

STONINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING April 7, 2022-Page | 1

Farouk Rajab, Board Chairman called the regular meeting to order at 6:30p.m. Members present were Heidi Simmons, Secretary, Craig Esposito, 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.

Late Arrival: Dan Kelley – 6:32 p.m.

Communications & Recognitions

Dr. Riley recognized Larry Shea, band teacher at Stonington Middle School for his recognition from Damon E. Coachman, Director of Bands at Bloomfield High School and co-chair of the Connecticut Music Educators Association for his work as the Equipment Manager for the CT Allstate Music Festival Damon Coachman day. He communicated regarding the recent NSBA conference in which Dr. Riley, Mary Anne Butler and Ravit R. Stein represented Stonington as presenters at the conference. Dr. Riley recognized the paraeducators noting that they will be recognized this week at each school with a cake to celebrate Paraeducator week. He added that the elementary schools celebrated kindness week with various activities. He communicated that Deans Mills will be having a drama production *Legally Blonde The Musical Jr.* on March 25th and 26th. Dr. Riley recognized West Vine Street School which recently did a donation collection for Ukraine and received four truckloads of supplies, food, and other items. Stonington Middle School will also have a drama production on March 26th *Scrapbook Theatre*. Deans Mill will be held a parent night last night and book fair.

Kyle Lowry recognized the high school drama department for their production of *Once Upon a Mattress*.

Kevin Agnello communicated he recently toured Deans Mill School and recognized the three student tour guides. He spoke how knowledgeable the students were about the school, teachers and support staff, which shows there must be a sense of community at Deans Mill School. He also thanked Kim McKee for her involvement in the tour.

Sara Baker welcomed Dr. Riley and Ms. Butler back from the San Diego conference and commended the administration for their work at the conference.

Heidi Simmons recognized the drama students for the *Once Upon A Mattress* production which was so impressive that the audience was in awe, it was phenomenal.

Chris Donahue recognized the Student Government students for organizing wellness week at the high school. He also recognized paraeducators. He communicated that the nurse at West Vine Street School is looking for donations of clothes and shoes. He commended the drama students at Stonington Middle School and Stonington High School for their recent productions and chorus concerts.

Dan Kelley recognized the drama production *Legally Blonde* and *Once Upon a Mattress*, noting they were both very good. He communicated the high school baseball team broke their losing streak and won again tonight. He added the Boosters always looking for volunteers in the concession stand. He recognized food service worker Ms. Vicki McCord who will be retiring, the food service staff are phenomenal, and the personal connection with the students is great. Mr. Kelley had lunch at Deans Mill School with students, they were very informative and it feels great that they are back in the schools. He also added he is glad to see the field trips going on.

Farouk Rajab thanked the staff for everything they do and is so filled with pride. He reported that Stonington crew athlete George Rodgers broke a record for crew team.

Comments from Citizens Regarding Items on the Agenda

Ashley Tewell spoke of the events at the schools, great to hear some of the things that are happening. She is excited to hear of ways the parents can get involved, and ways to have parents involved and have direct connection with administration. She would like to see two way communications. She also asked where the district stands with the opt it out program. She voiced her concern regarding a poster about the new club at the middle school and feels there should be a little more thought put into this. She asked if there could be more information to parents about these new clubs maybe through Parent Square. Would like clear transparency and communication which is really helpful.

Jennifer Evering communicated she is pleased about the trades program at the high school. She is happy to see both job fair and career fair in May and June at the school and will be there to help. The Home Builders Institute will be working with the school also. She thanked all on the Board for their help on this project. She voiced there is a need for an avenue for parents to communicate with administration. She would like to see more direct communication with the Board. Ms. Evering thanked the staff at West Vine Street School for all their work, it is a great school to be a part of. She added there is a need at the middle school for more communication with parents to ease parents' fears on certain issues. She recognized the paras noting they are very vital to a school and hopes the administration can address their needs because we need to take care of our employees.

Consent Agenda

- A. Minutes – March 10, 2022
- B. Checks and Bills – April
- C. Personnel Report
- D. Approval of 2021-22 School Calendar
- E. IDEA Grant

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

Motion 1: To approve the Consent Agenda A-E

All: Aye

Approval of Revised 2022-23 School Calendar

Heidi Simmons requested to have a discussion regarding Columbus Day and voiced her opinion regarding keeping it as Columbus Day on the calendar. Farouk Rajab, Chair gave a summary of the vote that was taken to change the day to Indigenous People's day at the Board meeting last year. Dan Kelley voiced he feels voting day should be a day off for staff and students because one of the buildings are being used for voting. Dr. Riley reported he contacted Danielle Chesebrough, Selectman requesting that the voting place be changed. However, the change brought forward was to change the voting location to the middle school rather than Deans Mill School.

The following motion was made by Dan Kelley and seconded by Sara-Baker:

Motion 2: To approve the revised 2022-23 school calendar as presented.

Vote:

Heidi Simmons – Abstained	Farouk Rajab - Yes
Sara Baker – Yes	Chris Donahue - Yes
Dan Kelley – Yes	Kevin Agnello - Yes
Craig Esposito – Yes	

Motion: Passes

Second Read/Approval of Grade 7 ELA Curriculum

No discussion regarding curriculum was had.

The following motion was made by Craig Esposito and seconded by Heidi Simmons:

Motion 3: To approve the Grade 7 ELA Curriculum.

All: Aye

First Read of Curriculum

- A. Stonington History
- B. Pottery and Designs

Farouk Rajab, Chair noted this will be back next month for the Board's approval and asked the Board to please take time to evaluate the curriculum. The Board will have an opportunity to ask questions at the next meeting.

