Suffield, Connecticut

Approved by Bd. of Ed.

Board of Education Regular Meeting
Suffield High School Media Center
and via Zoom Webinar
May 6, 2024

Call to Order

Board Vice Chair Finnigan called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Present: Board members Tracy Cloyd, Debra Dudack, Melissa Finnigan, Brian Fry, 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: Josh Barrows, Glenn Gazdik

Recognition

Schools in the Spotlight

- Connecticut Association of Boards of Education Student Leadership Awards

This year's CABE Student Leadership Award recipients are Suffield Middle School students Anna Murrin and Zackary Smith and Suffield High School students Craig Gnatek and Anna Washburn. Ken Smith, SMS Principal, and Matt Dobi, SHS Assistant Principal, spoke about the leadership attributes of these students.

- Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents Student Recognition Awards

This year's CAPSS Student Recognition Award recipients are Suffield Middle School student Lily Morissette and Suffield High School student Kandace Royce. Principal Smith and Assistant Principal Dobi spoke about the outstanding character traits of these students.

- Suffield High School Salutatorian and Valedictorian

The Suffield High School Class of 2024 Salutatorian is Ava Aube and the Valedictorian is Emma Conway. Shannon Insero, SHS Assistant Principal, spoke of the students' academic excellence, exceptional character, and their many extracurricular activities.

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 began by congratulating the student award recipients. The SHS Prom is May 10, FFA Chapter Awards are May 16, Pops Concert on May 21, and Graduation is June 8 at 9:30 a.m. During April break, 21 Agriscience students participated in the district's first International Agriscience Field Trip and visited four countries. SHS students from band and chorus visited Disney World and took part in music workshops. Suffield Middle School had a successful Step-Up Night with fifth graders and their parents. The choral and band students will participate in the districtwide concert on May 14. Elite Voices will be participating in an adjudication with Fantastic Festivals on May 31 at Six Flags New England.

Keila Silva, Class of 2025, shared the news and events at McAlister Intermediate School and A. Ward Spaulding School. Student Representative Silva congratulated the students who were recognized. The elementary schools had solar eclipse parties and a special thank you goes to

Justin Kaput, K-12 Science Curriculum Coach, for his help in organizing the students and securing safety solar eclipse glasses for all students in the district. First and second grade

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students participated in the Invention Convention. MIS students raised over $10,000 for the Kids Heart Challenge. Two MIS students were selected to participate in the statewide Honors Band.

MOTION #24-48: Mol moved, Toskin seconded to move Board Member Comment before Public Comment. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **7-0-0**.

Board Member Comment

- Board member Dudack offered congratulations to the recognized students and stated that they are an inspiration to all in the community. It is Teacher Appreciation Week, National Nurses Week, Jewish American Heritage Month and Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Island Heritage Month. She offered Dr. Van Tasel congratulations on his new position and thanked him for the improvements made in the school community, his leadership during COVID, and for his work over the last five years.
- Board member Cloyd congratulated all the recognized students. She thanked Dr. Van Tasel for everything he has done for the district and the students.
- Board member Fry said it is Asian Pacific American Heritage Month and Nurses Week. He thanked the recognized students for their hard work and for being an example to the entire student body. The Senior Class Signature Stone is in place at SHS, an initiative started by SHS Class of 2024 Student Council President Andrew Bombard. International and out-of-state field trip requests have been brought to the Board for approval and Board member Fry encouraged interested classes and clubs to come forward with requests.
- Board member Mol congratulated all recognized students and enjoyed hearing the recurring theme of service to community, kindness and inclusion.
- Board member Toskin congratulated the recognized students and commended them for their academic excellence, extracurricular activities, and community involvement. He was a parent on the recent music field trip to Disney and praised the students for their outstanding behavior. He thanked Dr. Van Tasel for his district leadership and wished him well.
- Board Chair Sattan congratulated all students.
- Board member Finnigan congratulated the recognized students. She gave special congratulations to the Salutatorian and Valedictorian.

Tracy Cloyd left at 7:25pm, returned at 7:29pm
Keila Silva and Milo Graham exited the meeting at 7:25pm

Public Comment

Liz Warren, 185 North Main Street, congratulated the students recognized. She thanked Dr. Van Tasel for his time and dedication to the district. She shared that her son was a victim of a racial incident at Suffield Middle School. She said educating students about the consequences of their decisions and allowing them to learn and grow from mistakes is needed. She stated that the district should be trained in these practices.

