

Board of Education Regular Meeting
Suffield High School Library Media Center
and via Zoom Webinar
December 4, 2023

Call to Order

Superintendent Van Tasel called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Board members Josh Barrows, Tracy Cloyd, Debra Dudack, Melissa Finnigan, Brian Fry, Glenn Gazdik, James Mol (via Zoom), Maureen Sattan and Samuel Toskin; and Superintendent Timothy Van Tasel, Assistant Superintendent Michelle Zawawi and Business Manager Eric Remington

Absent: None

Election of Officers

Superintendent Van Tasel explained the process as outlined in Board Bylaw #9120.

- **Board of Education Chair** – Gazdik nominated Sattan for Board of Education Chair. Sattan accepted the nomination. There were no other nominations.

MOTION #24-17: Gazdik moved to close the nominations for Board of Education Chair, Cloyd seconded the motion. Fry spoke in favor of Sattan. A roll call was conducted and votes tallied.

MOTION #24-18: All members voted in favor of electing Maureen Sattan as Board of Education Chair. The motion carried **9-0-0**.

- **Board of Education Vice Chair** – Cloyd nominated Finnigan for Board of Education Vice Chair. Finnigan accepted the nomination. Mol nominated Fry for Board of Education Vice Chair. Fry accepted the nomination.

MOTION #24-19: Sattan moved to close nominations for Board of Education Vice Chair, Gazdik seconded the motion. Mol spoke in favor of Fry. A roll call was conducted and votes tallied.

MOTION #24-20: Barrows, Cloyd, Finnigan, Gazdik, Sattan and Toskin voted for Finnigan. Dudack, Fry and Mol voted for Fry. Melissa Finnigan was elected as Board of Education Vice Chair in a **6-3-0** vote.

- **Board of Education Secretary** – Fry nominated Dudack for Board of Education Secretary. Dudack accepted the nomination. There were no other nominations.

MOTION #24-21: Fry moved to close nominations for Board of Education Secretary, Gazdik seconded the motion. Fry spoke in favor of Dudack. A roll call was conducted and votes tallied.

MOTION #24-22: All members voted in favor of electing Debra Dudack as Board of Education Secretary. The motion carried **9-0-0**.

Recognition

None

Suffield High School Student Representatives

Milo Graham, Class of 2024, shared the news and events at Suffield High School and Suffield Middle School. Student Representative Graham said the SHS Drama Club showcased Sherlock Holmes. On December 17 the Choir Concert will be performing at Second Baptist Church and on December 19 the SHS Band and Choir Concert will perform at SHS. Fall Sports have ended and winter sports have begun. SHS students are preparing for midterms. At Suffield Middle School the Second Annual Global Celebration Series and Food Drive was a huge success. SMS is holding a toy drive beginning December 11. SMS students Aubrey Couchon and Harlow Matteson were recognized by the North Central Connecticut Chamber of Commerce with the Act of Kindness Award. The Music Department released the cast list for their production of *Beauty and the Beast Jr.* The SMS Band Winter Concert is December 12 and the Winter Choral Concert is December 14. SMS has started a new initiative called the Positive Referral Program.

Keila Silva, Class of 2025, shared the news and events at McAlister Intermediate School and A. Ward Spaulding School. Student Representative Silva said Veterans Day celebrations were held at both schools. The AWS composting kickoff was a success. Students are learning about basic coding and how to build those skills through an interactive website. Fourth and fifth grade students at MIS have finished learning about musical instruments. Fifth grade has completed their unit on investigative journalism and students participated in mini conferences with several Suffield Observer reporters.

Public Comment

None

Board Member Comment

- Board Vice Chair Finnigan congratulated the elected officers. She said Board member Dudack had previously held the position of BOE Secretary and thinks she will do an amazing job. She thanked Board Chair Sattan for her work and she looks forward to the next two years.
- Board member Dudack congratulated the elected officers and said she is excited to be back on the BOE.
- Board members Barrows and Cloyd welcomed the new BOE members and congratulated the elected officers.
- Board member Fry congratulated the elected officers and welcomed new members. He said he is interested in hearing updates on the CIRMA review, fire safety matters and playscapes/playgrounds.
- Board member Gazdik congratulated the elected officers.
- Board member Mol congratulated the elected officers, welcomed Board member Toskin and welcomed back Board member Dudack. He said he looks forward to another two years with the BOE.
- Board member Toskin congratulated the elected officers and thanked Dr. Van Tassel, Board Chair Sattan and all BOE members for welcoming him. He thanked everyone for the opportunity to serve on the BOE.
- Board Chair Sattan thanked Terry Antrum for the two years he served on the BOE and recognized him for his contributions. She said Suffield is fortunate to have him in his position as a Suffield Police Officer.

