

Southington Board of Education
Southington, Connecticut
Regular Meeting
November 10, 2011

The regular meeting of the Southington Board of Education was held on Thursday, November 10, 2011 at 7:30 p.m. at Southington Town Hall in Town Council Chambers, 75 Main Street, Southington, Connecticut.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:32 p.m. by Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Joseph V. Erardi, Jr. Board members present were Mrs. Terri Carmody, Mrs. Colleen Clark, Mr. David Derynoski, Mr. Brian Goralski, Mrs. Patricia Johnson, Mrs. Terry Lombardi, Mrs. Jill Notar-Francesco, Mr. Zaya Oshana, and Mrs. Patricia Queen.

Present from the administration were Dr. Joseph V. Erardi, Jr., Superintendent of Schools; Mrs. Karen Smith, Assistant Superintendent of Schools; Mrs. Sherri DiNello, Director of Business and Finance; Mrs. Perri Murdica, Senior Special Education Coordinator; and Mr. Frederick Cox, Director of Operations.

Student Representatives present were Whitney DiMeo and Leon Peschel.

There were approximately 50 individuals in the audience.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Dr. Erardi led the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. SWEARING IN OF BOARD MEMBERS BY DEPUTY TOWN CLERK

Dr. Erardi turned the meeting over to Ms. Kathy Larkin, Deputy Town Clerk. Board members stood with their right hands raised while Ms. Larkin swore them in: *“Do you solemnly swear you will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Connecticut and will faithfully discharge according to law your duties as Board of Education Members for the Town of Southington to the best of your abilities so help you God?”* Board Members replied, “I do.” Congratulations and good luck were wished upon all.

4. ELECTION OF BOARD OFFICERS

Dr. Erardi congratulated all the Board Members and explained that, for a brief moment, he presides as the Chairperson of the Board of Education. He then solicited nominations for the Chairperson of the Southington Board of Education.

Mrs. Carmody stated that she was honored to nominate Mr. Brian Goralski as the Chairperson of the Board of Education. She has been very proud of what he has accomplished throughout the past four years and the communication he has promoted with the other Boards in the Town of Southington.

Dr. Erardi asked if there were any other nominations for the position of Board of Education Chairperson, and there were not any other nominees.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YES – Mrs. Clark, Mr. Derynoski, Mrs. Notar-Francesco, Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Lombardi, Mr. Oshana, Mrs. Queen, Mrs. Carmody. ABSTAIN – Mr. Goralski. Mr. Goralski was unanimously elected Chairperson of the Board.

Mr. Goralski expressed his thanks and said that it was a great honor to serve with the other Board Members.

Mr. Goralski asked for nominations for the position of Vice Chairperson. Mrs. Notar-Francesco nominated Mrs. Terri Carmody, and there were no other nominees.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YES – Mrs. Johnson, Mr. Oshana, Mrs. Clark, Mrs. Notar-Francesco, Mrs. Queen, Mr. Derynoski, Mrs. Lombardi, Mr. Goralski. ABSTAIN – Mrs. Carmody. Mrs. Carmody was unanimously elected Vice Chairperson of the Board.

Mr. Goralski asked for nominations for the position of Secretary. Mrs. Clark nominated Mrs. Notar-Francesco, and there were no other nominees.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YES – Mr. Oshana, Mrs. Clark, Mrs. Carmody, Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Lombardi, Mr. Derynoski, Mrs. Queen, Mr. Goralski. ABSTAIN – Mrs. Notar-Francesco. Mrs. Notar-Francesco was unanimously elected Secretary of the Board.

Mr. Goralski congratulated the full Board and stated that they will serve the community well and that it's an honor to sit on the Board of Education. He shared that the Board of Education is bipartisan and one of the hardest things that he ever had to do was to pick seats. For four years, there was a perception from the town that, because of their separation, they were partisan. He hoped that everyone recognized that that no longer exists. He took that advice and the Board is now spread out and not separated by party. They are sitting amongst each other and he believes that it better symbolizes that the Board of Education is a united group who is there to make the Southington Public Schools as good as possible.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES ~ October 27, 2011

MOTION: by Mrs. Notar-Francesco, seconded by Mrs. Carmody:

“Move to approve the minutes of the Regular Board of Education meeting of October 27, 2011.”

ROLL CALL VOTE: YES – Mr. Derynoski, Mrs. Queen, Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Notar-Francesco, Mrs. Lombardi, Mrs. Carmody, Mrs. Clark, Mr. Goralski. ABSTAIN – Mr. Oshana. Motion carried with eight votes in favor and one abstention.

6. COMMUNICATIONS

a. Communications from the Audience

No communications from the audience.

b. Communications from the Board

Mrs. Carmody asked that everyone take the time on Friday, November 11, 2011 to honor the veterans for all the service they have given which has allowed them the freedoms that they enjoy.

