

SAUQUOIT VALLEY CENTRAL SCHOOL
Sauquoit, NY 13456

Public accessed the meeting live starting at 7:00 p.m. at <https://youtu.be/kh9BDR306iw> which was located on the school website at www.svcasd.org.

Date of Meeting: Tuesday, February 23, 2021

Kind of Meeting: Regular

Presiding Officer: Mrs. Dawn Miller, President

Meeting was called to order by Mrs. Miller at 7:27 p.m.

Members Present: Dawn Miller, Anthony Nicotera, Michele Brennan-Vuocolo, Ronald Critelli, James Dever, Todd Nelson, and Christine Weber-Mangini

Administrators Present: Ronald Wheelock, Superintendent of Schools
Charles Cowen, Business Administrator;
Brian Read, High School Principal,
Pete Madden, Middle School Principal,
Mark Putnam, Elementary Principal and
Doug Jones, Athletic Director.

Others Present: Staff, community members and Derek LaLonde (MORIC).

Pledge of Allegiance – The pledge of allegiance was recited.

Public to Be Heard - Dawn Miller, President of the Board thanked the public for their comments that the board received from them. The board received seven (7) letters from parents and two (2) from students who asked to have their letters read aloud during public to be heard. Mrs. Miller read all the letters but one, as the writer requested (in the chat room) to not read it as he felt his letter expressed the same feelings and information as the others she was reading. All the letters addressed their support in letting students participate in high risk sports as long as the protocols are met and followed. Letters read were from: Mike Makuszak, Kathleen Makuszak, Dale Walker/Shannon Rogalski, Kristi Christian, and Karen Price. Mrs. Miller thanked everyone for writing and giving their feedback to the board. Mr. Wheelock expressed his gratitude as well for the maturity, respect and heartfelt passion shown in the letters.

Mark Perry and Karen Price expressed their concerns as to having the students attend school five (5) days a week and eliminating the all remote Wednesdays. Students are missing the socialization. Mr. Wheelock shared that social distancing guidelines limits the number of students we can have in person. He further cited that we have go live remote and in-person Monday through Friday with the exception of Wednesdays since our return from full remote instruction. Currently, the instructional staff in grades 5-12 are still preparing asynchronous lessons for students that are fully remote and for students on their designated remote days to engage in when the teacher is doing more hands on work with students in-person. If guidelines are changed, the District will reassess how any changes could impact our mode of instruction.

Mr. Nelson questioned the opportunity of the local NYSUT to assist in getting vaccinations for the teachers. One major issue is the supply of vaccine. Many of our staff agree to get it but having a hard time to get an appointment.

Kevin Claus asked if the public has the right to vote on the budget. Mr. Wheelock stated, "Yes." If the Board votes to exceed the 2% tax rate then an approval vote must be received from 60% of the residents in the district.

Students to Be Heard - Dawn Miller, President of the Board received two (2) letters from students that she read. The letters referenced their request for a positive vote to approve the participation in high risk sports. Student letters read were from Michael Makuszak and Jacob Jouben.

Presentation(s) – There was none.

Board of Education Sub-Committee Reports –

Policy – A draft policy is on tonight's addendum for the board's approval to post to the website for the public to view and comment on up to 30 days. The District must adopt a policy on a Pandemic Response Safety Plan. At the March 9th meeting the plan will be shared and open for public comment. At the March 23 board meeting the Board will vote on the policy. The Pandemic Response Safety Plan is expected to be adopted by April 1, 2021.

Audit/Finance – A budget meeting was held prior to this meeting. During this time the principals spoke on the programs that are offered and the impact it will have on the students if cut. They also touched on the importance of the benefits to update and get new ones for our educational process and strategic goals to excel.

Revenue to support these programs every year is unpredictable especially not knowing to what level the state will support education. We are looking for the board to go out to the taxpayers with a 2% tax increase which is currently above the 2% tax cap limit. Our current tax cap limit is 0.19%. Mr. Nelson felt that there really is no choice but to go above the tax cap. To fill the \$600k gap by not going above the tax cap and by using \$150k of the fund balance is not solving a problem. Mr. Nelson would like to go to the

public for an increase in the tax cap and also have the board as a whole to establish a 2 to 3 year plan to resolve or have a plan to guide them for the future as to getting the fund balance back up to a reasonable figure to work with. He also went on to say that if the board agrees to a 2% it is only addressing next year's budget and not addressing the fund balance. Mr. Nelson praised Mr. Cowen for his knowledge and expertise in the finances and believes that Mr. Cowen is correct in that the school cannot go day to day and year to year using the fund balance without increasing it, as it will deplete at some point. Mr. Nelson is not comfortable at 2% and thinks the tax vote should be a little higher than that.