Reports to the Board

- Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Van Tassel congratulated the elected BOE officers and thanked all BOE members for their commitment. He said the BOE had previously held an executive session to review the CIRMA

Safety and Security Report and another annual review will be scheduled. Superintendent Van Tassel has received revisions to the Memorandum of Understanding between the Suffield Police Department and the Board of Education relative to the School Resource Officer position. Once the MOU is finalized, it will be brought to the BOE for review. He said the fire safety matters can be discussed at the January BOE meeting and Business Manager Remington will compile a list of projects that had been discussed during the Finance and Facilities Subcommittee meetings. The full shipment of playscapes is expected before the winter break and installation is anticipated to take 4-5 weeks. Superintendent Van Tassel said the FY25 Budget Proposal will be presented to the BOE at the January 2 meeting. He said the district was notified that its submission for an elementary reading waiver was not approved and in order for the district to be in compliance, it must invest in a new reading program. This will have a significant impact on the budget, however, a two-year phase in period may be possible. The Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee can share more information relative to the waiver process. Superintendent Van Tassel recognized the SHS Drama club for their performance of Sherlock Holmes. He acknowledged the district's music program K-12 and said Suffield High School had five instrumental musicians and three vocalists elected onto the seat of Connecticut Music Educators Association, Northern Regional Band and Choir. Over 100 of the district's fall athletes were named All-Academic Awardees, 22 of the fall high school athletes received either All Conference, All State or All New England. He congratulated the SHS Girls Soccer team on making it to the finals and the Boys Cross Country team for placing second in the State of Connecticut. Superintendent Van Tassel wished all of the winter sport athletes and performers good luck in the coming months.

- Board Chair's Report

Board Chair Sattan said the Veterans Day programming and celebrations were quite moving. She gave thanks to Assistant Superintendent Zawawi, building administrators and the Board members who were able to attend. She thanked Colonel Dan Cloyd, who was a keynote speaker at all four schools, as well as his wife, Board member Tracy Cloyd. She gave a special thank you to Board member James Mol for speaking at the high school celebration and sharing his personal Veterans story with the community. The November CAFE/CAPSS Convention provided many breakout sessions and included a keynote speaker topic on Artificial Intelligence. Board Chair Sattan said she attended breakout sessions on the Science of Reading, Social Media and Student Discipline. If Board members have questions relative to those topics, please reach out to her.

- Business Manager's Report

Mr. Remington said the budget process is behind schedule but is making progress and should be ready before Christmas. Payroll has made some process improvements, transportation has stabilized and Food Service labor has also stabilized. He said he is working to increase breakfast sales at the secondary level and building administrators have been working to create initiatives. Mr. Remington said it has been a challenge collecting negative balances due to students charging meals and he is looking to find a long-term solution relative to that.

- Board of Selectmen's Report

None

- Board of Finance Liaison's Report

None

Approval of Minutes

MOTION #24-23: Finnigan moved, Sattan seconded to approve the Board of Education meeting minutes of November 6, 2023 and November 20, 2023. A Board member stated that the November 20, 2023 minutes should reflect that Board member Finnigan seconded to go into executive session for the purpose of holding Board of Education candidate interviews. Board Chair Sattan said that change will be made, amending the motion without objection. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **9-0-0**.

Milo Graham left the meeting at 7:08 p.m.

Consent Agenda

None

Discussion/Action Items

- October Financial Report

Mr. Remington said the September Food Service Financial Report had reflected a significant loss for the period and that was due to some 12 month expenses where our revenue is over 10 months. Positive net income was generated for October but a loss is still projected for the full year. He said an increase in breakfast sales would hopefully generate revenue as it is fully reimbursed by the state.

In the BOE budget to actual report, salary line items show a surplus of \$16,000. Health benefits are running favorably as fewer staff than budgeted are enrolled. Family coverage costs the district approximately \$28,000 per employee. Transportation is showing a surplus due to running fewer buses than budgeted. Special Education transportation is currently showing a deficit but is subject to change. Mr. Remington said the pension contribution has many facets and will be discussed further during budget discussions.

Board members discussed pension contributions and professional services and other professional services.

- Discussion Regarding BOE Committees

Board Chair Sattan reviewed Bylaw #9130. She requested Board members to email her their subcommittee preferences, if they would be willing to chair a subcommittee or not and to provide a sense of availability at different times of day. She said she would like to hold subcommittee meetings when it makes sense for Board members but also for staff. Board Chair Sattan reviewed the four subcommittees listed in the Bylaw. She said the Community Engagement and Public Relations Subcommittee has seen limited activity and the Board can determine what subcommittees they would like. Board Chair Sattan said the creation of a Data Subcommittee had been considered and could be created to help establish the desired student achievement data. She said there had been some discussion about reviving the Community Engagement and Public Relations Subcommittee due to the building project. Negotiations is an Ad-Hoc Committee and the Board could consider having a Data Ad-Hoc Committee. She said the Board has eight non-officio members and having four members to a subcommittee would make sense. Board Chair Sattan summarized that Board members appear to want to keep the CEPR Subcommittee, Policy, Curriculum and Instruction, and Finance and Facilities that would give the BOE their target of four subcommittees. She said the Board could create a Data Ad-Hoc Committee.

