

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

Call to Order

Board Chair Sattan called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m. The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Board members Josh Barrows, Debra Dudack, Melissa Finnigan, Brian Fry, James Mol, Gianna Rossi, Maureen Sattan, Gregory Sparzo and Sam Toskin (via Zoom); and Superintendent Matthew Dunbar; Assistant Superintendent Michelle Zawawi and Business Manager Eric Remington

Absent: None

Recognition

Superintendent Dunbar said it is a pleasure to recognize the Suffield Public Schools facilities staff. The staff works hard to keep our buildings looking their best and are ambassadors of the district, greeting staff and students and offering help when needed. Director of Facilities Larry Plano thanked his staff for their outstanding work and presented the group with plaques for each school building recognizing them for their commitment and hard work to Suffield Public Schools. Board members thanked the staff for their work and dedication to our schools.

Suffield High School Student Representatives

Board Chair Sattan introduced Olivia Mishtal, Class of 2026, as the Junior Board of Education Student Representative. Keila Silva, Class of 2025, will return as the Senior Board of Education Student Representative but was not available to attend tonight's meeting.

Student Representative Mishtal said she is excited to represent students in this role. She highlighted summer events that occurred at each school throughout the district and welcomed Principal Hibbert to the high school. She thanked the entire facilities staff for preparing the schools for a new year.

Public Comment

None

Board Member Comment

- Board member Finnigan is excited for the new school year and thanked the facilities staff.
- Board member Dudack thanked Superintendent Dunbar for the wonderful start to school, Mr. Remington for his work on bus routes and welcomed Olivia Mishtal. She thanked the Meghan Voisine Fund for the Kindness Matters t-shirts. She noted that September 15 starts National Hispanic Heritage Month.
- Board member Barrows welcomed everyone back, thanked the facilities crew, and stated that he is looking forward to the year.
- Board member Fry welcomed Olivia Mishtal, and thanked the facilities staff for their work and engagement with the student body. He said it is his opinion that as a public school district, the

district should provide all necessary supplies for students to be successful and that all students should be provided breakfast and lunch free of charge.

- Board member Mol welcomed Olivia Mishtal and thanked Keila Silva for continuing another year. He thanked Larry Plano, the entire facilities staff, and all administration and staff for a great start to the school year.
- Board member Toskin thanked the facilities staff and administration for the wonderful start to the school year.
- Board member Rossi thanked the facilities staff and welcomed Olivia Mishtal.
- Board member Sparzo is looking forward to continuing to be the best school system Suffield can be.

### Reports to the Board

#### A. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Dunbar said opening convocation provided a true sense of school community and the speech given by Suffield's Teacher of the Year, Julia Porter, provided a wonderful representation of colleagues. Opening day for students was a success and staff went above and beyond at putting students at ease. Bus routes ran smoothly, many thanks to Eric Remington for his work on transportation and his personal approach with parents. The Athletic Director application process continues.

#### B. Board Chair's Report

Board Chair Sattan said the beginning of the year events were a success and encouraged Board members to attend convocation next year. Melissa Bielonko has been diligently working on the CABA Board Recognition Award submission. It is due in October and winners will be announced at the CABA/CAPSS Convention in November. Board Chair Sattan and Board member Finnigan will represent the Board in Suffield Education Association (SEA) Teacher Negotiations. The SEA contract will be brought before the Board of Education for a final vote. Board Chair Sattan and Board member Toskin will represent the Board on Teamsters negotiations. Planning for the initial Data Ad-hoc Subcommittee meeting is underway and a data presentation at the second meeting in September is anticipated. Open Houses begin next week and any Board members interested in attending should reach out to Board Chair Sattan.

#### C. Business Manager's Report

Business Manager Eric Remington thanked all for the positive feedback relative to transportation. There are currently 1,600 students riding 14 buses. Mr. Remington thanked M&J Transportation Manager Jackie McDunnah for her collaboration. There is one lengthy elementary bus run that is being closely monitored. Breakfast is not free for students this year and sales are down. Revenue will drop and may require staffing changes. Mr. Remington thanked Food Services Director Tim Malley for always finding a way to make things work, even when short staffed. The district financial report was filed with the State today. Budget planning for Fiscal Year 2026 will begin next week.

#### D. Board of Selectmen's Report

None

#### E. Board of Finance Liaison's Report

None

### Approval of Minutes

**MOTION #25-07:** Dudack moved, Mol seconded to approve the Board of Education meeting minutes of July 1, July 16, July 22, and August 27, 2024 amending July 1, July 16, and July 22 to state for approval at the regular meeting of September 3, 2024. Board member Sparzo requested that the minutes be separated for approval.

**MOTION #25-08:** Sattan moved to amend the motion, Mol seconded. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **9-0-0**.