Trista LaForge, Suffield High School Agriscience student, thanked the Board for approving the recent international field trip for Agriscience students. The group traveled to four countries, experienced many different opportunities and learned about the history and culture of those

countries. The trip opened new friendships among classmates and provided lasting memories. She hopes the Board will continue to support these student experiences.

Reports to the Board

- Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Van Tasel said the annual town budget meeting is this Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. in the SMS Auditorium. National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) has recognized Suffield as one of the Best Communities for Music Education once again. Kyle Candia-Bovi, SHS ELA Teacher, has been honored with the prestigious UCONN ECE Instructor Award for Excellence in Course Instruction and was selected from a pool of 1,800 UCONN ECE Educators. Superintendent Van Tasel congratulated her on this wonderful achievement. He also noted that it is Teacher and Nurse Appreciation Week and thanked all for their dedication.

- Board Chair's Report

Board Vice Chair Finnigan read Board Chair Sattan's report. The SHS Principal Search Committee is continuing the process. Thank you to all who volunteered to serve on the committee. A reminder to all Board members that they are involved in the final step of appointing administrative positions. This Wednesday is the annual Town Budget Meeting beginning at 7:00 p.m. in the SMS Auditorium. Board Chair Sattan recently represented the BOE at a Teamsters negotiations meeting and a graduation planning meeting. Board member Finnigan will be giving a speech at the graduation ceremony.

Business Manager's Report

Business Manager Eric Remington said Wednesday is the Town Budget Meeting. If the budget is approved Wednesday, there is a 10-day waiting period should someone wish to petition the budget to referendum. Food Service is running smoothly but is short on labor. The new serving line has been installed at MIS. Transportation is struggling with after school bus runs. The activity van is helping with enrichment and smaller athletic teams.

- Board of Selectmen's Report

None

- Board of Finance Liaison's Report

None

Approval of Minutes

MOTION #24-49: Dudack moved, Mol seconded to approve the Board of Education meeting minutes of April 1 – Special Meeting and Regular Meeting, April 4, April 10, and April 22, 2024. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **7-0-0**.

Consent Agenda

MOTION #24-50: Fry moved to approve the following on the consent agenda:

1. Policy #3542.4 Charging
2. Policy #1330 Facility Use

Cloyd seconded the motion. All members voted in favor of approving the consent agenda. The motion passed **7-0-0**.

Discussion/Action Items

- Suffield Foundation for Excellent Schools Presentation

Kera Pixton, SFES Secretary, shared that SFES is an education foundation that provides support, beyond the tax supported school budget, for innovative and exceptional programs and opportunities that benefit Suffield students. Teachers, students, or staff are welcome to complete a grant application that can be found on the SFES website. Pixton shared the grants that were given from the 2019-2020 school year to present, each ranging from $400-$24,000. Some highlights of grants awarded include: safety solar eclipse glasses for all district students; $7,500 to support the upcoming BioBlitz Project; Artist in Residence Author Jarrett J. Krosoczka at SHS; $10,000 to help with benches and walkways in the outdoor classroom; DNA editing tool at SHS; and coffee carts at all schools run by special education teachers and students. A $24,000 grant was given in 2019-2020 to help fund Dreambox, an online program used during and after the pandemic. Grants awarded from 2019-2020 to present total $78,577 and grants awarded from 1986 to present total $750,000. SFES looks forward to continuing to support innovative and exceptional programs that the educators of Suffield make happen.

Maureen Sattan exited the meeting at 8:23pm

- Discussion and Possible Action on Teacher and Administrator Evaluation Plans

Superintendent Van Tasel provided background on the Teacher and Administrator Evaluation Plans and guidelines received from the CSDE. The district must submit a plan to the CSDE by August 1, 2024. He thanked the Professional Development and Evaluation Committee (PDEC) for their work on these plans. Assistant Superintendent Zawawi introduced members from PDEC: Abby Bowtruczyk, Bari DeMichele, Joy Tierney, Melissa Fortunato, Mark Janick, Shannon Picard and Kris Pryce. Topics discussed from the Educator Guidelines for Evaluation and Support were: Vision and Guiding Principles, Educator and Evaluation Support Overview, Evaluation Cycle, Corrective Action Plan and Dispute Resolution, Classroom and Non-Classroom Educator Rubrics, and Observations.

