

SOUTHINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION

SOUTHINGTON, CONNECTICUT

REGULAR MEETING

FEBRUARY 20, 2014

The regular meeting of the Southington Board of Education with Executive Session was held on Thursday, February 20, 2014 at 6:30 p.m. in the Municipal Center Public Assembly Room, 200 North Main Street, Southington, Connecticut.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Brian Goralski, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

2. EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS PERSONNEL AND SAFETY MATTERS ~ 6:30 p.m.

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

“Move to go into Executive Session, excluding the public and the press, for the purpose of discussing personnel and safety matters, and upon conclusion return to public session.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

An Executive Session meeting was held from 6:31 p.m. through 7:16 p.m.

Board members present were Mr. Brian Goralski, Chairperson; Mrs. Terri Carmody, Vice Chairperson; Mrs. Jill Notar-Francesco, Secretary; Mrs. Colleen Clark, Mr. David Derynoski, Mrs. Patricia Johnson, Mrs. Terry Lombardi, Mr. Zaya Oshana and Mrs. Patricia Queen.

Present from the administration were Dr. Joseph Erardi, Jr., Superintendent of Schools; Mrs. Karen Smith, Assistant Superintendent; Mrs. Kim Hunt, Personnel Manager, and Mrs. Franca Imme (*left at 6:55 p.m.*).

3. BOARD OF EDUCATION RECOGNITIONS

At 7:24 p.m., the Board of Education recognized four outstanding students in the fine arts program at Southington High School. Students recently participated in the Connecticut Scholastics Art Awards program which recognizes the work of talented young artists in Grades 7-12. More than 400 works of art were submitted and juried by professional artists and university art faculty. The submissions were based on merit for inclusion in a statewide art exhibit held at the University of Hartford. Students were awarded gold, silver and honorable mention placed in each of 16 categories. The SHS Art Department is proud to announce the award recipients:

Bert Casale – Gold Key for his black and white charcoal pencil self-portrait, “*The Unseen Side*.” This piece also received the distinguished award of “*Best in Show*” in the drawing category.

Samantha Aberizk, Silver Key for her oil pastel landscape drawing, “*Old Orchard Beach*.”

Kaitlyn Budrow – Silver Key for her scratch art illustration, “*Meow*.”

Nick DiFusco was recognized for his selection as a finalist in the Photo Forum where over 16,000 images were entered. His parents were in attendance for their son who is in Spain.

Thomas Mazzatti, a senior at Southington High School, was recognized for his work for the past two years with Mr. Campbell producing *Spotlight in Education*. His spirit continues to inspire them and he will be taking this opportunity to a new level by pursuing a career in broadcast media upon graduation.

At 7:35 p.m., Mr. Goralski called for a recess.

4. RECONVENE MEETING ~ REGULAR SESSION

The regular session was reconvened at 7:53 p.m. by Chairperson, Mr. Brian Goralski. Board members present were Mrs. Terri Carmody, Mrs. Colleen Clark, Mr. David Derynoski, Mrs. Patricia Johnson, Mrs. Terry Lombardi, Mrs. Jill Notar-Francesco, Mr. Zaya Oshana and Mrs. Patricia Queen.

Present from the administration were Dr. Joseph Erardi, Jr., Superintendent of Schools, Mrs. Karen Smith, Assistant Superintendent, Mr. Frederick Cox, Director of Operations and Dr. Perri Murdica, Director of Pupil Services.

Student representative present was Miss Gabby Baker.

There were approximately 42 people in the audience.

5. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The audience recited the Pledge of Allegiance led by Miss Gabby Baker.

6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES ~ January 23, 2014 (Regular Meeting), January 27, 2014 (Special Meeting), January 30, 2014 (Special Meeting), February 1, 2014 (Special Meeting), February 6, 2014 (Special Meeting)

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

“Move to approve the Board of Education Regular meeting minutes of January 23, 2014 and the Special meeting minutes of January 27, January 30, February 1 and February 6, 2014, as submitted.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

7. COMMUNICATIONS

a. Communications from Audience

Art Cyr, 103 Berlin Avenue: Mr. Cyr referred to a copy of the January 23, 2014 Board of Education meeting minutes. He stated that he felt there were some inaccuracies in what was said on pages 12-13 regarding the turf field at SHS. Someone in the discussion to leave \$25,000 in or out said they weren't sure who was on the committee. Mr. Cyr named the members. He stated that the original direction from the Town Council was to oversee the project, but not the replacement as read in the PowerPoint presentation. The replacement was set by the original committee, and neither the original turf committee or current committee made up that information, it came from Board of Education. Another comment was that the turf committee had not met the charge of the PowerPoint presentation. One problem was there were two meetings in a row to set up revenues and policy and they were informed by the BOE representative that that could not be done until the BOE approved the policy to deal with the field. He feels that there does not seem to be a lot of respect for other committees in town. Mr. Goralski stated that the minutes are public and available on the town and BOE website and are approved following each meeting.