**MOTION #25-09:** Dudack moved, Mol seconded to approve the Board of Education meeting minutes of July 1 and July 16, 2024 amending the July 1 and July 16, 2024 minutes to state for approval at the regular meeting of September 3, 2024. Barrows, Dudack, Finnigan, Fry, Mol, Sattan and Toskin voted in favor of the amended motion. Rossi and Sparzo abstained. The motion passed **7-0-2**.

**MOTION #25-10:** Dudack moved, Mol seconded to approve the Board of Education meeting minutes of July 22 and August 27, 2024 amending the July 22, 2024 minutes to state for approval at the regular meeting of September 3, 2024. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **9-0-0**.

### Consent Agenda

None

### Discussion/Action Items

#### A. Facilities Update

Director of Facilities Larry Plano provided a facilities update. The parking lot at A. Ward Spaulding School has been repaved and installation of the playscape is complete. McAlister Intermediate School has reconfigured its specials wing, the playscape resurfacing should be finished by the end of the week, and bids for boiler work will go out soon. The Suffield Middle School gym floor has been refinished and the Suffield High School floor is one-third finished. The Permanent Building Commission (PBC) has started walkthroughs of the school buildings and the district has received positive and supportive feedback. The HVAC Grant is approved and the district has until December 2025 to spend the funds. As part of the grant application, the district is working with Carrier Corporation to place the high school rooftop air-handling units. Board members discussed a timeline for PBC findings, the HVAC timeline and costs, the Suffield Middle School gym floor, McAlister Intermediate School's playscape area, and CIRMA's recommendations.

#### B. Financial Update FY2024

Business Manager Eric Remington provided a financial update and reported on the \$984 year-end surplus, state and federal grants, and food service. FY24 funds were used to pay for items that were not budgeted such as new math and reading programs, repair work for fire code violations, and special education tuition that was over budget. Regarding FY25 the payroll vacancy factor was discussed as well as the electricity generation contract that expires at the end of the calendar year. The food service department ended the year with a large surplus which is above the state guidelines. Mr. Remington will be research and present ways to use the surplus which may include capital projects in the kitchens. Board members discussed textbooks, special education tuition, geothermal heating systems, transfer adjustments, and non-lapsing account parameters.

***Josh Barrows exited at 7:50pm, returned at 7:53pm***

#### C. District Advancement Plan Priorities

Superintendent Dunbar said he and Assistant Superintendent Michelle Zawawi worked collaboratively on the district priorities. This plan focuses on a smaller number of items that will be

worked on intensely and accomplished. Critical items will be revisited throughout the year. School based plans will be reviewed at a future meeting. The Board of Education Goals are woven into the district priorities. Classroom drop-ins are critical for a broader view of what instructional strategies need improvements. Assistant Superintendent Zawawi said continuing multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) is a priority and explained what MTSS is and how it works. Board members discussed the effectiveness of MTSS, if tiered instruction showed a decrease in special education numbers, how MTSS around social emotional learning (SEL) at Suffield High School would work, and turnover of staff trained in the MTSS system. Board members stated that they appreciated the time and attention that went into the plan.

#### Subcommittee Reports

- A. August 29, 2024 – Finance and Facilities Subcommittee Meeting – Subcommittee Chair Toskin said the district does a fine job being stewards of Suffield residents’ hard-earned tax dollars. Changes in funding costs may make the fiscal year 2026 budget difficult.

#### Board Liaison Reports

- A. Capital Region Education Council (CREC) – Board member Toskin said a great deal of preparation was done for the start for school.
- B. Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) – Board member Finnigan attended a remote meeting on August 13 relative to funding changes, excess cost reimbursement and non-lapsing accounts. To view the presentation, please visit [www.schoolstatefinance.org](http://www.schoolstatefinance.org). The CABE/CAPSS Convention is November 15.
- C. Agriscience – Board member Mol gave a presentation on the Agriscience program and provided information on staffing, enrollment trends, participating towns, retention rates, Agriscience courses, and Future Farmers of America Leadership Development. Agriscience students will be participating in Suffield on the Green and will be competing at the Big E. On September 13, the New York FFA Chapter will visit Suffield Agriscience facilities.

#### Future Business

None

#### Public Comment

None

#### Board Member Comment

- Board member Finnigan looks forward to budget season and welcomes Olivia Mishtal. She thanked administrators for tying BOE Goals into the District Priorities.
- Board member Dudack thanked the facilities staff and stated that she is excited about the District Advancement Plan. She thanked Board Chair Sattan for putting Board of Education Roles & Responsibilities on last month’s agenda. She provided feedback received from families about the Suffield High School schedule and would welcome information about additional models.
- Board member Barrows welcomed all students and staff back to school.
- Board member Toskin thanked Assistant Superintendent Michelle Zawawi for her interim actions and contributions.

#### Adjournment

Finnigan moved, Toskin seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 p.m. All members voted in favor.

Click here to view the meeting: [03SEP2024 BOE Meeting](#)

*Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of October 7, 2024.*

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Dudack  
Secretary