Approval of 2022-2023 Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Statement and Food and Beverage Exemptions

The following motion was made by Chris Donahue and seconded by Craig Esposito:

Motion 4: Pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-215f, the board of education or governing authority certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction, and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, culinary programs, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or non-school organizations and groups.

All: Aye

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

Motion 5: The Board of Education or governing authority will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards and beverages not listed in Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with Page 3 of 3 | Connecticut State Department of Education an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the food and beverage items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An “event” is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The “regular school day” is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. “Location” means where the event is being held and must be the same place as the food and beverage sales.

All: Aye

Incoming Superintendent Updates

Mary Anne Butler thanked Chris Donahue for putting the spotlight on this for those students who are interested in trades. The Home Builders Institution awarded \$13,000 to the high school for students who are interested in tech opportunities. We are going to be the first school in the state that has this program and are very excited about this. Our hope is to have this ready for next September. We have two years to get program up and running. Ms. Butler shared a list of the trades that will be covered and taught under this program. Ms. Butler shared here transition plan with the Board and will post it on line on the District’s webpage. She will be looking at the old SBIT model. The Teaching and Learning Sub Committee are all in agreement that we need to do a better job with parent involvement, but want to move away from the SBIT model. She noted they will be looking at the district climate teams and will include four parent representatives. We will also have a Board member liaison at each school in the Curriculum Climate Community Team. Ms. Butler reported she is working on the Welcoming Schools Protocol, to insure schools are welcoming to all staff, students. She will have her first meet and greet on May 14th at the Pawcatuck Fire House. She noted that Mr. Agnello agreed to help with the parent survey regarding what parents expect for next school year and what they want to see. Ms. Butler suggested meeting with the Board do working policies during the summer. She reported the District is having the first interviews for the new Director of Finance and Assistant Superintendent next week. She commented that Dr. Osga has given her feedback which will help in the transition.

Dan Kelley asked how are we getting the word out to parents and inviting them to these various committees. Ms. Butler explained the principals will choose the group for the Welcoming Committee. She noted the firehouse will be advertising the meet and greet but we will also get the word out as a district.

Superintendent’s Report

Budget Reduction: Dr. Riley commented on the budget reduction from the Board of Finance of \$300,000. He assured that we will not have to do any layoffs of our current staff members. We will be looking at vacant positions that we will not fill instead of doing layoffs. He will be sharing information on the HVAC and current end of year balance.

COVID-19 Update: We have been distributing test kits and masks to staff and families. He reported that we have now

added back 95% of stops and routes and we are still keeping riding time under an hour.
Voting Location: The voting location was discussed earlier on the agenda.

Dan Kelley voiced his concern regarding students walking on roads that are unsafe and would like to see students not walk on these roads. Mr. Kelley had questions regarding the term of the First Student contract. Dr. Riley noted we have one more year under this contract it ends June 30, 2023. Chris Donahue asked if other companies are having the safe issues with shortages. Dr. Riley replied, yes. Mr. Kelley asked if running our own buses is an option. Dr. Riley noted it is very expensive to have your own buses, but will get more information on this topic. Gary Shettle gave an overview of cost to run buses and the logistics surrounding this issue. He advised the Board not to go this route. Craig Esposito shared his experience with LEARN regarding this issue and noted there is very little movement in bidding among bus companies. Mr. Kelley voiced his concern is safety of the students, and is glad and glad to see we are looking at as many options as possible.

Discussion Regarding District Memorials

Farouk Rajab, Chair explained last month we had a request for a donation to the Desmond Way project. Dr. Riley noted we collected some examples of other district and reached out to our attorney and were advised not to use district money for this type of item. He noted once an item is on our campus we need to maintain it. Our attorney suggested we look for other ways to privately fund. Dr. Riley asked the Board to give him some type of direction. Chair Rajab asked the Board to look at the information and come up with a policy to have in place that recognize people in the community. He communicated this item will come back at the May meeting.

Monthly Reports

Heidi Simmons commented on the Student Government report and commended the students and the need to promote positive and mental health around the school. She added she attended the recent anxiety workshop. Farouk Rajab, Chair had questions surrounding the chimney at the middle school. Mr. Smith and Gary Shettle explained the contractor will be returning to seal the chimney.

Items for Future Agendas

Dr. Riley noted we will be having retirement recognitions at May Board Meeting. Kyle Lowry would like the Junior Project on the May meeting agenda. Kevin Agnello spoke about the process behind African/Latino curriculum and the need to discuss as a Board how to advocate any state curriculum. He would like to reach out to Representative Howard and Senator Somers to discuss this topic to voice the Board's opposition. Farouk Rajab, Chair requested to invite both to speak on this issue. Craig Esposito requested a list of school end of the year events.

Board Comments/Concerns

Heidi Simmons extended her appreciation to parents who attended the Board meeting and asked to continue the discussion of parent engagement. Chris Donahue also thanked parents that came out to the meeting, and gave a shout out to Mr. and Mrs. Evering for their help with the trades program, their time is appreciated. Dan Kelley would like a get a tour of facilities. Farouk Rajab, Chair said Dr. Betty Osga will be doing workshop with the Board to work on goals for next year in May. Chair Rajab spoke about the budget and the need to have the budget pass and the importance of voting. We will not cut people or programs. He is committee to all Stonington Public Schools staff. We need to focus on priority number one which is children.

Adjournment

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

Motion 6: To adjourn 8:07 p.m.

All: Aye


Heidi Simmons, Secretary