Mrs. Notar-Francesco attended a Veterans Day celebration at Flanders Elementary School. One of the teachers, Mr. Dan Murdzek, had been conducting a Veterans Day program with the students and staff for the last seven years and he presented a wonderful program. His Veterans Day theme was that this was a time of *Reflection, Remembrance, and Rejoicing*. With that, the principal, Mrs. Mazzarella, read a story to the students about a soldier who received a tree in the mail from his family during the holidays. This tree helped him to remember his family during the time that he was away. This was to let him know that his family was thinking about him every moment. In celebration of his return home, that tree was planted. Mrs. Notar-Francesco acknowledged that the Board members were presented with trees in honor of this story. She also shared that the students at Flanders Elementary School decorated a tree that will be planted on the school grounds and they called it a *Hero's Tree*. Mrs. Notar-Francesco stated that it was a very moving ceremony and, following the program, one of the veterans talked with her about how the children were respectful and very well behaved during the ceremony.

Dr. Erardi stated that the trees that were presented to each member of the Board and the administration came from the teachers at Flanders Elementary School as part of their celebration.

Mrs. Notar-Francesco asked the administration if the schools would be participating in American Education Week and if they would be opening the doors to parents in a consistent fashion. Mrs. Smith replied that American Education Week is a highlight in November for all the schools to showcase what a typical day looks like. There may be some variation with the actual schedule at each of the schools. The schools will develop schedules that work best for them and will invite parents to visit during those times.

Mrs. Lombardi thanked all the families that she spoke with over the past couple months. She also stated that it is a privilege and honor to be serving the Town of Southington. She thanked everyone on the Board of Education and the administration for the amazing job they

have done over the past few years. She thanked the Board, administration, and families in Southington for their support.

Mr. Derynoski took a moment to thank Dr. Erardi for his leadership with the referendum for the middle schools. He thanked all the parents, PTOs, and senior citizens who came out and supported the project. It was obvious by the results of the vote that the community understood the need and the intent of the Board of Education and the town to move forward and get the facilities up-to-speed so they could provide the best education for Southington middle school students. He again thanked Dr. Erardi for all the time and effort he put into this project.

Mrs. Carmody thanked the Southington Police and Fire Departments, the Town Manager, and Assistant Town Manager for the wonderful way they handled the difficult week they had because of the snow storm. She appreciated everything that was done by the community leaders.

Mr. Goralski requested a moment of silence to honor a former teacher, Irene Flugard, who passed away recently.

Mr. Goralski thanked the Board for all their work following the election on Tuesday. He then formally named members of the following committees:

Policy and Personnel Committee ~ Administrator, Mrs. Karen Smith

- Mrs. Colleen Clark ~ Chair
- Mrs. Patricia Johnson
- Mr. Zaya Oshana
- Mrs. Patricia Queen

Finance Committee ~ Administrator, Mrs. Sherri DiNello

- Mrs. Jill Notar-Francesco ~ Chair
- Mr. David Derynoski
- Mrs. Terry Lombardi
- Mr. Zaya Oshana

Curriculum Committee ~ Administrator, Mrs. Karen Smith

- Mrs. Terri Carmody ~ Chair
- Mrs. Patricia Johnson
- Mrs. Terry Lombardi
- Mrs. Patricia Queen

Mr. Goralski shared that the Board of Education works continuously. The actions that they take as a Board could only be done as a Board. The Board has authority over the finances and policies of the district. The procedures that the Board of Education has in place for the public and Board is as follows:

All requests for information will be directed to the administrator that oversees those areas. In addition to the administrator, he requested that people send a copy of the request for information to the Superintendent of Schools, Chair of the Committee, and the Chair of the Board of Education. Mr. Goralski explained that this is a formality for the Board of Education and the public. This will help the public to better understand how they can get their information.

It's best to include the Board before they go to the administrators so they can properly answer any questions. If the Board is aware of a concern, they can better serve the public.

Adopt-A-School

A list of the Board members who are currently responsible for specific schools was distributed. Mr. Goralski asked that the Board get back to Mrs. Albaitis (Executive Secretary to Dr. Erardi) before Thanksgiving so they can distribute an updated list.

c. Communications from the Administration

Dr. Erardi shared that, through conversation he had with Dr. Semmel, they would like to request that a Board member work as a representative for their Instructional Time Committee. This is a committee that will look at how the day continues to layout with the length of periods at the high school. This is the progression following the work of the leveling committee that was just completed. The past practice worked very well with the leveling committee that included a Board representative and they are hoping for the same success with this committee. He asked that any interested Board member contact the Board Chair.

• Recognition ~ CAPSS Students

Dr. Erardi recognized Nicholas Frega and Jorge Sanchez as the 2011-2012 recipients of the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents' (CAPSS) Superintendent / Student Recognition awards. He shared that Nick and Jorge were selected as two of Southington's outstanding students in the secondary schools. Nicholas is a senior at Southington High School and Jorge is a Grade 8 student at J. F. Kennedy Middle School. These students will represent the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents as Southington's Students of the Year. Dr. Erardi shared information about each student.

Nicolas Frega

Nicholas is a hard-working, dedicated, and compassionate young man. He is the consummate student! He pursues his academic studies with vigor and enthusiasm. Nick has surpassed all of Southington High School's academic, social, and civic expectations. Nick's perseverance and intellect, along with his quick wit, helps him stand apart from all the other many accomplished students at Southington High School. Nick has maintained academic excellence while participating in many extracurricular and civic oriented activities. Nick is highly regarded by all his peers. He was elected to serve as National Honor Society President this year. Nick is also highly involved with Best Buddies in which he has served as their Treasurer for the past three years. Nick also participates in Unified Sports. Nick puts in a lot of hard work as a trumpet player in Southington's award-winning Marching Band. Nick believes strongly in "giving back" to the community. He contributes countless hours to volunteering at the Salvation Army Soup Kitchens, Mission trips with his church, and is currently working on his Eagle Scout project. Nick's parents are Peter and Marianne Frega.

