

Board of Education Special Meeting
Suffield High School Library Media Center
and via Zoom Webinar
January 29, 2024

Call to Order

Board Chair Sattan called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

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

Also in attendance: Brian Kost, Board of Finance Liaison

Absent: Josh Barrows

Board of Education Workshop - Proposed 2024-2025 Budget Presentations

• Special Services

Diana Kelley, Ed.D., Director of Special Services, reviewed the Special Education and Pupil Services proposed budget. Current year program highlights included work on the anticipated NAEYC Accreditation, social emotional programming at McAlister Intermediate School, increased access to transition services for secondary students, comprehensive school threat assessment training, and district status on the recent Annual Special Education Performance Report. Advancement Planning Initiatives for the 2024-25 school year were reviewed and discussed. Dr. Kelley is requesting an increase of a 1.0 FTE Special Education teacher to support Agriscience students at Suffield High School, she is requesting to increase the Physical Therapist position from a .8 to a 1.0 FTE, and she would like the floating nurse position moved from grant funded to the operating budget. Dr. Kelley addressed Board questions relative to the Transition Coordinator position, the Special Education teacher position for Agriscience, and the proposed preschool model. Mr. Remington explained the costs for outplaced students and their transportation. He explained the budget allocation of the high school Special Education position. Superintendent Van Tassel explained the increase to speech and language diagnostics. Board members discussed the proposed half-day preschool model and discussed the district making it a priority to maintain a 50/50 ratio for peer models to Special Education students. Suffield High School Special Education caseloads and the rationale for requesting a Special Education teacher for the Agriscience program were discussed. Board members inquired about Special Education costs for out-of-town students and legal expenses for the Special Services Department. Board members questioned student expulsions and the legal fees associated with the process, costs associated with the change to the IEP platform, and non-certified positions related to Special Education. The district is planning to provide Board members with an updated summary of all items included in the Special Services budget. Board members expressed appreciation for the extensive work put into creating the budget and discussed the implications of decreasing funding for the Special Education budget.

- Technology Information

Rebecca Osleger, Director of Technology, reviewed the Technology Department's proposed budget. Current year technology highlights included the purchase of View Sonic Interactive Boards, enhancements to the Board of Education meetings, change to district cellular carrier, installation of a district-wide intercom system, redefining of technology department positions, Suffield High School Tech Advisory Board of Students, and awarded grants. Ms. Osleger reviewed the program initiatives for the 2024-25 school year. Ms. Osleger said she would like to request Home Builders Institute be implemented at Suffield Middle School, accessibility training for office support staff, and an increase in curriculum digital memberships. She said the Technology Information budget is down 7% from last year in large part due to hosting fees, professional development and building systems for Multi-tiered Systems of Support and teacher evaluations in-house. This budget does not include any hardware as that has been built into the Capital budget. Board members discussed the change to the cellular carrier, the reasoning behind administrators having assigned cellular devices, and how repairs and replacements of technology devices are handled. Wifi restrictions and the cost of adding wifi boosters were also discussed. In addition, Board members discussed whether a Technology Integrationist position was needed.

- Facilities

Larry Plano, Director of Facilities, reviewed the Facilities Department's proposed budget. Current year maintenance highlights included the enhancements to district-wide safety and security, submission of the HVAC grant, continued focus on grounds care and maintenance, and the Agriscience storage facility and animal barn. He discussed unfunded state mandates and summer student labor costs. Mr. Plano reviewed the program initiatives for the 2024-25 school year. Mr. Plano is planning to develop a new work order system with the help of the Technology Department, he will continue to work with the Department of Public Works to build upon shared services, maintain status of ACCE projects, develop the proposal for the Suffield Middle School project with the Board of Education and Town, and begin the implementation of Indoor Air Quality Reviews as mandated. Superintendent Van Tassel noted that funds for marketing the Suffield Middle School project were not included in the budget. Board members discussed the timing of ACCE projects and if the fire code work was included in the Facilities budget.

- Athletics and Student Activities

Todd Zenczak, Director of Athletics and Student Activities, reviewed the Athletics and Student Activities proposed budget. Current year program highlights included conference championships, athlete standings, participation in clubs and activities, and a formalized Clubs and Activities Handbook. Mr. Zenczak reviewed the program initiatives for the 2024-25 school year. He would like to continue the district's partnership with OT Sports, establish an engraved brick and paver fundraiser, research grants to improve the overall athletic department, and continue the implementation of the Suffield High School and League Sportsmanship Committee. Mr. Zenczak reviewed the number of sports teams and athletes at the secondary level. Overall club and participant information was shared. He reviewed the costs associated with each club and sport including stipend amounts, equipment, and fees for officials. Board members discussed the impact the athletic trainer has on the budget, coach salaries, and equipment costs. They discussed how salaries were determined for coaching staff, how funding was determined for each sport, the placement of the athletic trainer within the budget, if an audit is done of club stipends based on participation, and if a stipend committee should be created to review stipends before collective bargaining begins. Board members discussed the new policy around graduation adornments relative to sports and athletics.

Board members discussed increased legal fees related to Special Services and the work EastConn is now doing with general education and the costs associated with that. The district intends to sunset the EastConn services after next year's work at the high school.

Tracy Cloyd left at 8:26, returned at 8:29

Glenn Gazdik left at 8:30, returned at 8:32

- Central Services

Eric Remington, Business Manager, reviewed the Central Services proposed budget. There is a 2.24% increase in Central Services. Salaries, benefits, insurance, transportation, fuel, and utilities are included in Central Services. Mr. Remington reviewed salary line items and substitute coverage costs. He provided an analysis on substitute coverage and said \$463,000 is budgeted for substitutes next year. Insurance costs were reviewed and he anticipates a 5% premium increase next year. Insurance reimbursements, HSA contributions, pension, and teacher retirement were reviewed. Retiree insurance, workers compensation, and utilities were discussed. Mr. Remington reviewed student transportation and fuel costs. Superintendent Van Tassel addressed questions from the Board relative to Central Services and departmental requests that were made but not included in the budget. In response to a Board request, he reconciled the CT data portal (EdSight) enrollment and FTE counts with the data that has been presented to the Board. Any disparities between the sources are explainable and the Board can be confident that the numbers his team has presented are accurate. Board members discussed professional development, CAFE dues and fees, and enrollment numbers based on projections.

Board Chair Sattan said the next BOE meeting is February 5 and there is still time for Board members to populate budget questions within the BOE Budget Studio. She thanked Board members for attending additional meetings this month, the administration and everyone who presented.

Adjournment

James Mol moved, Tracy Cloyd seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:22 p.m. All members voted in favor.

Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of February 5, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Dudack
Secretary