Mr. Dever spoke on the reduction of expenditures. It is a very hard thing to eliminate. The revenue amount does not seem to change. He is 100% in agreement with Mr. Nelson to establish a 2 to 3 year plan. It is understandable that the figures will not be accurate due to the unknown revenue but at least it will give some guidance to the budget and where the school stands financially. SVCSD is near the bottom compared to other schools in the state. Mrs. Weber-Mangini asked Mr. Wheelock to explain to the public about the tax vote if it gets defeated. Mr. Wheelock explained that if the budget vote is defeated, the tax levy stays at this year's amount. A second vote can occur but if defeated, the amount stays as is. Mr. Nicotera explained that that would mean there will be no change but the increases will occur and the school will struggle to make up that amount in the future. Mr. Nicotera supports a 2.5% increase if it puts the school in a better position. Mrs. Miller agrees with Mr. Nicotera but also understands the difficult financial position some families are facing during the COVID epidemic. Mrs. Miller supports a 2%. Mrs. Weber Mangini and Ms. Brennan-Vuocolo agreed with Mrs. Miller at a 2% tax increase. Many businesses are being affected financially at this time and need to be considered when making this decision. Mr. Critelli agrees that this time is going to be hard on families if the tax increase is 2 or over 2%. Mrs. Weber-Mangini went on to agree with the importance of a committee to work on the future long term planning to fill the void in the fund balance. Mrs. Miller also agrees that it would be difficult to increase the fund balance in one year but over a couple years a long range plan can help increase it so the district is not as fiscally stressed as it is. Mr. Nelson asks the board to think about presenting a 4% increase to the public so they can then come forward and voice their opinion as to what amount they can afford and willing to increase the tax amount to. It is only a suggestion that will give the community opportunity to give feedback as they have with the high risk sports. Mr. Wheelock agrees to the planning but it is very difficult to accurately plan with the unknown revenue that schools are faced with yearly. Mr. Cowen can establish a 5 year plan but it will change after year one. The state has a funding formula that they have not been able to follow. The only thing is that we know the schools receive very little increase from year to year. Mr. Wheelock went on to say that from the comments made tonight there is a willingness to breach the tax cap. A report card is mailed out just before the vote and it would be wise to send a preliminary budget report card to share with the public and give the public a date and time to meet or join by virtual to be able to ask questions. Potential savings with BOCES will be discussed at the next meeting. Many of the services of BOCES is reimbursed.

Several questions were made from the chat room and answered about the election, budget, and capital projects. The nature of a future project will focus on building

infrastructure needs (roofs, HVAC, brick re-pointing, elevators, etc.) and renovation of the stadium field (turf replacement and drainage).

Superintendent's Report

- There are three open board positions. Board petitions are due Monday, April 19, 2021 by 5:00 p.m. Please drop them off at the Superintendent's Office in the upper end of the Elementary Building. Anyone can stop by and pick up the petitions, if they would like to run.
- Reminder - BOCES Annual Meeting, Wednesday, April 14, 2021, 5:00 p.m., Oneida BOCES. If interested in attending, please contact Marie Goodman to register.

Old Business

- High Risk Sports – After review of the letters and comments made from the public and students a vote was casted to participate in high risk sports.

Resolution No. 38 made by Mr. Nelson, and seconded by Ms. Brennan-Vuocolo,

- to approve participating in high risk sports. (this includes the sports of boys and girls basketball, boys and girls volleyball, wrestling, football, and competitive cheerleading)

Carried: Ayes 7, Nays 0.

The plan was submitted to the county and the County will not act on it until our Board approves it first.

- Public Budget meeting – Discussed above.

New Business

Mrs. Miller stated that action items 9.1 to 9.10 will be read as a consent motion and take one vote. If there are any questions or comment, members can do so prior to vote or pull a motion for further discussion.

Resolution No. 39 made by Mrs. Weber-Mangini, and seconded by Mr. Nicotera,

- to appoint Emma Filipkowski as per diem substitute teacher aide effective February 10, 2021.
- to adopt the 185 day calendar for the 2021-2022 school year as recommended by the Superintendents of Oneida, Herkimer, and Madison counties.
- to adopt revised Gender Neutral Single-Occupancy Bathroom Facilities Policy.

- to adopt revised Leave of Absence for COVID-19 Qualifying Reasons Policy.
- that the Treasurer's Reports of Balances for January 31, 2021 be approved as presented.
- that the minutes of the February 2, 2021 meeting be approved.
- that authorization be given regarding the payment of bills approved by the claims auditor (dated Feb. 28, 2021).
- that the Board of Education upon completion of its review of the IEP in accordance with Section 200.4(d)(2) of the Regulations of the Commissioner agrees to arrange for appropriate special education programs and services for students numbered 1400625, 1401319, 1401035, 1401073, and 1400318 as recommended by the Committee on Special Education.
- to approve Lorraine Orr as a per diem substitute teacher aide, effective February 24, 2021.
- to approve the Pandemic Safety Plan for public to view and comment.
Carried: Ayes 7, Nays 0.

Miscellaneous Topics –

- Mr. Dever asked, "What the timeline was for the sport seasons?" Mr. Wheelock stated February 1 to March 13 (Winter Sports); March 1 to April 26 (Fall II Sports); and April 19 to a date in June pending if there are regents exams.

Resolution No. 40 made by Mr. Critelli, and seconded by Mrs. Weber-Mangini, that the Board of Education go into executive session at 9:15 p.m. to discuss negotiations.

Carried: Ayes 7, Nays 0.

The executive session was declared over by the Board President at 9:45 p.m.

Resolution No. 41 made by Mrs. Weber-Mangini, and seconded by Ms. Brennan-Vuocolo, that the Board of Education meeting be adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Carried: Ayes 7, Nays 0.

Respectfully submitted,



Marie Goodman,
District Clerk
Board of Education