Jorge Sanchez

Jorge Sanchez, in his quiet and unassuming way, is a student who exemplifies the essence of what this award was designed to recognize. He comes to school each and every day with a hugely positive attitude, ready to bring his absolute best to the Kennedy Middle School

community. He demonstrates this with his passion for learning, the astute questions he asks in all of his classes, and with his natural intellectual curiosity. Quick to smile, Jorge's positive, caring, and supportive nature is seen in his willingness to volunteer his help, whether it be needed by his peers in the classroom, the hallways or the cafeteria.

Jorge is a student who is always able to see the positive aspects of difficult or challenging situations. He leads others through his example by practicing good sportsmanship, good citizenship, and by his superlative work ethic. This is a young man who always maintains a positive attitude about school, family, and life in general. The best way to summarize why Jorge is so deserving of this recognition is through the words of one of his teachers, "He is the type of student that you wish you could clone, because all of your classes would be better because he was a part of it." Jorge's parents are Tina Sanchez and Jorge Sanchez.

Mr. Goralski stated that one of the greatest honors that the Board of Education has is to recognize the deeds of their students. Both Nicholas and Jorge stand above their peers and with this honor, they represent the Southington Community on the State level. For that, the Southington Board of Education is incredibly proud and appreciative of all they have done. He congratulated the students, the parents, and Southington teachers because education does not occur by itself. He then presented the students with a Certificate of Excellence.

Nicholas took a moment to thank everyone for the honor. He stated that it was completely unexpected. He expressed a special thanks to: his parents for all they have done for him; Mrs. Clark who helped him with his education while in high school; his best friend, Travis Clark; two of his teachers, Mrs. Migliaro and Mr. Rohen; most of all, the Southington High School Marching Band. He shared that the first time he ever had to apply himself came when he was a freshman in the band and believed that the award would not have happened without that experience.

- **Recognition ~ Kennedy Students, "Cans for Cans"**

Dr. Erardi invited the following students from Kennedy Middle School to the front of the room: Abby Alfieri, Bianca D'Amore, Lyndsey Giudice, Morgan Maccione, Kristen Matthew, and Jillian Noli. He shared with the Board Members that this recognition was a discovered treasure with great meaning. It was self-imposed and organized by the students. Last year during the food drive at Kennedy Middle School, these students had Mr. James DiNello as their teacher. During his class, he stressed the importance of giving and teamwork. The girls then went well beyond bringing in one can to support the food drive. They filled three grocery carts of food for community services. It was not a one-year opportunity. The girls understood the opportunity to give and what civic responsibility means. This year, again without adult prodding, they collected four grocery carts of food, \$85 in bottle returns, and a \$50 gift card, all of which were donated to community services. Dr. Erardi believed that is something very special and he congratulated the girls on their outstanding service to the community.

Mr. Goralski issued a Certificate of Excellence on behalf of the Board of Education. He shared that the Board and administration were very proud of this accomplishment. There are many needs in the community and, because of what these students provided, many Southington

families will be served a Thanksgiving meal. Their act of kindness is an example for both adults and students.

At 7:58 p.m., Mr. Goralski called for a short recess.

The regular meeting reconvened at 8:15 p.m.

c. Communications from Student Board Representatives

Reported by Whitney DiMeo

- Because of the snow storm on Saturday, October 29, the Music of the Knight was canceled. It was very disappointing as it's a great event. However, the band did very well in the State Competition by finishing in second place and, when they placed second instead of first, it was only by a difference of two decimals.
- Today, students received a voting ballot for the Homecoming Prince and Princess. Homecoming is being held on November 18, 2011.
- Dr. Alexandru and the foreign language department are organizing the first Spanish Student Exchange program at Southington High School. There are nine participants from Southington High School, and there are ten students coming to the United States from Madrid. During the February vacation week, the Southington students will go to Madrid to spend time with the students who are visiting Southington. The group is very excited and believes that it will be a great opportunity that could open doors to other foreign exchange programs.
- The Course Fair is scheduled for December 5, 2011. It's open to all Southington High School students. It provides information to students of the opportunities they have in each course.

Reported by Mr. Peschel

- The big news was not having school for a week. Most students were excited about the week off which gave them the chance to sleep in. Monday's return was a slow start for students, and teachers were trying to compensate for the lost week. Students are anxious to hear how the Board of Education is going to address the school calendar.
- The SATs were rescheduled from October 29, 2011 to November 19, 2011.
- Financial Aid night was Monday evening and it was extremely informative. There were 200 parents in attendance. They had the opportunity to ask questions and receive all the information they need to apply for financial aid. They offered great advice as to what types of loans parents and students should be looking for.
- Parent/Teacher Conferences will be held on Thursday, November 19. Dr. Semmel made an all-call to families this year to let the parents know that these Parent/Teacher Conferences are taking place.
- They also congratulated all Board Members for their election or re-election on the Board of Education.

