Board of Education Regular Meeting
Suffield High School Media Center
and via Zoom Webinar
April 1, 2024

Call to Order
Board Vice Chair Finnigan called the meeting to order at 6:31p.m.

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

Absent: None

Recognition
Schools in the Spotlight
Larry Plano, Director of Facilities, provided an update on the elementary playgrounds. Mr. Plano said installment of the A.Ward Spaulding School playground equipment is complete and the playground was opened to students on March 19. Contractors began installing the McAlister Intermediate School playground equipment on March 19 and should have the work completed by next week. A request for ADA surfacing of the playgrounds has been submitted to ACCE. The playgrounds are currently covered in mulch. Elementary principals Gina Olearczyk and Kris Pryce are working with Suffield Foundation for Excellent Schools (SFES) on fundraising ideas to landscape the playgrounds. The playgrounds feature exciting new equipment including spinners, racing slides and climbing walls. Spaulding students are overjoyed with the new equipment and it is anticipated that McAlister students will feel the same.

Suffield High School Student Representatives
Milo Graham, Class of 2024, shared the news and events at Suffield High School. Student Representative Graham said Suffield High School held an AgBingo night, the spring musical *Into the Woods* was well attended and the Junior class took the SAT on March 20. There are many college scholarships still available. The Volleyball Marathon was a success and students had a great time. No update was given for Suffield Middle School.

Keila Silva, Class of 2025, shared the news and events at McAlister Intermediate School and A. Ward Spaulding School. Student Representative Silva said the elementary schools partnered together for the *One Bowl One Community* project. Student-made bowls will be available for purchase on April 11 from 5-7pm, at the Suffield High School Spring Art Show and proceeds from the sales will be donated to Suffield Community Aid. The *One Bowl One Community* project was made possible through the Meghan Voisine Kindness Matters Grant. Read Across America was celebrated last month. Spaulding School had a visit from The Children's Museum and learned about different amphibians, reptiles and mammals. Fourth graders from McAlister Intermediate School went to the New England Air Museum to learn about different types of aircraft.

Public Comment

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Board member Fry read a statement on behalf of Paul Mandirola, 1667 Hill Street. Mr. Mandirola would like the Policy Subcommittee to reconsider the charges proposed for field use.

Board member Finnigan read a statement from Eric Harrington, 700 North Street. He is disappointed in the Board of Education's decision to include Indigenous Peoples Day alongside Columbus Day on the 2024-2025 District School Calendar.

Board Member Comment

- Board member Dudack thanked Dr. Van Tasel, Eric Remington, Larry Plano, and Ken Smith for the tour and presentation with the Board of Selectmen related to the Suffield Middle School Building Project. She thanked the Suffield Middle School and Suffield High School Culinary Arts students and Agriscience students for the Board member gifts. She has heard from a parent concerned that the Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SPED PAC) is no longer happening and suggested adding the topic to a Community Engagement Public Relations (CEPR) Subcommittee agenda.
- Board member Fry thanked the Suffield High School Culinary Arts students for the pizza that was prepared for Board members at the last meeting. He is hoping to discuss Summer School and costs associated with it at a future Board meeting. He would like to hear from Eric Remington regarding the monies that the district was entitled to following completion of the construction of Suffield High School.
- Board member Toskin thanked the Agriscience and Culinary Arts students for the Board member gifts. He thanked the students and teachers of the Music Department for the incredible musical performances and programming.
- Board member Mol thanked the students for the Board gifts. He thanked the Suffield Middle School French teacher who organized International Night. He suggested marketing the International Night event differently next year, possibly holding the event during the day, and having all students participate so that everyone is able to learn about different cultures and taste different foods.
- Board member Gazdik and Finnigan thanked the students for the Board Member Appreciation gifts.

Reports to the Board

- Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Van Tasel said the Board of Education's proposed budget was presented to the Board of Finance last Monday. He thanked Eric Remington, Larry Plano and Board members Melissa Finnigan and Glenn Gazdik for taking part in the presentation. The Public Budget Hearing is scheduled on April 24 and the Town Budget Meeting is scheduled on May 8. The solar eclipse is happening next week and Justin Kaput, K-12 Science Instructional Coach, has been busy preparing lessons. Mr. Kaput requested and received a large donation from SFES that will provide all students in the district with proper eyewear to view the eclipse. Mr. Kaput will be offering a viewing location for students at the secondary level. Superintendent Van Tasel wished the Agriscience, band and chorus students safe travels for their upcoming trips. He thanked Board members Maureen Sattan, Debra Dudack, and Melissa Finnigan for their assistance with the Suffield Middle School Building Project. The study by the Long Range Facility Committee found that the Suffield Middle School building ranked at the top of the list as

the building in greatest need of renovation and repair and the Board of Education supports their finding. The Suffield High School Principal Search is underway and a recommendation for the position could be brought to the Board by end of April.

Milo Graham and Keila Silva exited the meeting at 7:06pm

- Board Chair's Report

Board member Finnigan read Board Chair Sattan's report. Read Across America was a success and Board members Sattan and Finnigan participated. The Town Budget Meeting is scheduled on May 8. Teamsters negotiations will take place in the near future.

- Business Manager's Report

Business Manager Eric Remington said the newly purchased activity vans are gaining traction. The Transition Program is able to provide students with more outings, sports teams are traveling to meets, and Open Choice students are able to participate in more events all due to having this additional mode of transportation. Guidelines for van use have been created. A large surplus of funds has built up in the food service account and a capital expenditure list was created to spend down the funds. School construction receivables from Suffield High School are being worked through and an update can be provided in a few months.

