

Suffield, Connecticut

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

Board of Education Regular Meeting
Suffield High School Library Media Center
and via Zoom Webinar
February 2, 2026

Call to Order

Board Chair Sattan called the meeting to order at 6:38 p.m. The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Board members Debra Dudack, Melissa Finnigan, Brian Fry, James Mol, Dustin Rose, Gianna Rossi, Maureen Sattan, and Greg Sparzo; and Superintendent Matt Dunbar, Assistant Superintendent Laura Norbut, Ed.D., and Business Manager Eric Remington

Also in attendance: Board of Finance Vice Chair Brian Kost (via Zoom), Board of Finance member Candace Forsman (via Zoom)

Absent: Sam Toskin

Recognition

The Board of Education recognized the Suffield Middle School Robotics Team for their notable success at the 2026 VEX Robotics Competition. Suffield Middle School Technology Education Teacher and Robotics Coach Kevin Mattia, joined by students Riley Dougherty, Isaac Lavoie, and Robert Snyder, provided an overview of the program and recent accomplishments. Superintendent Dunbar and the Board congratulated the team on a successful competition.

Suffield High School Student Representatives

Olivia Mishtal, Class of 2026, shared the news and events at Suffield High School and Suffield Middle School. Student Representative Mishtal highlighted the induction of the Tri-M Music Honor Society and the donation of a personal trumpet by Suffield High School Principal Anthony Hibbert. Midterm exams have concluded. Suffield Middle School celebrated the success of the Robotics Team. Students and staff will be able to participate in the “Blind Date with a Book” initiative. The district will hold its Band Concert tomorrow night at Suffield High School.

Lucy McCoy, Class of 2027, shared the news and events at McAlister Intermediate School and A. Ward Spaulding School. Student Representative McCoy reported on the PTO-sponsored Mystic Aquarium visit to McAlister Intermediate School and detailed the *Tree Table Book* project supported by the Meghan Voisine Kindness Matters Foundation. A. Ward Spaulding School will hold its Family Literacy Night on February 12.

Public Comment

None

Board Member Comment

- Board member Dudack congratulated the Suffield Middle School Robotics Team. She thanked Superintendent Dunbar for the recent budget proposal and praised administration's response to the facility incident at Spaulding School today.
- Board member Rossi congratulated the Suffield Middle School Robotics Team.
- Board member Finnigan congratulated the Suffield Middle School Robotics Team and thanked the Board of Education Student Representatives for their updates.
- Board member Mol noted February is Black History Month.

Reports to the Board

● Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Dunbar provided detail on the power outage and heating system failure that occurred earlier in the day at Spaulding School. The incident was triggered by a faulty external electrical line on the street that caused a power surge. This surge damaged the sensors and drivers for the pumps on the school's new boilers. After consultation with facilities staff and Eversource, a decision was made to transport Spaulding students to McAlister for the remainder of the day. Families were notified through SchoolMessenger. The district continues to monitor the situation.

Superintendent Dunbar reported that the bridge behind Spaulding School requires significant repair. He provided a preliminary estimate of \$100,000-200,000 to bring the decking and railings up to code for vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

He thanked Suffield Middle School Principal Ken Smith for collaborating with Tecton Architects on the Suffield Middle School building project. Planning work continues on educational specifications and design considerations, and a joint meeting with the Permanent Building Commission is anticipated prior to the next Board of Education meeting to review progress and align next steps.

Superintendent Dunbar shared that the district reviewed the annex building as a potential location for an alternative Special Services program. After evaluating the space, it was determined that the current layout would not adequately meet student needs without significant renovations or additions. As a result, the administration is exploring alternative options, including incorporating specialized program space into the specifications for a new or renovated middle school facility to better support long-term programming needs.

At the high school, Superintendent Dunbar noted that discussions have begun regarding the possible implementation of cell phone holders in classrooms to reduce classroom distractions and support student focus during the school day. Administration is researching best practices and gathering feedback before making recommendations. He notified the Board that the high school's NESDEC accreditation visit is now scheduled for the 2028-29 school year.

Superintendent Dunbar left the meeting at 7:19 p.m., returned at 7:22 p.m.

● Board Chair's Report

Board Chair Sattan encouraged Board members to submit budget questions via the shared spreadsheet. The Advisory Committee for Capital Expenditures (ACCE) will be deliberating on capital needs and priorities this week. Board member training is currently being planned. The district's transportation contract with M&J Transportation is due for renewal, and M&J President

Jon Hipsher has offered to attend a Board meeting to discuss contract considerations. Board Chair Sattan participated in a virtual meeting with Colliers Engineering to discuss ongoing planning and coordination related to the Suffield Middle School building project. Board Chair Sattan attended the first graduation planning meeting of the year at Suffield High School.