Mrs. Notar-Francesco took a moment to recognize the Southington High School Guidance Department who got the Naviance email system up and functional. She received a couple of email notifications and believes that this will be great resource for parent communication.

Mrs. Lombardi asked for additional information about the Foreign Exchange students who will be visiting from Madrid. She asked specifically how long they would be coming, who is organizing the program, and, beyond the language, what are the other components of the Exchange Program.

Ms. DiMeo replied that the students are coming for two weeks and will go to school with the SHS students for four days. It will be spread out so they are not attending four days of school back-to-back. Other days they will be experiencing America. They will visit Boston and New York, as well as attend a basketball and/or football game. Beyond the language, it's about their learning the American culture. They would like to treat the students like family members. Dr. Erardi shared with Mrs. Lombardi that this program came to the Board six weeks ago and that the administration will provide her with that documentation.

Mrs. Queen asked Mr. Peschel what the students were saying about the school calendar. He shared that there are many rumors and speculations as to what is going to happen. One rumor is that the days won't be made up, which he knows is not an option. Seniors are most concerned that their Graduation might be pushed back. There are rumors about cancelling some of the breaks. They do realize that the five days need to be made up.

Mr. Goralski recommended that a motion be made to move agenda item 9a, School Calendar Update ~ 2011-2012 to agenda item 6d.

MOTION: by Mrs. Notar-Francesco, seconded by Mr. Derynoski:

“Move to move agenda item 9a, School Calendar Update ~ 2011-2012 to agenda item 6d.”

ROLL CALL VOTE: YES: Mrs. Carmody, Mr. Derynoski, Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Lombardi, Mr. Oshana, Mrs. Queen, Mrs. Notar-Francesco, Mrs. Clark, and Mr. Goralski. **Motion carried unanimously.**

d. School Calendar

Dr. Erardi distributed a copy of the Board approved 2011-2012 School Calendar. He shared a starting point for the Board's conversation surrounding the School Calendar. He laid out some important information as a common platform moving forward. When the Board adopted the calendar in January 2011, they were aggressive with coming back to school early. By starting the school year with a five-day week, it put the district in a better place for the last day in June. The original calendar had the last day as Wednesday, June 13, 2012. With the hurricane loss of one day and the snow storm loss of five days, the projected graduation date is now Thursday, June 21. It's important to remember that, last year, students graduated on June 23. Connecticut Statute is very clear that public schools must be in session 180 days. The Southington calendar shows that their students are responsible for 181 days. If the Board chooses to do nothing, they would meet statutory obligations if there were six or less school cancellations between now and the close of the school year. The school year must be completed before July 1, 2012. There are two dates that are non-negotiable, and they are January 2 and January 16, 2012.

In an effort to prepare for this conversation, the administration met with all union presidents and PTO leadership. The question presented to the 1,100 employees was the balance between the February and April breaks. It came back that the preference of well over 90 percent of those polled is to eliminate the February break. The conversation with union presidents would be to recognize and honor Presidents' Day, and the rest of the week would be compromised. That offers some inherent risk. They could cancel the February break, schedule school, and the potential of snow during that week may lead to no-school days anyway.

After reviewing the calendar, Dr. Erardi also looked at several potential singleton dates and considered November 23, January 17, April 6, and May 28.

Dr. Erardi shared his proposal before the Board tonight with the union presidents and they endorsed his proposal moving forward. He reminded the Board of Education that this was a starting point for them. His conservative recommendation was that November 23, 2011 will be reclaimed as a shortened day. Administration also recommended that they reclaim January 17, which is a scheduled Professional Development Day for teachers. He's confident that they would make up that day with a Memorandum of Understanding with the Southington Education Association bargaining group by holding Professional Development in three, two-hour blocks.

Dr. Erardi also felt that it's important to put people on notice and he read the following recommendation: *In addition to the November 23 and January 17 dates, the Southington Board of Education is directing the superintendent to put all staff and students on notice that, if there are additional no-school days in November, December, and up to January 12, the present February vacation may be eliminated.*

This language is passive by design. February 20 would remain a no-school day to recognize Presidents' Day; however, students and staff should be prepared to attend school on February 21-24. If the Board looks to change the school calendar, he strongly suggested that their position be a "demand to work." That means that they have the right to set the days that students attend, teachers teach, and administrators administrate. The board would then direct him to demand their work force to the change of the calendar. For those who already have a non-refundable deposit, he would ask those people to meet with him or an administrator individually to understand where they are with the plans they made. They would then use their discretion, and, because of these changes and because of the unknown prior to November 10, they may offer them the opportunity to continue on their vacation, compromising and losing the number of days they are out of work. It is not minus substitute pay; it's a loss of pay per day. He believes that it's the only fair and consistent way to look at this. His final comment was that the challenge with changing the calendar is equity and unhappiness. He asked that the Board remember that they only meet one time in November and one time in December.

Mrs. Notar-Francesco asked about the significant professional development that is planned for January 17 at the high school. She wondered how changing the plan from one, six-hour day to three, two-hour blocks would impact their plan for the leveling professional development. Mrs. Smith shared that she spoke with Mr. Terino about this and they are comfortable with this compromised position. They would clearly be able to identify dates that resource staff would return to the district for their planning. She planned to meet with Dr. Semmel surrounding this issue following the Board meeting. While the professional development will look different, it will be redesigned appropriately. Mrs. Smith confirmed that there will be enough time to redesign the plan.

