summer Leadership Conference is open for registration. Board members interested in attending should contact Melissa Bielonko.

Future Business

- Special Education (RTS/C&I, TBS)
 - Transition Program
 - 504 Profile
- Nursing Review (TBS) – Brian Fry would like sooner
- World Language Review (C&I)

Exit Interviews – Brian Fry would like the administration to report exit interview information back to the BOE.

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

Public Comment

None

Board Member Comment

- Board member Finnigan said she shared information with Dr. Van Tassel in regard to the organization Dedication to Community. Board member Finnigan received information on the organization from retired Major Michael Pendleton and she also had the opportunity to speak with the Program Director Quentin Williams. She said this organization runs pilot programs and she would like to look into bringing in a possible speaker who addresses different culture issues. Board member Finnigan said the organization helps communities deal with unrest in regards to the police and community, bringing the two facets together to begin open conversations. She said the organization has now begun to drill down into the school level. She said the pilot program works mainly with administrators and faculty. She said the idea is to bring people from different facets of the community together and have open conversations, the premise being that it is hard to hate up close. Board member Finnigan would like to see the town and Youth Services also involved.
- Board member Fry thanked Carl Casinghino for stepping up as the Cable Advisory Council liaison. He thanked Assistant Superintendent Michelle Zawawi and the Suffield High School administrative team for bringing forth the issues with attendance and providing a solution. Board member Fry restated his appeal to adjust language in the handbooks to include the district's intolerance to racism.
- Board Chair Sattan clarified that her vote against the kindergarten teacher and academic support positions were not reflective of an unwillingness to provide those specific additional positions, but rather a belief that an additional headcount could have been saved by repurposing a second grade teaching position, as was discussed during budget season.

Adjournment

Tracy Cloyd moved, James Mol seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:05 p.m. All members voted in favor.

Click here to view the meeting: [25JUL2022 BOE Special Meeting](#)

Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of August 15, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

Jamie Drzyzga
Secretary