- Business Manager's Report

Business Manager Eric Remington reported that discussions and proposal exchanges continue with M&J Transportation regarding the district's upcoming transportation contract renewal. Food Services operations across the district are running smoothly.

Mr. Remington detailed the shift from asphalt shingles to a metal roof for the roof replacement project at Suffield High School. After evaluating options, the decision was made to pursue a metal roof system rather than asphalt shingles due to its longer life expectancy and lower long-term maintenance costs. The estimated cost of the project is approximately \$2.3 million gross cost (before reimbursement) and is expected to be included as part of the Town's upcoming bonding package. A tentative town meeting is scheduled for February 26, 2026 to review and approve bonding appropriations. He also noted that the high school flooring replacement will be included in the same bonding effort.

The district is also exploring the potential for installing solar panels in conjunction with the new metal roof. Mr. Remington and Facilities Director Larry Plano recently met with the project architect to discuss feasibility and available incentives. In addition to state construction cost reimbursement, the solar project may qualify for a federal tax credit of approximately 30% if construction begins by the federal deadline this summer. Beginning construction before the deadline, rather than completing the entire installation, would allow the district to capture the available credit and reduce overall project costs.

Mr. Remington provided an update on continued cleanup and recovery efforts related to the previous flood damage at McAlister Intermediate School. The district is working closely with CIRMA and contractors to assess and remediate affected spaces. Damages are currently estimated between \$250,000 and \$500,000.

Mr. Remington discussed preventative maintenance considerations related to the district's heating systems. The administration is evaluating the potential installation of glycol in the heating systems of the remaining school buildings to help protect pipes and reduce the risk of freezing during colder months. The projected cost for this work is approximately \$90,000 and the district is reviewing both contracting options and funding sources.

- Board of Selectmen Liaison's Report

None

- Board of Finance Liaison's Report

None

Approval of Minutes

Board Chair Sattan said there are two corrections to the January 5, 2026 meeting minutes:

Page 4: Change "Aproval" to "Approval" in the Discussion/Action Items section.

Page 5: Omit the last sentence in the Adjournment section.

MOTION #26-38: Sattan moved, Finnigan seconded to approve the Board of Education regular meeting minutes of January 5, 2026 with the specified corrections. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **8-0-0**.

MOTION #26-39: Sattan moved, Mol seconded to approve the Board of Education regular meeting minutes of January 20, 2026. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **8-0-0**.

Olivia Mishtal and Lucy McCoy exited the meeting at 7:33 p.m.

Consent Agenda

MOTION #26-40: Dudack moved to approve the following on the consent agenda:

A. Suffield High School Agriscience Field Trip Request – SUNY Cobleskill – March 24, 2026

Mol seconded the motion. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **8-0-0**.

Discussion/Action Items

- Proposed 2026-2027 Budget Presentation

- Information Technology

Rebecca Osleger, Director of Technology, reviewed the proposed Information Technology budget. Ms. Osleger explained that the technology budget is shared between the Board of Education and the Town of Suffield, requiring coordination to ensure that infrastructure, hardware replacement cycles, and software needs are aligned and sustainable. Key initiatives include continued enhancements to the district's Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) platform and the transition of data analytics tools into PowerSchool to improve data accessibility and reporting capabilities for staff. She highlighted a \$21,000 credit from PowerSchool due to previous implementation delays. The department is transitioning from Red Box to PikMyKid for visitor management, which integrates with K-5 dismissal software and reduces hardware maintenance liabilities.

Board members discussed streamlining communications and thanked Ms. Osleger for her ability to improve processes and locate cost savings. Board of Finance Vice Chair Brian Kost would like to see the technology budget split between the town and school district.

Board member Dudack exited the meeting at 7:46 p.m. and rejoined via Zoom at 7:48 p.m.

- Facilities

Larry Plano, Director of Facilities, reviewed the proposed Facilities budget. He said the department's focus is on maintaining safe, clean, and operational learning environments across all school buildings while keeping expenditures as lean as possible. Mr. Plano noted that the overall scope of responsibilities for the Facilities team has continued to grow as buildings age and require more frequent repairs, system monitoring, and preventative upkeep. In addition to daily maintenance needs, the department oversees HVAC systems, plumbing and electrical repairs, grounds work, capital improvement coordination, emergency response situations, and compliance with safety and regulatory requirements. Superintendent Dunbar added that the addition of a full-time maintenance position was not included in the current proposed budget but both he and Mr. Plano acknowledged that the increasing workload, combined with the age and complexity of several district facilities, may warrant additional staff in the future.

Board members discussed the balance between maintaining lean staffing and ensuring adequate support to protect the district's physical assets. They discussed the current workload demands and building square footage assignments.