Mrs. Queen liked the idea of using November 23 and January 17 to reduce the number of missing days. She asked about taking some of the days from February vacation. Dr. Erardi explained that the intent was to try to create passive language to give the Board the flexibility of having better information in the middle of January. That would be the substance of the letter that would be sent from Dr. Erardi's office to staff. The letter will be clear that if you don't have plans, don't make them. If you can get your reimbursement, get your reimbursement.

Mr. Derynoski stated that, based on what he heard and read, a motion be made.

MOTION: by Mr. Derynoski, seconded by Mrs. Notar-Francesco:

“Move to approve the recommendation by the Superintendent of Schools to put November 23, 2011 back on the calendar as a shortened day and January 17, 2012 as a full day for students with the understanding that all staff and students are put on notice that, if there are additional no-school days in November, December, and up to January 12, the present February vacation may be eliminated.”

Mrs. Carmody expressed that she agrees to the recommendation from the superintendent and that it is as equitable as possible.

Mrs. Clark also agreed that her concern is for those families who need to plan for child care, but, if they are given the flexibility, it's not all or nothing.

Mr. Goralski clarified that, with the motion presented, he sees the January 12, 2012 agenda item being the School Calendar with a similar recommendation from the superintendent to be discussed.

Mrs. Johnson shared that she was uncomfortable not making the decision that evening and doesn't believe that they will be in any better situation at the January meeting in projecting what the weather will be. She thought that it would be best to make the decision at this meeting because the future is unknown. However, if the vote is that they go along with the superintendent's recommendation, she wants to be sure that people are very prepared to attend school February 21-24. She does not want to see the students going to school the last week of June. It was not a good situation last year, and she does not want to see that happen this school year. Mrs. Johnson also thought that many of the parent leaders who surveyed their memberships reported that, overwhelmingly, they wanted to eliminate February vacation week as their first choice. Mrs. Queen added that she understood the parents feeling that, if given a choice between February and April vacation, they would choose to eliminate February.

Dr. Erardi shared another point that there are school districts in Connecticut that have already lost 12 days of school. In order for the required 180 days to change, it would have to go through the Commissioner of Education, with action from the State Board of Education. The State Board of Education has taken the position that they would never make that change. However, Dr. Erardi does not recall there ever being a district in this position that has lost double-digit days before the month of December. He stated that there might be that conversation at the State level in the next 4-6 weeks depending on the weather. He does not disagree with Mrs. Johnson that winter is winter and they have yet to get there. Dr. Erardi is confident that he

can word the letter in a way that will stop February break as far as planning and trying to recover the days. He tried to be conservative with the unknown.

Mrs. Lombardi clarified that, on January 12, they will review where they are with the snow days. Between January 12 and February 17, in the height of winter, they could have additional days and the probability is very high. The Board would then need to add more days at that time. If she were thinking as a parent, she feels that they would need to know their plans. Not having a definite plan, it could be a hardship on families.

Mr. Goralski stated that, if the Board were to take February vacation with the motion before the Board of Education, it would be done on January 12. He assumes that, if there are any snow days between now and January 12, there would be a greater likelihood that the conversation would be much easier as to eliminating all or some of the February vacation week.

Mrs. Clark confirmed that Dr. Erardi's letter would state that there is a strong likelihood that they will not have February vacation and they are putting everyone on notice that they should plan on being in school during that time. She understands that the State might change the plan between now and January and, if they were to make changes, Southington would still be in a good position. They are not telling people that they are definitely going to school, but there is a chance that they will be going to school.

Mrs. Carmody asked Dr. Erardi, if they had to use February vacation and it was a terrible winter, would they have to use April vacation as well rather than the late June date. Dr. Erardi confirmed that she was correct.

Mr. Derynoski understood that the State might make a change to the 180-school-day regulation; however, he did not think that it would be a 'blanket' statement for all districts. He believes that they would instruct districts to take all their vacation days away and then reconsider the 180-day regulation.

Mr. Goralski asked if there should be some reference that, if there is a late winter, families and staff should be on notice that April vacation week is also in jeopardy. Dr. Erardi will reference the April break as well. Mrs. DiNello reviewed the teacher contract and did not see any language surrounding vacation weeks and, during their meeting, no one mentioned any contract concerns.

Student Representative, Mr. Peschel, shared that last year, many of the seniors experienced problems attending college orientations because the school year ended so late. Mr. Goralski asked that he follow-up with the Guidance Department to get a list of the colleges that hold the earliest orientations and the dates. Mr. Goralski asked that they have this information by the January 12, 2012 meeting.

The request was made to add to the motion that staff should be on notice that the April vacation week is also in jeopardy. Mr. Derynoski and Mrs. Notar-Francesco agreed to amend the motion.

The motion on the table from Mr. Derynoski and seconded by Mrs. Notar-Francesco was read as follows:

“Move to approve the recommendation by the Superintendent of Schools to put November 23, 2011 back on the calendar as a shortened day and January 17, 2012 as a full day for students with the understanding that all staff and students are put on notice that, if there are additional no-school days in November, December, and up to January 12, the present February and April vacation weeks may be eliminated.”