MIS Principal Pryce, MIS Assistant Principal Todd, AWS Principal Olearczyk and SMS Principal Smith provided an update on the Leadership Guidelines for Evaluation and Support. Topics discussed were: Vision and Guiding Principles, Leader and Evaluation Support Overview, Evaluation Cycles, and Corrective Action Plan. Assistant Superintendent Zawawi said the design model was taken from the CSDE and the committee feels confident with the plan. Superintendent Van Tasel said a Google Studio will be created to house all evaluation documents.

Board members discussed the metrics being used, the type of feedback received, classroom educator rubrics, and the process of goal setting and observations. Board members recognized and appreciated the work that was put into these plans.

MOTION #24-51: Cloyd moved to approve the Teacher and Administrator Evaluation Plans. Dudack seconded the motion. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **6-0-0**.

- Discussion and Possible Action on Suffield High School Agriscience Field Trip Request

MOTION #24-52: Fry moved to approve the Suffield High School Agriscience Field Trip Request to Ireland, April 8-17, 2025. Mol seconded the motion. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **6-0-0**.

- Discussion and Possible Action on the Suffield High School Model UN Field Trip Request

MOTION #24-53: Dudack moved to approve the Suffield High School Model UN Field Trip Request to Washington, DC April 12-15, 2025. Cloyd seconded the motion. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **6-0-0**.

- March 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 $98,609.

Subcommittee Reports

- April 25, 2024 – Finance & Facilities – Board member Finnigan said the Large Animal Facility was discussed and the funds associated with it. The March Financial Report was reviewed. The McAlister Intermediate School playground is near completion.
- April 26, 2024 – Community Engagement and Public Relations Subcommittee Meeting – Subcommittee Chair Dudack said the idea of bringing back a special education parent group was discussed. Creating templates for BOE social media posts was discussed. The Subcommittee plans to address areas related to empathy and inclusivity at its next meeting.
- April 30, 2024 – Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee Meeting –Subcommittee Chair Finnigan said Christy Baril, K-5 ELA Curriculum Coach, gave a presentation on the pilot process used for a new K-2 ELA curriculum. Heather Goldstein, K-5 Math Curriculum Coach, gave a presentation on the pilot process used for a new K-5 math curriculum.

Board Liaison Reports

- CREC – No report
- Agriscience – Board member Mol shared a slideshow presentation of the many events that occurred in the Agriscience Department during the month of April including the Ag Expo, the International Agriculture Trip, and the Advanced Floral Design ECE Class attending the Wadsworth Flowers and Fine Art event. Agriscience Awards Night is May 16.
- CABE – Board member Finnigan said the special education-related excess cost grants were discussed.

Future Business

None

Public Comment

None

Tracy Cloyd left at 9:01pm, returned at 9:05pm

Board Member Comment

- Board member Dudack thanked the students who were honored. She appreciated hearing from SFES and seeing where their support has gone. She thanked Liz Warren for sharing and encouraged the Board to look at what can be done through policy or other areas to address such conduct.
- Board member Fry congratulated Kyle Candia-Bovi. He thanked SFES for the update. He thanked Liz Warren for sharing and is interested in exploring the topic of restorative education. He was pleased to learn of cost savings and that the activity van is in demand.
- Board member Mol said it was a positive meeting with amazing students and teachers. He thanked Liz Warren for sharing her story and he hopes to further DEI initiatives.
- Board member Toskin thanked SFES for enriching all students in the district. He looks forward to working with administration to ensure all students are treated fairly.
- Board member Finnigan thanked SFES. She was sad to hear Liz Warren's comments. She looks forward to hearing from the CEPR Subcommittee.

Executive Session

Dudack moved to go into executive session for the purpose of discussions related to matter(s) pertaining to unaffiliated employment contracts, inviting Superintendent Van Tasel, Assistant Superintendent Zawawi, and Business Manager Remington to join the meeting. Mol seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion carried **6-0-0**.

The Board came out of executive session at 10:09 pm.

Adjournment

Cloyd moved, Toskin seconded to adjourn the meeting at 10:10 p.m. All members voted in favor. The motion carried **6-0-0**.

Click here to view the meeting: 06MAY2024 BOE Meeting

Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of June 3, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Dudack
Secretary