

STONINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING December 14, 2023-Page | 1

Complete Board Meeting can be heard on the Stonington Public Schools YouTube Channel at:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFXjoLyIU1KT9YnO3SQSryQ/>

Farouk Rajab, Board Chairman called the regular meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Members present were Chris Donahue, Dan Kelley, Kate Gauthier, Meghan Blanchette, and Sara Baker. Board Member Absent – Kevin Agnello. Also present were Mary Anne Butler, Superintendent of Schools, Recording Secretary, Ana de Oliveira, Student Government Representative, Catherine Statchen, and members of the administrative staff and citizens.

Farouk Rajab, Chair started the meeting with a moment of silence to recognize the tragedy of Sandy Hook eleven years ago.

Communications & Recognitions

Mary Anne Butler, Superintendent recognized Allison Van Etten for her work on applying for a possible participation in a pilot program named the Early Childhood Consultation Partnership consultant partnership. The purpose of the 12-week training is to support kindergarten teachers at West Vine Street School in social-emotional supports. Mrs. Butler also attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony at the high school for the opening of both West Vine Street School and the high school Child and Family clinics together with State Senator Somers, State Representative Bumgardner, and Child and Family administrators. Stonington Middle School had a performance of Beauty and the Beast, which is the last performance sponsored by Scrapbook Theatre. She noted that Beth Bromley and Lori Liguori would be the two drama advisors in the spring for that performance. She also recognized the Stonington Middle School Sing Rays for their performance at the Borough Holiday Stroll and the high school and middle school holiday concerts this past week. She recognized and will be delivering special awards and prizes to two special education paras at West Vine Street School, Deanna Gharios and Dawn Keeley who had perfect attendance in September, October, and November. George Crouse will be inducted into the 2024 Connecticut High School Coaches Association Hall of Fame on May 9th at a dinner at the Aqua Turf. Mrs. Butler also recognized and thanked Peter Anderson for his five years of service to Stonington Public Schools, and his various accomplishments during his tenure, and wished him well in his new position in Madison, CT.

Farouk Rajab, Chair recognized and thanked Peter Anderson for his years of service noting he has big shoes to fill. He added he will be missed. Chair Rajab presented Mr. Anderson with a gift of appreciation. Catherine Statchen, Student Government Representative thanked Mr. Anderson for his help with their senior project. She gave a shout out to Mr. Brown who had all the branches of the military visit for Military Day, which gave seniors and juniors an opportunity to learn more about the military branches. She gave a shout out to Mr. Stanley in the chorus department for next week's concert. She noted that the choir has gone down to the middle school to work with the 8th-grade chorus and create that connection. Chris Donahue thanked Peter Anderson for making it easy to head the Finance and Facilities Sub Committee, noting it was great working with him, and wished him luck on his new endeavors. Mr. Donahue congratulated Mr. Crouse on his award. He recognized both middle school and high school for their great concerts. Dan Kelley thanked Peter Anderson and gave a shout out to the chamber choir from the middle school for sharing their talents with the community. Sara Baker echoed the gratitude to Peter Anderson and added he will be missed. She acknowledged that Mr. Anderson is leaving the district in a good position to carry on and build on his good work. Kate Gauthier also congratulated Peter Anderson adding he will be missed.

Comments from Citizens Regarding Items on the Agenda

Farouk Rajab, Chair reviewed the rules regarding public comments.

Dylan Lawrence commented on the school calendar and school start times. He requested that the Board look at changing the start times, making the high school start later and elementary start earlier. He shared his view and reasons for this change.

Ashley Tewell communicated she attended the recent Board of Finance meeting. She expressed her frustration regarding the decision on the HVAC item. She asked that the Board of Education continue to push it and continue to remind the Board of Finance that they cannot keep putting it off. She also voiced her thoughts regarding the school calendar and the idea of changing the school start times.

Board Presentation – Housing Development/Potential Enrollment Impact - Clifton Iler, Town Planner gave a presentation on the upcoming development projects in Stonington. He also explained the projections of the number of students per development. Farouk Rajab, Chair had questions regarding application waivers and if the projects are all in Pawcatuck. Mr. Iler answered the Board's questions and shared a handout with information on all the potential and approved projects. Dan Kelley asked which projects were approved and suggested that the Board make a formal vote to submit a letter to Planning and Zoning requesting the stop to all waivers. Chair Rajab asked if the Board was in agreement to send a letter to Planning and Zoning with this request. Chair Rajab questioned some of the numbers in the report. Mr. Iler noted he would confirm and review them with the committee.

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

Motion 1: To send a letter to the Planning and Zoning on behalf of the Board to stop waivers.

All: Aye – Motion Passes

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Report of the Superintendent of Schools

Introduction of the new Director of Facilities and Operations - Mary Anne Butler, Superintendent introduced and welcomed Stephen Carroll the new Director of Facilities and Operations who comes with 26 years of experience from Montville. Mr. Carroll thanked the administration for adding him to the team.