ROLL CALL VOTE: YES – Mrs. Clark, Mrs. Queen, Mrs. Notar-Francesco, Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Lombardi, Mr. Oshana, Mrs. Carmody, Mr. Derynoski, and Mr. Goralski. **Motion carried unanimously.**

7. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

a. Personnel Report

MOTION: by Mr. Derynoski, seconded by Mrs. Carmody:

“Move to approve the Personnel Report as submitted.”

ROLL CALL VOTE: YES – Mrs. Notar-Francesco, Mr. Oshana, Mrs. Clark, Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Queen, Mrs. Lombardi, Mrs. Carmody, Mr. Derynoski, and Mr. Goralski. **Motion carried unanimously.**

8. OLD BUSINESS

a. Town Government Communications

Mr. Goralski congratulated all the elected officials on the other town Boards and stated that the Southington Board of Education looks forward to working with them. Also, those candidates that did not succeed offered some insight for the Board to use as they move forward and he thanked those people for their time.

Several members of other Boards were present at the swearing in of the Board of Education members and those, who are able and have the opportunity, are encouraged to attend the swearing in of members at the Town Council Meeting on November 14. This meeting will also coincide with the 9/11 Thank You from the Southington Remembers 9/11 Committee. Other meetings next week are the Planning and Zoning on November 15 and the Board of Finance on November 16.

Mr. Goralski was told by the prospective Chairman of the Town Council that they would not be naming their town-wide committees at the first meeting. The naming of committees will take place in December.

b. Construction Update

Mr. Cox reported that the snow storm did not help with completing the last few ‘punch list’ items. In addition, the energy management company that was scheduled to do the programming on the server at Plantsville Elementary School had other systems that took priority

throughout the State, and that appointment is rescheduled for the following week. At South End Elementary School, the one remaining item is the site lawns. The architect was not able to inspect it under the snow fall. He did state that Mr. Jones, the Committee Chair, wants to close out the project and is planning a meeting at the end of November to do so. By the next meeting, he will have a much different report for the Board.

Mrs. Clark shared that, on Tuesday, she spent some time at South End Elementary School and the grass was growing and things were looking as if they are moving in the right direction.

c. North Center School Project Update

Dr. Erardi stated that they would be receiving the environmental report for 49 Beecher Street that was important to continue the negotiations with the brokers who expressed an interest in marketing the property. They will be meeting as an administrative team with the Town Manager and Town Attorney next week and will have an update for the Board of Education, most likely in December.

The office staff is continuing to clean out 49 Beecher Street through organized work days. At the North Center/Government Complex, they are beginning to move into stages of addressing the meeting room, looking at furniture, and layouts. That continues to move forward and he will keep the Board updated. Despite the weather, the demolition and construction continues to take place. Central office is comfortable where they are and anxious to move. While there are always surprises in old buildings, they continue to move forward.

Mr. Derynoski asked if the plan was to have a built-in sound system. Dr. Erardi shared that the Borghesi Group selected their subcontractor for furnishing that room. They met two weeks ago about the furniture, but discussion about technology has not taken place and they don't know the plan at this point. The budget is tight for furniture, fixtures, and equipment.

Mrs. Johnson asked about how the buildings and grounds fared during the power failure. Mr. Cox shared that there were a number of buildings down for an extended period of time, but they spent a lot of time removing limbs and carrying them off. They had arborists that were working on their sites to ensure that there are not any hanging limbs. They did rope off areas in the beginning, but that is behind them now and they are in good shape.

Mrs. Johnson asked if the lack of power affected the heating and water systems. Mr. Cox explained that, in the buildings that lost power, they had a fire watch because the fire alarm system was down. The custodians and maintenance staff were there 24 hours per day. When the systems came back up, there were some problems with surges and they had to replace some boards, but the majority of issues were with the phone systems.

Mrs. Johnson asked about the email system. Dr. Erardi explained that they lost the email access for the full week, but were back online the following Saturday. He also explained that there were some problems to open on Monday, in particular with the freezers and food. However, through the terrific work of Mrs. DiNello and Ms. Welinsky, Food Service Director, they were able to move the food to other schools and to a local business.

In addition, a compliment to New Britain Transportation who ran a dry run on Sunday to ensure all routes were safe. Their cooperation was extraordinary.

The town leadership was amazing. If the Board had the opportunity to participate in the emergency meetings with the fire chief, police chief, town manager, town attorney, and the public health director, they also would have been impressed. These leaders all worked around the clock for the community.

Mrs. Johnson asked if there is an emergency plan in place for these types of situations for the school district. Dr. Erardi explained that the district runs simulations on an annual basis. It's a difficult answer to the question because there are some places in which it's easy to create a safety zone and, in others, it's not as easy. They have had in-depth conversations about emergency 'what-ifs' at the high school. The administration continues to work with safety officials on these situations and do their best to plan.