- Special Services

Diana Kelley, Ed.D., Director of Special Services, reviewed the proposed Special Services budget. Dr. Kelley explained that the department continues to leverage grant funding strategically to offset costs, including funding for a special education teaching position at Suffield Middle School. She reviewed staffing adjustments, including replacing one Speech-Language Pathologist position with two Speech-Language Pathology Assistants, which provides service capacity in a more cost-effective manner.

Dr. Kelley noted that Suffield's special education prevalence rate remains below the state average. The district also experienced a net gain in students requiring services, including several students enrolled in the Agriscience program whose sending district contribute to costs on a prorated basis.

Dr. Kelley discussed the continued partnership with Effective School Solutions, which provides clinical support for students with significant social-emotional needs. The program currently serves approximately 10-12 students and helps reduce the need for more restrictive and costly outplacements.

Board members discussed long-term sustainability of grant-funded positions, student privacy considerations, and planning for specialized program space given the limitations of the annex building. They discussed incorporating dedicated Special Services space into the future middle school building project. Board of Finance Vice Chair Kost is excited to see the district looking into options.

- Athletics

Amy Muska, Director of Athletics and Student Activities, reviewed the proposed Athletics budget. She shared that Suffield's athletic programs continue to demonstrate strong participation, competitive performance, and positive school spirit. Recent improvements include new scoreboards, updated banners, and implementation of the Wildcat app, which has enhanced communication with families and the community. Athletic uniforms across programs have also been refreshed to ensure consistency and longevity.

The proposed budget includes routine equipment replacement, stipend adjustments, and planning for future facility needs. She noted that resurfacing of the high school track will likely be necessary within the next five years and will require future capital planning.

Board members discussed strategies to increase student engagement and attendance at events. They discussed the overall increase to the athletics budget.

- December Financial Report

None

- Discussion and Possible Approval of Suffield High School Course Proposal

Board member Finnigan reported on the Suffield High School Wind Ensemble course proposal that had previously been reviewed by the Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee. The course is

intended to provide students with a more rigorous and engaging instructional experience. The subcommittee expressed support for the proposal.

MOTION #26-41: Finnigan moved, Rossi seconded to approve the Suffield High School Wind Ensemble Course Proposal as presented. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **8-0-0**.

- Discussion and Possible Approval of Suffield High School Advanced Placement Spanish Textbook

Board member Finnigan reported that the proposed Advanced Placement Spanish textbook had been reviewed by the Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee as part of the district's regular process for evaluating instructional materials. The AP Spanish course has not run consistently in recent years due to enrollment patterns, but student interest has increased. The recommended resource is a digital, online textbook platform that provides regularly updated content. Dr. Norbut stated the cost is \$2,759.83 for six years.

MOTION #26-42: Finnigan moved, Rossi seconded to approve the Advanced Placement Spanish textbook for Suffield High School as presented. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **8-0-0**.

Subcommittee Reports

- January 15, 2026; January 29, 2026 – Finance and Facilities Subcommittee Meeting – Board Chair Sattan said the district is working with architects on educational specifications for the Suffield Middle School building project.
- January 23, 2026 – Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee Meeting – Subcommittee Chair Finnigan reported on an ELA pilot program at Suffield Middle School.
- February 2, 2026 – Policy Subcommittee Meeting – Subcommittee Chair Fry reported that the Wellness Policy and Restorative Practices Response Policy were discussed and will be placed on First Read.

Board Liaison Reports

- Capital Region Education Council (CREC) – Board member Sparzo said he will attend an upcoming workshop on Artificial Intelligence. Board Chair Sattan said Greg Florio has officially retired and Desi Nesmith has been named Executive Director.
- Agriscience – Board member Mol reported interviews for incoming ninth-grade applicants were held on January 6 and 7 and Senior Capstone Night was held on January 29. The Agriscience Department hosted members of the Suffield Garden Club and students collaborated with guests to create themed floral centerpieces representing different decades. Students will participate in a public speaking competition on February 5, the Green Hand Chapter Degree Ceremony is February 12, and National FFA Week is February 23-27.

Future Business

None

Public Comment

Victoria Copes, 223 Hickory Street, appreciated the clarity of the microphone system and thanked Superintendent Dunbar for his detailed update. She looks forward to future updates related to the Suffield Middle School building project. She expressed interest in better understanding the Special Services budget and would like a follow-up conversation with either Business Manager Remington or Superintendent Dunbar.

Board Member Comment

- Board member Dudack thanked Superintendent Dunbar and the high school administration for continuing to explore solutions to address student cell phone use during the school day.
- Board member Finnigan shared that there are many exciting things coming up at Suffield High School and that she will share the high school newsletter with all Board members.
- Board member Mol expressed his support and appreciation to the administrators and staff at Spaulding School as they manage the heating system situation.

Adjournment

Mol moved, Fry seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:01 p.m. All members voted in favor.

Click here to view the meeting: [02FEB2026 BOE Regular Meeting](#)

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

Respectfully submitted,

Gianna Rossi
Secretary