

Board of Education Regular Meeting
Suffield High School Library Media Center
and via Zoom Webinar
June 3, 2024

Call to Order

Board Chair Sattan called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

Absent: Josh Barrows, Glenn Gazdik

Recognition

Superintendent Van Tassel and the Board recognized staff members who are retiring at the end of the 2023-2024 school year. McAlister Intermediate School Principal Kris Pryce spoke of Melanie Motter. Suffield Middle School Principal Ken Smith spoke of Corinne Khawaja. Suffield High School Assistant Principal Matt Dobi spoke of Steve Shultis.

Superintendent Van Tassel and the Board recognized the 2025 Paraeducator of the Year, Jennifer Devine, and the 2025 Suffield Teacher of the Year, Julia Porter, as presented by Secondary Special Services Supervisor Sharon Goulet, Ed.D., and Teacher of the Year Committee Chair and Suffield High School teacher, Samantha Schragar, respectively.

Superintendent Van Tassel and the Board recognized Milo Graham, Suffield High School Class of 2024 Board of Education Student Representative. They thanked Student Representative Graham for his work with the Board of Education and wished him all the best as he continues to further his education in college.

Suffield High School Student Representatives

Keila Silva, Class of 2025, shared the news and events at all schools. Student Representative Silva said Suffield High School will hold the annual Senior Walk on Friday, June 7. Suffield High School students from Dr. Pugliese's science class taught at Suffield Middle School for a day and students from Mr. Harfenist's science class taught at A. Ward Spaulding School for a day. Sophomores visited the state capital. New class officers have been elected. Student Representative Silva said Spaulding School students had the opportunity to experience an interactive space lab. Second grade students had a field trip to The Story Barn and also participated in the first annual BioBlitz held at Suffield High School's Outdoor Learning Lab. McAlister Intermediate School finished a successful Unified Sports before-school program and fifth grade students participated in the BioBlitz. Two students won the raffle lottery to be Student Principal and Student Assistant Principal for the day.

Board Chair Sattan announced that Olivia Mishtal, Class of 2026, will be the Junior Class Student Representative to the Board of Education next year. Student Representative Silva will move to the Senior Class Student Representative position.

Keila Silva exited the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Public Comment

None

Board Member Comment

- Board member Finnigan congratulated those who were recognized tonight and thanked the Jazz Ensemble for performing during the reception.
- Board member Dudack thanked all who were recognized and said June is Pride Month. She has been impressed with the music program performances that have been put on throughout the district and said the BioBlitz was an incredible event.
- Board member Cloyd congratulated all who were recognized and thanked them for their service to Suffield Public Schools. She thanked Tim Malley, Food Service Director, and Corey Killian, Band Director, for their part in creating a wonderful reception for the evening.
- Board member Fry thanked all who were recognized and congratulated faculty and staff for completing another successful year. He welcomed newly appointed Suffield High School Principal Anthony Hibbert. He said June is Pride Month. He thanked Dr. Van Tasel for his service over the past five years and wished him the best.
- Board member Mol congratulated Julia Porter on being recognized as the Teacher of the Year. He wished the retirees well and thanked them for their dedication to Suffield Public Schools. He thanked the community for completing the survey for the Superintendent Search and thanked Dr. Van Tasel for his dedication to the district.
- Board member Toskin thanked all educators for the impact they have on our children. He wished the retirees well, congratulated the Teacher of the Year and the Paraeducator of the Year, and thanked Student Representative Graham for his time with the Board. He thanked Dr. Van Tasel for his district leadership over the last five years.
- Board Chair Sattan said she has appreciated the time spent working with Dr. Van Tasel and found him to be a thoughtful, hardworking leader. She said he gives his time generously, has the heart of a teacher and is a good human. Board Chair Sattan presented Dr. Van Tasel with a gift on behalf of the Board. She recognized June as Pride Month.

