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REC'D BY: cmu

Suffield, Connecticut

Approved by Bd. of Ed.

Board of Education Regular Meeting
Suffield High School Library Media Center
and via Zoom Webinar
April 6, 2026

Call to Order

Board Chair Sattan called the meeting to order at 6:36 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 (via Zoom), Maureen Sattan, Greg Sparzo, and Sam Toskin; and Superintendent Matt Dunbar, Assistant Superintendent Laura Norbut, Ed.D., and Business Manager Eric Remington

Recognition

A. Dave Moriarty Designs, LLC

The Board recognized a Suffield High School graduate, Dave Moriarty, for giving back to the district by contributing both time and expertise to a middle school landscaping project, where he is mentoring students and helping guide the design and installation. Staff highlighted the value of this hands-on learning experience, noting that his involvement not only supports the project through donated materials and guidance but also serves as an inspiring example of career pathways in the trades.

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 a variety of activities: students attended a Broadway master class; student participated in the Old State Festival at the Convention Center with performances in chorus, jazz, and band; the Spanish Honor Society continued outreach at Spaulding; Class of 2027 held a trivia night; two trips to UConn occurred last month for students participating in Science Olympiads and GSA; AgriScience organized multiple events including a Capitol visit and public speaking competition; and Winter sports awards were held, while middle school students enjoyed a staff vs. student basketball game and a *Finding Nemo* performance.

Lucy McCoy, Class of 2027, shared the news and events at McAlister Intermediate School and A. Ward Spaulding School. Student Representative McCoy reported that Spaulding students focused on weather education with a visit from a meteorologist, completed Reading March Madness, and participated in Read Across America activities including a Global Day of Unplugging, while third graders visited the Science Museum, and McAlister students also engaged in Read Across America and daily thematic activities.

Public Comment

None

Board Member Comment

- Board member Dudack thanked Dave Moriarty for his generosity and support of Suffield Public Schools. Dudack also thanked everyone involved with the budget process and document preparation.
- Board member Finnigan thanked Dave Moriarty and his support of our schools. Finnigan also stated there are exciting initiatives coming out of the Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee.
- Board member Fry thanked Larry Plano and everyone responsible for the new scoreboards on the Baseball and Softball Fields.
- Board member Mol congratulated everyone from the Drama Department on great performances.
- Board member Sparzo noted that after serving on the Board, he now better understands the budget challenges. He was shocked by Hartford's \$70 million budget gap.
- Board member Toskin thanked Dave Moriarty for all of his efforts and congratulated everyone who participated in the Spring Concert.

Reports to the Board

A. Superintendent's Report:

Superintendent Dunbar reported on the recent Board of Finance budget presentation, noting a positive partnership sentiment between boards and outlining the district's approach to special education and associated financial considerations. Professional development sessions across the district were reviewed, including math-focused workshops at Spaulding School integrating unit study, workplace connections, and place-based learning; literacy instruction at McAlister utilizing MClass data and Notebook LM for planning aligned with the science of reading; AI workflow workshops at the middle school exploring Gemini; and high school sessions focused on the RULER approach to social-emotional learning and Building Thinking Classrooms in mathematics. New athletic scoreboards at the high school were successfully installed, and the Superintendent congratulated students and staff on spring concert performances.

B. Board Chair's Report

Board Chair Sattan provided additional context on the constructive relationship with the Board of Finance and reaffirmed the positive feedback from the budget presentation. Members were reminded of an upcoming BOE training on April 20th with Jonathan Costa of EdAdvance, for which in-person attendance was encouraged. The Chair also noted participation in ongoing planning meetings with Colliers, the project manager for the middle school facilities project, and indicated that updates on cost estimates and community engagement would follow.

C. Business Manager's Report

Business Manager Remington provided updates on transportation and capital projects. The M&J transportation contract is under review with the district's attorney, and submitted to the BOE for consideration of approval is expected soon. One district van was involved in an accident in March and deemed a total loss. Replacement will be funded through insurance proceeds and \$28,000 from the town's contingency fund which has been approved by the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance. The van requires a special 10-seat configuration for homeschool and special education transportation, as regulations limit passenger numbers without a school bus license. The district maintains a collaborative arrangement with Parks and Recreation to share a 15-passenger activity van.

Capital project updates included the roof replacement grant, which will be resubmitted after initial rejection, with legislative support requested to address age-related funding rules. The photovoltaic project requires additional approval for roof attachment details, and high school floor replacement is scheduled for next week. Spalding School exterior brick repointing and bathroom renovations are moving forward with architect selection, while the HVAC project is on track for completion in June.

Regarding the middle school building project, a working committee is reviewing options for renovation versus new construction, including educational specifications, site considerations, and cost estimates. Planning is underway for a potential November referendum, with the architect and project management team providing detailed cost and design concepts. The Board will have opportunities for feedback, and the process aims to ensure informed community engagement before final decisions.

D. Board of Selectmen Liaison's Report
No Report

E. Board of Finance Liaison's Report
No Report

Approval of Minutes

MOTION #26-61: Fry moved, Toskin seconded to approve the Board of Education Meeting minutes of March 2, 9, and 16, 2026. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **9-0-0**.

Consent Agenda

MOTION #26-62: Dudack moved to approve the following on the consent agenda:

- A. Suffield High School Agriscience Field Trip Request – FFA National Convention – October 20-24, 2026 – Indianapolis, IN

Sparzo seconded the motion. All members voted in favor of approving the consent agenda. The motion passed **9-0-0**,

Discussion/Action Items

A. February Financial Report

The Board reviewed the February financial report, which shows a projected deficit of \$265,000, up from \$212,000 in January. The increase is primarily due to higher special education outplacement costs, though lower health insurance enrollment help offset some of this impact. Special education tuition and transportation line items are currently \$705,000 over budget, with state reimbursement for excess costs offsetting some of the increase.