Mr. Derynoski asked Mrs. DiNello if there was enough damage throughout the district that would require us to put the insurance carrier on notice, so we could possibly recoup some of the costs that were incurred. She shared that she and Mr. Cox are in the process of tallying any losses in the district, and they will share the expenses with the town to apply for any aid that might be available. They are keeping the insurance carrier on notice in the event they do have some notable loss. Mr. Goralski shared that he thought that any overtime would be covered by federal assistance, and Mrs. DiNello stated that they would have a list of these expenses.

d. Middle School Feasibility Study Update

Dr. Erardi shared that there are many things going on as they move forward. On Monday, November 14, Attorney Sciota will introduce the timeline for the acquisition of property to the Town Council. Part of the \$85 million question was the acquisition of 1043-1045 South Main Street. Within the signature of the agreement that they have, it will take place on or before January 1. A conversation will take place at the Town Council level on Monday, November 14. On November 15, Dr. Erardi, Mr. Cox, and Fletcher Thompson will be presenting to the Planning and Zoning Commission what the property will be used for. This property is located on the cafeteria side of Kennedy Middle School that runs parallel to that area. There's a home, small shop, and a home that is off curbside. It will be explained to the Planning and Zoning Commission how this property will offer opportunities for parking concerns.

On November 28, the Town Council will look to constitute the Public Building Committee. The past practice of the Council is to include Board Members, the Board Chairperson and Mr. Cox as ex-officio members.

Dr. Erardi also thought that an important comment from the parent leaders was a request for the administration to return to the elementary schools to better explain what is going to happen as they move forward. Their concerns are mostly surrounding the work-around project.

Dr. Erardi's final comment was that he is extraordinarily proud of the community and how they stood tall for public schools.

9. NEW BUSINESS

a. School Calendar ~ 2011-2012

This agenda item was moved to 6d.

b. Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy ~ First Reading

Dr. Erardi thanked Mrs. Notar-Francesco for bringing to his attention that this policy is different from most. The legislation includes that the Board adopt the policy, as well as the plan behind the policy. Presented to the Board was a first read of a comprehensive document. He is comfortable with the timeline to take action in December. He also reminded the Board of Education that the document was a sample that came directly from legal counsel.

Mr. Goralski noted that all Board members, including the two new members, are familiar with the policy being presented. The Board started by going through the policy page by page. There was some discussion that took place surrounding language on the first page; however, because of the level of detail, it was recommended by Mrs. Clark that the policy go to the Policy and Personnel Committee for further review and clarification, and they will then come back to the Board with their recommendations.

The Board agreed and Mr. Goralski asked all members to share their recommendations with Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Clark by Monday, November 14. Those recommendations will then be brought to the Policy and Personnel Committee who will work on revising the policy.

c. Grade 4 Science Pilot Program

Mrs. Smith introduced Ms. Dale Riedinger, District Science and Math Coordinator, who was prepared to give a brief, important presentation. She, in partnership with the Southington Education Foundation (SEF) and Camp Sloper, offered a program to the Grade 4 students and teachers involving hands-on science learning at Camp Sloper.

Ms. Riedinger shared that they were working on this project for approximately a year with the SEF who provided them with some grant funding. This funding allowed the Grade 4 students to attend science experiences at Camp Sloper.

A large initiative of the SEF is to create a STEM Center. This program is a precursor to that program to see how they could use science in nature and incorporate other facets of instruction. The program is a collaborative partnership with the Southington Board of Education, SEF, and Camp Sloper's Outdoor Center under the leadership of Mark Pooler, Director.

It was determined that the fourth grade science curriculum is where this program works the best because they are working with ecosystems, food chains, adaptation, and living things. There will also be units on erosion as the year goes on.

Ms. Riedinger stated that the partners met and put together a district committee of Grade 4 teachers. They planned and developed a curriculum with activities and experiences for the

students to participate in at Camp Sloper. They did a mini pilot in June of 2011. This school year, they have 26 fourth grade classes which is a total of 539 students that are experiencing science at Camp Sloper in the fall and the spring. The fall program began on October 24. The committee looked at the basic science and engineering practices and reviewed the new national standards. After reviewing the eight different practices, they determined their plan about what they could do with science in the outdoors. Included would be problem solving about the adaptations and what the erosion would do to the environment. They included live plot studies where the students measure out a specific amount of space in the environment and they have to determine all the living things in that environment. Then, in the classroom, they talk about how they can look at the scale and proportionality of what those living things might be in that particular area. Students plan and carry out investigations. They all received their own notebooks, clipboards, digital cameras, binoculars, portable microscopes, and special boots that allow the students to get into the water and explore the environment.

While analyzing and interpreting data, students collect soil and water samples from several different environments within Camp Sloper. They take the tests and determine what the results show about those particular ecosystems.

Ms. Riedinger continued that mathematics was used when determining how many earthworms and other critters they found in their live plot studies. By going out at two different times of the year, the students see what the environment looks like and what the living things represent and how they are different between the systems.

Students are responsible for explaining what food chains they think are happening in those ecosystems based on the living things that they discovered and haven't seen yet. They are talking about why they do or don't see something and ways to describe the erosion and food chains within the science concepts that they are working on.

They are responsible for keeping their notebooks up-to-date and filling in the information as they move from one ecosystem to another. They have a plan so there is at least 45-minutes in each of the different areas. Students are asking good questions. Before they go on site, they need to predict what they think they are going to find.

Basic science concepts are based on the national standards and they are looking at patterns, cause and effect, scale and proportionality, systems and models, energy and matter, stability and change. With the grant money they received, they are able to record all the living things and evidence of living things and they could leave those items in nature where they belong. Students are seeing things first hand, are finding and discovering things, and asking good questions.