Reports to the Board

• Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Van Tasel recognized June as Pride Month. The last day of school for students is Friday, June 14, and is an early release day. Suffield High School will hold its graduation ceremony Saturday, June 8, at 9:30 a.m. on Beneski Field. Congratulations to the Class of 2024!

Superintendent Van Tasel expressed his gratitude to the Board of Education, his administrative team, faculty, staff, students, families, and the community of Suffield for having had the opportunity to serve as the district's leader over the past five years. He thanked the First Selectman, town departments and agencies, the Board of Selectmen, and the Board of Finance for working in close partnership for the good of the community's children. He wished everyone the very best.

• Board Chair's Report

Board Chair Sattan said graduation is Saturday, June 8, at 9:30 a.m. Board members should arrive in the SHS Commons between 8:30-8:45 a.m. Board member Finnigan will be giving a graduation speech and all BOE members take part in the ceremony by handing out diplomas. The budget was finalized at the town meeting and a special thank you goes to Board member Finnigan, Business Manager Remington and Superintendent Van Tasel for presenting that evening. The Superintendent

Hiring Committee is continuing its process and is interviewing invited superintendent candidates this week.

- **Business Manager's Report**

Business Manager Eric Remington said Food Service is busy with year-end school events as they also continue to provide regular breakfast and lunch service to students. Mr. Remington is waiting to hear from the state regarding the continuation of free breakfast for next year. Negative balances are coming down and the state has said food service surplus funds can now be used to pay down negative student balances. The district will continue to work to collect negative balances. Fifteen buses have been budgeted for the next school year.

- **Board of Selectmen's Report**

None

- **Board of Finance Liaison's Report**

None

Approval of Minutes

MOTION #24-56: Finnigan moved, Cloyd seconded to approve the Board of Education meeting minutes of May 6, May 21 and May 23, 2024. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **7-0-0**.

Consent Agenda

None

Discussion/Action Items

- **Introduction of Suffield High School Principal**

Board Chair Sattan thanked the hiring committee for their work in selecting Mr. Anthony Hibbert as Suffield High School Principal. He was the enthusiastically recommended candidate, and the Board appointed him to the position last week. Assistant Superintendent Zawawi spoke of Mr. Hibbert's career path leading to Suffield Public Schools, his credentials, notable awards he has received, and his personal background. She said he most looks forward to coming to Suffield to build positive relationships with students, faculty, and staff. Mr. Hibbert said he was honored and humbled to be selected as the next Suffield High School Principal and he looks forward to working with everyone and building relationships. He thanked the Board for giving him the opportunity to lead and for having the faith in his abilities to do so.

- **Kindergarten Enrollment Update**

Superintendent Van Tasel said there are currently eight classroom teachers budgeted for kindergarten next year and that number should be reviewed again in July. Principal Olearczyk said 108 students are currently registered for kindergarten, two waiver approvals have been processed, ten students are outstanding from Kindergarten Information Night, and six Open Choice spots have been held. On average, an additional 30 registrations are received over the summer. Principal Olearczyk said the district is typically at or above the NESDEC projections. An anticipated first grade teacher position has been posted due to a resignation but will only be needed if eight kindergarten classroom teachers are required. Board members discussed Open Choice seat declarations.

MOTION #24-57: Board Chair Sattan made a motion to reorder the Discussion/Action Items as A, B, C, D. Cloyd seconded the motion. The motion passed **7-0-0**.

- **April Financial Report**

Business Manager Eric Remington reported on the general operating budget, state and federal grants, and food service income. The projected year-end shows a net surplus of approximately \$100,000. Board members discussed Special Education tuition costs, outplacements and excess costs.

- **Discussion and Possible Action on FY24 Budget Transfers**

Business Manager Eric Remington said there is no change to the FY24 Budget. The Board needs to approve transferring money from what was budgeted to where it will be spent at the end of this fiscal year.

MOTION #24-58: Finnigan moved to approve the FY24 Budget Transfers as presented. Mol seconded the motion. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **7-0-0**.