HVAC grant update - Mrs. Butler thanked Mrs. Tewell and other parents for attending the Board of Finance meeting to support the HVAC. She noted there will be two more opportunities to apply for funding again this summer.

Upcoming Events – Mrs. Butler shared information on the upcoming Witness Stone Project happening on December 18th at the United Theatre. The SHS choral performance will take place on December 19th. Dr. Osga will do a retreat on Monday, February 12th at 8:30 am for all the new Board members. Mrs. Butler also shared information regarding her monthly talk show with WBLQ Radio, adding is a great way to get information out about the schools.

CIP Approval/Review

Dan Kelley noted he would vote against the approval of the CIP for several reasons. He voiced why would the Board send it to them and expect them to make their cuts without the Board reviewing their operation budget first. He also commented the previous superintendent looked at doing a middle school on the high school property and it may be time to look at a building committee to review this idea. Farouk Rajab, Chair explained the CIP and the increases in some of the items. Chris Donahue and Dan Kelley had questions on costs associated with the turf field and its life span. Mr. Anderson answered their questions.

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

Motion 2: To approve the CIP for submission to the Board of Finance.

Farouk Rajab – Yes	Dan Kelley – No
Sara Baker – Yes	Chris Donahue – Yes
Meghan Blanchette – Yes	Kate Gauthier – Yes

Motion - Passes

2023-24 School Calendar Update/Approval

Mary Anne Butler asked for a vote to switch May 2nd Professional Development Day to April 2nd to accommodate the Primary Election Day.

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

Motion 3: To make the changes to this year's calendar.

All: Aye – Motion Passes

Consent Agenda

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

Motion 4: To approve the consent agenda items A-C.

All: Aye – Motion Passes

Sub Committee Reports

Teaching and Learning Sub-Committee – Sara Baker reported there is no news to report because they have not met since October but will have plenty in the new year.

Finance and Facilities Sub-Committee- Chris Donahue reported on the HVAC system and going forward will be getting the budget ready for the Board of Finance. Sara Baker asked Mr. Donahue if the Board of Finance gave a timeline on the HVAC item. He noted they said two years on the HVAC.

Policy Sub-Committee - Dan Kelley reported on the meeting this past Monday. He shared information on the policies for first read, second read, and repeal noting more information can be found on the links on the agenda.

Policies for Second Read –Vote Required

[P5141.25 – Students with Special Health Care Needs](#)

[P5111.1 – Registration Requirements for SPS](#)

[P5125 – Student Records, Confidentiality](#)

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

Motion 5: Move that the three policies be adopted; P5141.25, P5111.1, and P5125
All: Aye – Motion Passes

Policies for Repeal – Vote Required

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

Motion 6: Move to repeal Policy P4118.112 and replace it with P4000.1.
All: Aye – Motion Passes

Welcoming Schools Liaison Report - Meghan Blanchette reported that West Vine Street School Welcoming Schools was rescheduled. Chris Donahue reported on the high school meeting which had discussions on Wellness Week, climate surveys, and creative ideas on getting parents involved with career nights or military day. Kate Gauthier reported on the Deans Mill School meeting where they reviewed staff, parents, and student surveys and how to get more participation on the surveys, changes in what types of questions are asked, and confidentiality. Sara Baker reported on middle school and will have their next meeting on January 16th.

Retirement Board Report – Farouk Rajab, Chair was not able to attend the last meeting. Alisha Stripling gave an update. The committee discussed pension plans and reviewed accounts. She noted the committee meets quarterly.

Learn Board Membership - Farouk Rajab, Chair shared a summary regarding what the membership entails. He added the Board meets on the second Thursday of each month from September to June at 9 am in Old Lyme. He asked Board members if interested in taking part to let him know.

Monthly Reports

Sara Baker requested a physical copy of the Brown and White newspaper from Catherine Statchen. Dan Kelley commented on the enrollment report. He noted that it validates that when the district did the middle school consolidation we did the right thing. With the current housing impact, we need to look at the current enrollment and where we were at last year.

Board Comments and Items for Future Agendas

Catherine Statchen noted she would not be able to attend the majority of the meetings until March, so First Vice President of Student Government Maya Bankston will be filling in.

Dan Kelley and Sara Baker suggested that a committee review the school start times. Mary Anne Butler noted that the administration at the high school did a full report in 2019 but perhaps we can put it back in their hands to update it. Mrs. Butler will also contribute key information for the report. Farouk Rajab, Chair suggested sending this back to Alicia Dawe to update and then bring it to the Board for review. Mrs. Butler suggested that Mrs. Dawe do the research and then bring it either to the full Board or to the Teaching and Learning Sub-Committee. Rajab, Chair suggested bringing it to the full Board and having a special Board meeting to discuss the item. Chris Donahue asked if there was any new development on funding for HBI. Mary Anne Butler answered no, but will work with Senator Somers on the HBI item. Sara Baker noted letters should be ready to go to state representatives now since they will review this in February.

Adjournment

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

Motion 7: To adjourn at 8:02 pm
All: Aye – Motion Passes



Kevin Agnello, Secretary