Basic skills that students are utilizing are predicting, observing, measuring, testing, recording data, comparing and contrasting, and summarizing. They take soil and water tests from different areas. They were happy to find that the water is clean at Camp Sloper. There are many living things in the water, but not enough to cause an overgrowth of bacteria. If they don't finish their data entry in their notebooks at Camp Sloper, they return to school and continue with the class and share their results. They are working in groups of four allowing them to share with small groups. There are many different activities that they built into the program and they took the curriculum back out into the environment where the students are able to do their work.

Ms. Riedinger thanked the SEF for the substantial grant that they awarded to the district. They covered the transportation and an additional \$4,000 of extra supplies and materials for the students. Ms. Riedinger is excited to report that the students are thrilled with this program. They are impressed with the materials and supplies. They look and act like scientists. While learning, they are having a great time.

Ms. Riedinger shared some pictures of students from Derynoski, Hatton, and Thalberg Elementary Schools. The pictures showed students actively engaged in conducting research. They were instructed to take pictures of living things that they could not bring back with them, activities within the group, and pictures of the environment so they could compare the areas between the fall and spring. Photos included students measuring, finding earthworms, snails, and a variety of different types of living things. They took the temperature of water, collected items from the pond, and explored a sink hole. The pictures showed a combination of their work and some photos from Mr. Pooler at Camp Sloper. The students' ability to go out into the real world and find the connections of how things happen is what makes it an amazing learning experience.

Ms. Riedinger stated that the students have loved every minute of this experience. They are learning so much science, enjoying what they are doing, and are learning many new things.

Ms. Riedinger encouraged all Board members to visit the students at Camp Sloper. She will forward the dates and times and reminded them to dress appropriately.

Dr. Erardi commented that this project only took place because of Ms. Riedinger's willingness to coordinate it. Her 'yes' attitude in partnership with the Southington Education Foundation is what allowed this program to take place. He shared that he is very proud of her work with this project.

Mrs. Clark shared that in October, she was visiting Camp Sloper with a group of students and she saw Ms. Riedinger and the teachers on site. The teachers were actively involved and exploring. They were just as thrilled as the students to be there and learn. Their enthusiasm was infectious.

Mrs. Carmody shared that she was excited to see what the students are doing and wanted to acknowledge how wonderful the Southington Education Foundation has been to the schools. She also is willing to meet Ms. Riedinger at Camp Sloper to experience this adventure. She thanked Ms. Riedinger for her enthusiasm and amazing work.

Mrs. Notar-Francesco believed that this is a great opportunity to tie-in the whole school enrichment with the learning that the students are experiencing and to bring in their two teaching experts in that area to redirect students who have further interests. She also wondered if this was being tied-in with Readers and Writers Workshop in terms of getting the students to read and write more non-fiction. Ms. Riedinger stated that, based on when the writing units allow non-fiction to happen, she is confident that those connections are being made. They have been stocking the classrooms with non-fiction readers. However, in science, it is technical writing, not narrative. They do a lot of collecting of data and facts, but there are still plenty of opportunities for students to write. Any chance they can write about something is another way for them to continue to understand the material.

Mrs. Lombardi shared that there are so many facets of this initiative that tie into where public education needs to go. In terms of the 21st Century Skills, she complimented Ms. Riedinger that she has hit each one of those skills. She shared how impressed she is with the program and how amazing it is to have the opportunity to have a collaborative effort with a resource within the community such as the YMCA. She hopes that Southington can showcase this program and share it with other towns. She applauded Ms. Riedinger and Mr. Pooler for their efforts. She also expressed that she would like to see a portion of the Science Fair take note of this program in each of the fourth grades that are participating.

Dr. Erardi shared that the SEF will be presenting their conceptual plan for approximately a one million dollar science, technology, engineering, and mathematics center. They are looking to start their capital campaign and at some point gift this to the Southington Board of Education.

Mrs. Queen shared that the Southington Education Foundation made \$35,000 at their annual fundraiser and they are doing amazing things for the district.

Mr. Derynoski confirmed that this was a one-year program and asked if this program was going to be part of the school budget. Dr. Erardi shared that they will have a conversation with the Foundation prior to their submittal of a budget to the Board of Education, and he will have a better answer for the Board following that conversation with the SEF.

Mrs. Johnson thanked Ms. Riedinger for her work and shared how exciting this program is. She wondered if she would be putting together a formal assessment about the effectiveness of this in-depth program. Ms. Riedinger confirmed that she will have a program evaluation completed for the spring. The SEF requested that they continue to showcase the program and they have invited parents to join them. The word is spreading and the students are excited. Ms. Riedinger stated that the SEF is proud to sponsor this program and they believe in what they are doing and the benefits of the program.

Mr. Goralski thanked Ms. Riedinger for her passion and hard work. He also recommended that she share with the Foundation that, as they showcase this program, there are many opportunities for them to showcase and grow their abilities to raise revenue. There are many businesses that might be able to offer donations other than monetary ones.

MOTION: by David Derynoski, seconded by Mrs. Notar-Francesco:

“Move to adjourn.”

Motion carried by voice vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Passamano
Recording Secretary