

Suffield, Connecticut

Approved by Bd. of Ed. 03/02/2026

Suffield Board of Education and Permanent Building Commission
Joint Special Meeting
Suffield High School Media Center
and via Zoom Webinar
February 19, 2026

Call to Order

Board Chair Sattan called the meeting to order at 5:16 p.m. The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Board of Education members Debra Dudack, Melissa Finnigan, James Mol (via Zoom), Dustin Rose, Gianna Rossi, Maureen Sattan, Greg Sparzo, and Sam Toskin; and Superintendent Matt Dunbar, Assistant Superintendent Laura Norbut, Ed.D., and Business Manager Eric Remington

Absent: Brian Fry

Also in attendance: Permanent Building Commission Members Kevin Goff, Glenn Neilson, Brian Baril, Cathie Ellithorpe (via Zoom), Bill Gozzo Sr., Henry Miga, Marty Page, and Joe Sangiovanni; Scott Pellman – Colliers, Jeff Wyszynski and Antonia Ciaverella – Tecton Architects

Presentation on Process

A. PowerPoint Presentation on Process, Funding and Draft Schedule

Scott Pellman from Colliers, serving as the Owner's Project Manager (OPM), outlined the strategic necessity of the OPM role in navigating the complex requirements of the State of Connecticut Office of Grants Administration. Mr. Pellman detailed the state grant cycle, noting that applications must be submitted by the June 30th deadline in any given year to enter the annual priority list. This list undergoes legislative review in late autumn, with final funding authorization typically granted via a legislative vote the following June or July. For example, for a June 2027 filing, Suffield would anticipate funding authorization in mid-2028.

Mr. Pellman provided historical context on the Suffield Middle School facility and explained how the 1960s design is fundamentally incompatible with 21st-century educational needs. He detailed the state's formula for reimbursement, which is predicated on student enrollment and a square foot allocation per student. He said a primary challenge for the project is the space standard calculation utilized by the state to determine reimbursement. The state calculates allowable square footage based strictly on the highest student enrollment projected over the next 8 years, which often creates a discrepancy when compared to the district's actual programmatic needs as defined in the Educational Specification.

Mr. Pellman discussed renovation reimbursement rates (51.07%) versus new construction reimbursement rates (46.25%). Navigating renovation status is complex. To qualify for the higher 51.07% rate, a project must satisfy retaining at least 55% of the existing building's structural replacement value and pass a cost-effectiveness test. However, if the Town shows that new construction is less expensive than renovation, the state may grant the higher renovation reimbursement rate for the new build.

Mr. Pellman reviewed the project's timeline.

- Spring 2026: Refinement of building options (Repair, Renovate as new, Replace) and cost estimates
- November 3, 2026: Target date for Town Referendum
- June 2027: Deadline for State Grant application
- July 2028: Projected State funding authorization
- October 2028: Projected construction start

Board of Education and Permanent Building Commission members discussed legislative reimbursement rates, and trend lines. They discussed potential building site options, state reimbursement eligibility for specific programming, and the potential for additional state funding if affordable housing becomes available in Suffield.

Discussion/Action Items

A. Review Educational Specifications for the Suffield Middle School Building Project

Jeff Wyszynski, Principal, and Antonia Ciaverella, Associate Architectural Designer, of Tecton Architects presented the draft Educational Specification for the Suffield Middle School Building Project. The Educational Specification is a mandatory roadmap required for state reimbursement and details every space within the building. The draft Educational Specification is a comprehensive 15-section document covering rationale, pedagogy, room-by-room descriptions, and building system requirements.

The proposed layout emphasizes small learning communities to create a sense of place for students. Proposed space programming categories include: academics, specialized areas, and student support. The objective is to create a community asset that supports modern pedagogy while maximizing operational efficiency and health needs through natural light and updated environmental controls.

Mr. Wyszynski discussed open items and strategic challenges. The current gymnasium exceeds the standard middle school size and the team will seek a space waiver based on its use as a community voting and athletic asset. The existing auditorium is likely to be retained in a renovation but many associated costs are ineligible for state reimbursement, which lowers the project's overall effective reimbursement rate. Central Office currently occupies space within the middle school building and including it in the project requires a separate grant with a significantly lower reimbursement rate. There is a strategic opportunity to include a regional special educational program within the project, potentially qualifying for higher state reimbursement.

Board of Education and Permanent Building Commission members engaged in a discussion regarding their shared fiduciary responsibility to ensure the project's long-term viability and its impact on the Suffield community. Members discussed enrollment projections, facility prioritization, the regional special education program, Central Office integration, and referendum logistics.

Adjournment

Dudack moved, Toskin seconded to adjourn the meeting at 6:28 p.m. All members voted in favor.

Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of March 2, 2026.

Respectfully submitted,

Gianna Rossi
Secretary