Barbara Brush, 120 South End Road – She expressed her concern regarding the placement of the Southington Sports Hall of Fame, which is currently located in the arts wing at the high school. This location was to be temporary and a committee was set up three years to discuss alternate locations. She appreciated Dr. Erardi's help in taking her concerns seriously and reinstating this committee to discuss where the most suitable place would be. Dr. Erardi stated that the committee endorsement will come to the Board of Education on or around April 1. Mr. Goralski stated that the recommendations from the committee will help give the Board direction to recognize the Hall of Fame appropriately.

b. Communications from Board Members and Administration

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

“Move Agenda Item 10a. Overnight/Out of State Field Trip Approvals to 7d.

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

Communication from Board Members:

Mr. Goralski gave the following updates:

- Superintendent Search – Dr. Mary Broderick and Dr. George Goens have been hired as search consultants seeking the replacement of Superintendent of Schools. Mrs. Karen Smith will be Interim Superintendent upon Dr. Erardi's departure. The public is asked to be actively involved in the process and invited guests will attend various focus group meetings on February 24. Final input opportunities will be on March 6 with the consultants at 6:30 p.m. in the auditorium at Derynoski.
- Southington Education Foundation Spelling Bee – will be held on April 23, 2014. There is a Board of Education special meeting that evening to hire a new assistant principal at Southington High School.

- STEPS Community Forum – will be held on March 4 at 6:00 p.m. This is a cornerstone event of the year where results of surveys are discussed. For more information, please contact Southington Youth Services.

Mrs. Johnson stated that, regarding the Superintendent search focus group meetings, Board members will not be there, as they were advised not to attend so conversations can be free flowing. Information from these meetings will be shared with them, but they will not be in attendance.

Communications from Administration:

Dr. Erardi reported on the following:

- Middlesex Community College Enrichment Partnership Grade Six: JFK/JAD ~ March Launch ~ Meriden Campus: Through the work of aspiring administrators, particularly Kim Kalat, letters are being sent home this week to all sixth graders regarding the start of a Saturday enrichment program. If more than 22 students sign up for a class, there will be a lottery. The following class opportunities are available:
 - a. Using the New York Times for Critical Reading and Thinking
 - b. Creating Animation and Video Games
 - c. Introduction to Video Production
 - d. Make Your Own Website
- End-of-the-Year School Calendar: Projected Last Day of School ~ Thursday, June 19 (7 snow days) as of this evening. An agenda item for consensus at the next meeting will be to look at end-of-year calendar in relationship to the April break.
- Virtual STEM University/SEF Partnership – More than 30 educators met yesterday afternoon and are ready to load by May 1 the STEM curriculum units designed by approved curriculum, at grade level, and ready to launch by start of new school year.
- STEPS Community Forum – will be held on Tuesday, March 4, 2014.
- Southington Public Schools Spelling Bee – will be held on Thursday, March 20 at 7:00 p.m. at Thalberg School for fifth and sixth grade students.

c. Communications from Student Representative

Miss Baker reported the following:

- She congratulated the student artists who received awards tonight.
- She hoped all enjoyed the “fake” February vacation, as she sure did.
- Tonight is the girls’ basketball Senior Night and tomorrow starts the LL for wrestling; boys’ basketball Senior Night is tomorrow night.
- Due date for scholarship essays is rapidly approaching.
- Underclassmen are working on course registration, and parents have until Sunday to register on Power School.
- She is looking forward to hearing about leveling and BYOD later in the meeting.

d. Overnight/Out of State Field Trip Approvals

Mrs. Smith stated two field trips are before the Board this evening. This information in detail was sent to Board members earlier.

- SHS Key Club to Springfield Marriott - April 4-6, 2014
Ms. Petra Johnson, Key Club Advisor, stated students will depart at 3:00 p.m. on April 4 so students will not miss any school time.
- SHS Agricultural Science to Kentucky National FFA Convention – October 28-
November 2, 2014
Ms. Victoria Christian, a teacher at SHS, stated that this field trip is held every year and is very valuable for students to compete in various competitions.