- Board of Selectmen's Report

None

- Board of Finance Liaison's Report

None

Approval of Minutes

MOTION #24-40: Dudack moved, Mol seconded to approve the Board of Education meeting minutes of March 4 and March 18, 2024. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **9-0-0**.

Consent Agenda

MOTION #24-41: Gazdik moved to approve the following on the consent agenda:

A. Suffield High School Robotics Team Field Trip Request – Houston, TX – April 16-21, 2024

Dudack seconded the motion. All members voted in favor of approving the consent agenda. The motion passed **9-0-0**.

Discussion/Action Items

- February Financial Report

Business Manager Eric Remington reported on the general operating budget, federal and state grants, and food service income. The projected year-end shows a net surplus of approximately $98,917.

- Discussion and Possible Approval of the 2024-2025 Healthy Foods Certification

Mr. Remington said the state is requiring two motions to accept the Healthy Foods Certification and the Board needs to approve this for next year's program.

MOTION #24-42: Mol moved, Pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-215f, the Suffield Board of Education 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, 2024, through June 30, 2025. 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. Gazdik seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion passed **9-0-0**.

MOTION #24-43: Mol moved that the Suffield Board of Education will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with 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 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 sales. Toskin seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion passed **9-0-0**.

- Discussion and Possible Approval of Increasing Educator Diversity Plan as Required by Public Act 23-167, Section 10(a)

Board member Finnigan said the Connecticut legislature created a mandate saying Boards of Education must submit an Increasing Educator Diversity Plan. Superintendent Van Tasel assembled a team and created a draft plan for the Board's approval. Board members discussed the work that was put into the plan and the desire to discuss the topic and how it relates to higher education with State Representative Zawistowski.

MOTION #24-44: Fry moved to approve the Increasing Educator Diversity Plan as required by Public Act 23-167, Section 10(a). Mol seconded the motion. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **9-0-0**.

- Non-Renewal of Staff in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes

MOTION #24-45: Dudack moved to approve the non-renewal of staff as presented in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes. Fry seconded the motion. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **9-0-0**.

<u>Subcommittee Reports</u>

- March 8, 2024 – Policy Subcommittee Meeting – the following policies are being placed on 30-day read: #3542.43 Charging and #1330 Use of School Facilities. Policy Subcommittee

Chair Fry said the field use fee is being considered and a field use fee structure may be placed in the accompanying Regulation. In response to Board member questions, Board member Fry said there is an ongoing conversation with Department of Public Works and Parks and Recreation regarding priority use of fields. Maintaining the fields is a large expense and must be worked out with the town. Board member Fry also noted that a number of policies remain on the list for consideration by the subcommittee including one pertaining to Senior Privileges.

- March 26, 2024 – Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee Meeting –Subcommittee Chair Finnigan said Steven Wheeler, Suffield High School Social Studies Teacher, presented a new Civics textbook and the accompanying online materials. The textbooks and online material were included in the FY25 budget. Julie Haefner, Suffield High School Family and Consumer Science Teacher, provided a course review for a new ECE course titled Exercise and Wellness for Everyone. Ms. Haefner would like to incorporate this course into the Program of Studies for 2025-2026.
- March 28, 2024 – Finance & Facilities – Board member Finnigan said the February Financial Report was reviewed, the Food Service surplus was discussed, and the Suffield Middle School Building Project was discussed. The BOE budget is being reviewed by the BOF.

Board Liaison Reports

- CREC – Board member Toskin said Desi Nesmith was appointed as the new Assistant Executive Director. House Bill 5003 was discussed and more information is needed in order for the Board to weigh in on the topic.
- Agriscience – Board member Mol shared a slideshow of recent Agriscience events. The Agstravaganza was held March 14, Future Leaders Conference was March 15, Ag Day at the Capital was March 20, and Accepted Students Day was March 22. The AgExpo is April 3 and 4. The Agriscience International Field Trip is April 9-18 and participating students will tour Amsterdam, Brussels, Paris and London. Agriscience Awards Night is May 16.
- CABE – No update.

Future Business
None

Public Comment
None

Board Member Comment

- Board member Dudack thanked SFES for the solar eclipse safety glasses. She thanked administrators and Board members for their work on the budget.
- Board member Fry thanked SFES for the eclipse safety glasses and Justin Kaput for launching a program around the solar eclipse. He wished the Robotics team best of luck in their upcoming competition. He would like Board members to contact him regarding their thoughts on adding community service graduation requirements and cell phone use at the high school to the Policy Subcommittee agenda.
- Board member Mol said during public comment at last month's BOE meeting several students and family members shared about their journey in school. He took the advice of one

of the parents and read the book *Rethinking Normal* by Katie Rain Hill. He said the book was very well written and provided an understanding of what some people go through. He feels prepared to discuss this topic with his own children and he recommends others read the book with an open mind.

- Board member Finnigan said the Robotics team video is incredible and encourages others to view it.
- Board member Sattan commented on how lucky the Board was to have Melissa Finnigan and Debra Dudack serving in board leadership positions.

Executive Session

Finnigan moved to go into executive session for the purpose of discussions related to matter(s) pertaining to personnel, inviting Superintendent Van Tasel to join the meeting. Sattan seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion carried **9-0-0**.

The Board came out of executive session at 8:38 pm.

Adjournment

Gazdik moved, Toskin seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:38 p.m. All members voted in favor. The motion carried 9-0-0.

Click here to view the meeting: 01APR2024 BOE Meeting

Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of May 6, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Dudack
Secretary

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