Subcommittee Reports

- May 17, 2024 – Policy Subcommittee Meeting – Subcommittee Chair Fry said the following policies are being placed on a 30-day read: Policy #5122.3 Assignment of Former Home-Schooled Students, Policy #6113 Senior Privileges, Policy #6146 Graduation Requirements, and Policy #6172.6 Virtual/Online Learning. Subcommittee Chair Fry encouraged Board members to review the 30-day reads prior to the policies being placed on the Consent Agenda in July.
- May 24, 2024 – Community Engagement and Public Relations Subcommittee Meeting – Subcommittee Chair Dudack said the Suffield Middle School Building Project was discussed. Subcommittee members discussed sending out a short update on the building project along with messages related to the Superintendent Candidate Profile. Social media outreach with Board of Education branding was discussed. A brief discussion was held regarding the \$15,000 set aside for student training and a Board of Education workshop on empathy.
- May 28, 2024 – Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee Meeting – Subcommittee Chair Finnigan said K-12 Health Standards were discussed.
- May 30, 2024 – Finance and Facilities Subcommittee Meeting – Board member Finnigan said the HVAC Grant was approved on the second submission and the funds must be spent by December 31, 2025. The April Financial Report was reviewed and discussed. Board member Finnigan said the Subcommittee closely looks at costs associated with Special Services.

Board Liaison Reports

- Capital Region Education Council (CREC) – Board member Toskin said concerns with respect to state funding were shared as well as finalized legislative items.
- Agriscience – Board member Mol reported on the successes of the Agriscience Mechanics and the Tractor Driving competitors at recent competitions. Students participated in field trips to Oak Ridge Dairy Farm and The Plant Lounge. Horticulture students raised geraniums for the Suffield May Market and the VFW. They also participated in a community service activity by planting a geranium on each grave of a Suffield Veteran for Memorial Day. Community service was also done by 46 ninth grade Agriscience students at Sunrise Park. End of year FFA events are in full swing. Nineteen students received their state FFA degrees.
- Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) – Board member Finnigan said education-related legislative changes from the 2024 session are lengthy.

Future Business

- Board of Education Roles and Responsibilities
- Career Technical Education (CTE) program, possible opportunities with Agriscience and curriculum update
- Legislative Update with State Representative Tami Zawistowski

Public Comment

None

Board Member Comment

- Board member Finnigan thanked Dr. Van Tasel and wished him and his family all the best.
- Board member Dudack welcomed Anthony Hibbert and thanked Dr. Van Tasel for everything he has done for Suffield Public Schools.
- Board member Cloyd welcomed Anthony Hibbert and thanked Dr. Van Tasel for his leadership and professionalism.
- Board member Mol thanked Student Representative Graham for being the voice of the high schoolers, as well as his own voice during Board meetings and wished him well.
- Board member Toskin welcomed Anthony Hibbert and recognized June as Pride Month. In recognition of Memorial Day, he thanked those who served.

Executive Session

Dudack moved to go into executive session for the purpose of personnel matters related to the employment of administrators, inviting Superintendent Van Tasel to join the meeting. Cloyd seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion carried **7-0-0**.

Finnigan exited the meeting at 8:55 p.m.

The Board came out of executive session at 9:04 pm.

Discussion/Action Items

- Discussion and Possible Action Regarding the July 1, 2024 Appointment of an Interim Superintendent

MOTION #24-59: Dudack moved to appoint Michelle Zawawi to the position of Interim Superintendent of Suffield Public Schools as of July 1, 2024 and authorize Board Chair Sattan to enter into negotiations for an interim superintendent contract. Mol seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion carried **6-0-0**.

Adjournment

Fry moved, Cloyd seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:06 p.m. All members voted in favor.

Click here to view the meeting: [03JUN2024 BOE Meeting](#)

Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of July 15, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Dudack
Secretary