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

“Move to approve the SHS Key Club Field Trip to the New England Key Club Convention in Massachusetts and the SHS Agriculture and Science Field Trip to the National FFA Convention in Kentucky.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

8. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT**a. Personnel Report**

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

“Move to approve the Personnel Report, as presented.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

b. Curriculum & Instruction Committee Meeting ~ February 10, 2014

Mrs. Carmody reported that the committee met on February 10 to review the ABA program at Hatton School, and saw a presentation by the new BCBA. They also visited classrooms at Hatton. CREC staff continues to provide ABA support at Hatton and other schools in Southington. There will be an external evaluation of the Southington-based ABA program, with results given to the curriculum committee in the spring.

c. Policy & Personnel Committee Meeting ~ February 10, 2014

Mrs. Clark reported that the committee met on February 10 and went over the job description for the Superintendent of Schools, as it had not been reviewed since 2001. A revised job description will be presented later this evening. They also reviewed the job description for a Lead ABA Therapist. Having brought our ABA program in-house, we are looking at various job descriptions to ensure success of the program. We have further questions regarding that position, and will be looking at it again at our next meeting with Dr. Murdica. There will be a joint meeting with the Curriculum and Instruction Committee for both committees to hear

information on Monday, February 24 at 5:30 p.m. at Hatton School. Mrs. Lombardi stated that she read the minutes from the Personnel and Policy Committee where there is discussion on making a CREC therapist a BOE employee. Mrs. Smith stated that we are currently paying CREC for this position and can realize a \$15,000 savings if this position were transferred to a BOE position. Mrs. Lombardi stated that it was not just about adding a salary, but also for providing benefits as well. What would the implications of that be on the budget for next year? Mrs. Smith stated that she will be prepared to respond to that question at the next meeting.

9. OLD BUSINESS

a. Town Government Communications

Mr. Goralski stated that the Board of Finance presentation went well last evening and it publicly shows the communication between the two Boards and gives a better understanding of our work. He looks forward to continued dialogue with them. An important date for the Board of Finance workshop will be March 11, which will be dedicated to the Board of Education. They have asked Dr. Erardi, Mrs. Smith, Mrs. DiNello and himself to be present, and he invites his colleagues on the Board of Education to attend as well.

The Turf Advisory meeting was snowed out last week and he will follow up with the Board when the meeting is rescheduled on what takes place.

b. Construction Update

Mr. Cox stated that the project continues to be on schedule. Above ceiling inspections for electric and mechanical work have started. We are starting to see ceiling grids and panels go in, giving it a finished look. The project remains on schedule for the mid-April classroom and office move in.

Mrs. Johnson asked for a comment on the issues of color choices. Mr. Goralski stated that both he and Mrs. Clark sit on the Building Committee and the committee has been asking Fletcher Thompson for these color boards to be presented to this Board since September. He understands that, as of today, all but one color board has made it to Attorney Sciota's office. Colors were approved, but they had not been given the color boards. Painting has started, and the colors are vibrant. He assures this Board that there will be a presentation to them in March. He apologizes for the delay.

Mr. Derynoski asked if there was further information from the state regarding the building committee he continues to sit on? Mr. Cox stated that there has been conversation with the state over the past few weeks, and they continue to gather information on enrollment numbers because there is an eight-year window for these numbers.

c. Administrator Evaluation Plan Update

Dr. Erardi stated that there was no report.

d. Teacher Evaluation Plan Update

Mrs. Smith stated that the Committee met today and will follow up the discussion at its March 3 meeting. It is her understanding the State Department of Education will be providing flexible options providing some relief especially regarding teacher data collection and development of SLOs. She will be updating the C&I Committee as they go forward, and she is glad for the opportunity to make some amendments to the Southington plan.

Mrs. Queen stated that there were some questions last night at the Board of Finance meeting regarding changes Governor Malloy is proposing. There is some confusion over Common Core, and she asked what specifically is changing. Mrs. Smith stated that three major initiatives occurred this year: (1) Teacher Evaluation, (2) Common Core and (3) the Smarter Balanced Assessment which will eventually replace the CMT and CAPT. These are all distinct, but dependent on one another. The governor is referring to the SDE supporting the slowing of the implementation of the teacher and administrator evaluation support plan, not Common Core and not Smarter Balanced. Common Core was adopted in 2010 and the implementation is occurring now. The Smarter Balanced field test will occur this spring; it is a test of the test, and we will not have benchmark data until the spring of 2015. For now, we are relying on non-standardized data.