The administration noted that because the year is well underway, any new outplacements or cost changes will have limited impact on the full-year budget. The administration believes available funds in discretionary and frozen budget items, as well as potential savings on health insurance, are expected to provide sufficient coverage for the deficit. Deferred expenditures, including contractor repairs, equipment maintenance, and instructional supplies, are being carefully managed.

Additionally, the Board discussed the potential effect of middle school planning and consultant work on outplacements. The administration is reviewing students who may return from

outplacement, meeting individually with families, with planning ongoing at both elementary and middle school levels to support reintegration. Overall, the administration remains confident in managing the financial position through the end of the year.

B. Discussion and Possible Approval of Educational Specifications for the Suffield High School Photovoltaic Project

MOTION #26-63: Finnigan moved, Mol seconded that the Suffield Board of Education approve the revised Educational Specifications dated February 26, 2026 for the photovoltaic (PV) solar system project at Suffield High School. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **9-0-0**.

C. Discussion and Possible Approval of the 2026-2027 Healthy Foods Certification

Mr. Remington said the state is requiring two motions to accept the Healthy Foods Certification and the Board needs to approve this for next year's program.

MOTION #26-64: Mol moved that pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-215f, the Suffield Board of Education certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction, and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, culinary programs, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or non-school organizations and groups. Dudack seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion passed **9-0-0**.

MOTION #26-65: Mol moved that the Suffield Board of Education will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the food items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An "event" is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The "regular school day" is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. "Location" means where the event is being held and must be the same place as the food sales. Finnigan seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion passed **9-0-0**.

D. Discussion and Possible Action on Non-renewal of Staff

Superintendent Dunbar said this action is required yearly, and not an indication of any performance-related evaluation. These roles were for a finite amount of time, and their efforts have been appreciated.

MOTION #26-66: Sattan moved, Finnigan seconded to approve the non-renewal of staff as presented in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **9-0-0**.

E. Discussion and Possible Action on the 2025-2026 District School Calendar

The 2025-2026 district school calendar was proposed to be amended to account for four official snow days and an additional canceled day at McAlister due to flooding. The last student day would be set for June 17, 2026, with early dismissal, and the last staff day for June 18, 2026. The McAlister flood day will not be made up, while the total instructional hours for students and staff remain compliant with state requirements.

MOTION #26-67: Mol moved, Toskin seconded to amend the 2025-2026 District School Calendar to make June 17, 2026 the last student day of school and that this day will follow our traditional early dismissal schedule. Further, that June 18, 2026 be designated as a Teacher Work Day. All members voted in favor. The motion passed **9-0-0**.

Subcommittee Reports

- A. March 11, 2026 – Community Engagement and Public Relations – Subcommittee Chair James Mol reported that the subcommittee discussed upcoming Observer articles highlighting budget updates and achievements of the robotics team and drama clubs. Potential future articles may focus on special education. Communication strategies for the middle school project were addressed, including creating dedicated websites and broader community outreach.
- B. March 12, 2026; April 2, 2026 – Finance and Facilities Subcommittee Meeting – Subcommittee Chair Toskin reported that the subcommittee focused on budget and facilities topics, which were covered in the Business Manager Remington’s presentations.
- C. March 18, 2026 – Policy Subcommittee Meeting – Subcommittee Chair Brian Fry said the following policy is being placed on First Read – Policy #5123.3 Graduation Ceremony. Subcommittee Chair Fry proposed an update to the graduation ceremony policy which would allow students in any school-recognized and principal-approved honor society to wear designated cords. Discussions also addressed whether U.S. History should become a mandatory graduation requirement. The cell phone usage policy was reviewed, with the subcommittee opting to await state legislation before making changes. Additionally, the subcommittee reviewed a proposed policy for live animals in the classroom, including a potential donation of a dog from the Voisine family. Further discussion will occur at the next subcommittee meeting, with the family potentially presenting on May 18th.
- D. March 27, 2026 – Curriculum and Instruction – Subcommittee Chair Finnigan provided updates on place-based education, emphasizing engagement with local, natural, and built environments – engaging with community partners like Antioch University, Suffield Historical Society, CT Landmarks, and the New England Air Museum. The subcommittee also formalized the process for course proposals and textbook adoption, including timelines and budget considerations.

Board Liaison Reports

- A. Capital Region Education Council (CREC) – Board member Sparzo discussed AI integration and adoption within the district. There is currently no consensus on its use, with staff ranging from enthusiastic early adopters to those resistant to change. It was noted that AI technology is evolving rapidly.

B. Agriscience – Board member Mol provided updates on recent events such as Ag Accepted Students Day, Ag Day at the Capitol, and FFA Alumni Bingo Night. Upcoming events include the Ag Expo and State Ag Fair, and board members are invited to attend. Board member training with Ed Advance is scheduled for April 20th.

Future Business

Board Member Availability: Summer Meetings
Effective School Solutions (ESS) program update

Public Comment

None

Board Member Comment

- Board member Dudack thanked Assistant Superintendent Laura Norbut for the professional learning update. Dudack also thanked Eric Remington for the helpful budget analysis and Brian Fry for the policy update. She expressed interest in a future update or potential pilot program regarding classroom pouches for student cell phones.
- Board member Mol reminded everyone that Multicultural Night is coming up on May 20, 2026. Suffield High School and Suffield Middle School have combined efforts and he anticipates it being a great success.

Adjournment

Toskin moved, Mol seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:21 p.m. All members voted in favor.

Click here to view the [meeting](#):

Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of May 4, 2026.

Respectfully submitted,

Gianna Rossi
Secretary