Board members discussed the importance of the CEPR Subcommittee but said it does not need to meet as frequently due to school level newsletters covering many topics. Data could be addressed

at the Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee meetings. Board members said CEPR was created around the time of leadership turnover, it served a useful purpose and a CEPR Ad-Hoc Committee could be beneficial. Board members questioned if the C&I Subcommittee is overloaded and if data was used to steer decisions. BOE members discussed the importance of data and rigor review and what would be manageable.

MOTION #24-24: Fry moved, Mol seconded to move Bylaw #9130 to the BOE Agenda for the purpose of Discussion and Action. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **9-0-0**.

Board Chair Sattan said she would like to add a bullet under Ad-Hoc Committees and write Data.

MOTION #24-25: Fry moved, Sattan seconded to move Bylaw #9130 with the change of adding Data to the Ad-Hoc Committee be moved to 30-day read. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **9-0-0**. [30-day read Bylaw #9130](#)

- Discussion Regarding Senior Privileges

Superintendent Van Tasel provided a brief background on Senior Privilege Policy #6113 and thanked the high school administrators for their recommended changes to different policies and procedures that have been impacting student performance. Suffield High School Assistant Principals Shannon Inero and Matt Dobi provided a presentation relative to Senior Privilege. Assistant Principal Inero said administration is sharing the proposed changes with the Board because they feel it will be beneficial to students. Assistant Principal Dobi explained how Senior Privilege works for students. Assistant Principal Inero explained how students can earn and lose the privilege and she reviewed both current and recommended practices. She explained how a balanced schedule is created and why teachers of certain subjects request to not have a first or last period class due to Senior Privilege. Assistant Principal Dobi said students were informally surveyed and the majority said they would prefer having Senior Privilege seventh period. Assistant Principal Inero said any changes to Senior Privilege would occur next year. Principal Apanovitch said the work Assistant Principal Inero does with scheduling is complex and the constraints compound and that is why limiting Senior Privilege to one period would be impactful. Principal Apanovitch said this change is what would be best for programming and would allow for a robust amount of classes that would be more evenly spread out.

Board members discussed providing students the option of first or last period, potentially increasing community service hours, requiring eligible students to have As and Bs only and requiring letters of recommendation from teachers. Student Representative Silva shared the impact schedule changes made due to Senior Privilege have on the classroom experience, that C grades should be allowed as some students cannot achieve only As and Bs and that letters of recommendation should not be required as that would be a heavy lift for staff. Board members reported how this policy was discussed at the Policy Subcommittee meeting, which had a small quorum, and due to divided opinion it was decided to bring it to the full Board for input. Board members discussed determining grade requirements, what periods should be available for Senior Privilege, possibly grandfathering students in and how changes would be received by the community.

Glenn Gazdik left the meeting at 8:14 p.m.

Keila Silva left the meeting at 8:28 p.m.

Subcommittee Reports

- November 13, 2023 – Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee Meeting – Board Chair Sattan said Connecticut State Health Standards were reviewed.

- November 30, 2023 – Finance and Facilities Subcommittee Meeting – Board Vice Chair Finnigan said financial reports were reviewed and contracted medical expenses are down. First Selectman Colin Moll gave his presentation on his recommendation from the Joint Facilities Committee for the proposed middle school project. Questions on the building project should be directed to Board Vice Chair Finnigan or Board Chair Sattan. The ACCE list was reviewed and discussed briefly, the HVAC Grant has been submitted for a second time and the request for digital signage was denied by the PZC. Dr. Van Tasel and Mr. Remington attended the BOF meeting on November 13 and provided a budget update. FY25 Budget preparation is underway.
- December 1, 2023 – Policy Subcommittee Meeting – Board member Fry said Policy #6141.322 Bring Your Own Technology will be pulled from 30-day read for further review. The following policies were reviewed and will remain on 30-day read: Policy #6146 Graduation Requirements, Policy #5141.221 Pediculosis and Policy #4112.4 Employee Health Examinations. Policy #6113 Senior Privilege was reviewed and discussed and will be brought forward at a future business meeting. Board member Fry said adding community service time to the Graduation Requirements Policy should be considered as a recommended change in the future.

Board Liaison Reports

Board Chair Sattan said the Board Liaison positions will be structured before the next business meeting.

- CREC – No update.
- Agriscience – Board member Fry said the agriscience students are busy with the holiday sale.
- CABE – Board Vice Chair Finnigan attended the CABE/CAPSS Convention with Board Chair Sattan. She attended the Legislative Session and the Career Pathways Session.

Future Business

None

Public Comment

None

Board Member Comment

- Board member Cloyd thanked the Suffield High School Administrators for their presentation.
- Board member Fry said the digital signage request had support from all town Boards with the exception of the Planning and Zoning Commission. He said he felt it was a miscarriage of their responsibilities to have ignored virtually every entity in town. They did not reflect the wants and needs of the community.
- Board member Mol thanked the Technology Department for the webinar system and said the sound was great and the video was clear.

Adjournment

Cloyd moved, Finnigan seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:57 p.m. All members voted in favor.

Click here to view the meeting: [04DEC2023 BOE Meeting](#)

Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of January 2, 2024

Respectfully submitted,
Debra Dudack
Secretary