10. NEW BUSINESS

b. Leveling at Southington High School

Dr. Semmel, along with Helen Crowley and Stacy Simpson, gave a presentation regarding leveling changes at Southington High School, now in its second full year. A major recommendation from the NEASC report was the need to review and revise leveling practices. Levels changed from four to three, which are now defined as Honors (H), Competitive College Prep (CCP) and College Prep (CP). He reviewed survey results from staff and stated that 11% of staff reported not having taught under both systems, and 88% of staff have taught under both systems. Mrs. Simpson stated that the consistent comments from teachers were that: students taking CP and CCP levels are being exposed to more challenging materials; expectations have been upgraded at all levels; there has been a shift in the mentality of students and teachers; there is a decrease of inappropriate behavior at the CP level; there are less students not doing homework; they see students rising to the level of their peers and doing better; students are taking more appropriate level classes, taking CCP over CP whereas previously students were more prone to take a Level 2 for an easier grade; there is increased rigor for all students being prepared for college; teachers create more differentiated instruction, using small groups and different organizers; teachers feel the leveling system has raised the bar; CCP-level teachers feel there is more parental support, and students are working harder and rising to the challenge. Mrs. Crowley stated that in the past two years she has seen a decrease in inappropriate student behavior in the classroom. As the culture has changed, generally so has student behavior.

Student survey results show that students are adjusting well to the new leveling system, and they are looking to move up to try to get into a higher level.

Parent survey responses show students are adjusting well. The biggest concern is how to balance the number of upper-level classes a student should take. Ninth grade counselors are now involved with the middle school counselors to find the right balance. If it is too much for a student, they can drop a level.

Student Achievement Information – very high passing rates for honors and CCP classes. Administration thought that they might see dramatic failures with Level 1 students new to CP classes, but there are not. Staff has gotten better at SRBI and the EIP processes, and literacy teachers are helping with this, giving supports to students.

In 2011-12, the last year of the 4-level system, 129 students took a level 4 class. In 2012-13, 468 honors seats were taken. Science and civics classes are now being offered at the honors level and students are taking them. There are dramatic increases of students challenging themselves. They are seeing success with students taking AP classes and have added more AP courses giving more opportunities to students. The goal is to have every student take one college bearing credit class.

Mrs. Carmody shared a concern that she received from a parent of an eighth grade student who has been recommended to take all honors level classes. Mrs. Carmody addressed how hard it is for parents to know how many honors classes a child should take. Dr. Semmel stated that he feels that, if it is the recommendation of the teacher, the student should take the class. There are many freshmen students taking all honors classes; they are students also involved in sports or band, and are doing just fine. If they find they are struggling, the student can meet with their counselor and reduce to a CCP class. There is some miscommunication about the August deadline for changing classes. He stated that pertains to elective classes as it affects our FTEs; leveling changes are different.

Mr. Goralski asked what they are hearing from guidance staff at the colleges. Dr. Semmel stated that this is a fantastic year for student acceptances to MIT, Yale, Duke, Tufts, and that the list is growing. It all depends on the college, as different schools look for different things.

Mrs. Queen stated that she loved the results presented. Culture is hard to change, and this change has been very beneficial to students' behavior, attitude, and grades. She asked what the data was regarding the number of students taking one college-bearing class before leaving high school? Dr. Semmel stated that they are assembling those numbers now. She asked him in an ideal world, what else would he like to have that he is not asking for due to budget constraints? He stated that students need more individual service. Some students are reading at a third grade level, and that it is a very small number, but intensive service is needed. He would like to see two more literacy specialists and a math specialist. There are also equipment needs, cosmetic needs, and library needs. There are a number of things that they can do to make Southington High School a flagship school for the state of Connecticut, and he would like to have that discussion at another time.

Mr. Oshana stated that this information was very interesting and is really good. As for the students not going to college, how is this working for them? Dr. Semmel stated that they produced a report that talks about the number of students that go into the world of work, the military, and a host of students who go to a two-year school to help them figure out what they want to do.

Mrs. Lombardi stated that this presentation represents excellence. She thanked Dr. Semmel for all the hard work that has been done. She noticed the data in the Grade 10-11 history area and stated that the CCP level had a consistently higher percentage of students, with a lower percentage at the CP level. It appears that there are higher percentages of students in CCP

in history vs. math or science, why is that? Dr. Semmel thanked her for pointing that out, and stated that he will follow up with department chairs. Mrs. Lombardi asked about the students who were in Level 1 classes, where are they going, asked if the graduation rate has changed. Dr. Semmel stated that the graduation rate is very good, and a goal at the administrative level is increasing that graduation rate. EIP pays more attention to students failing in classes; social workers and guidance counselors are working with students to make sure they are not failing. He feels that we will see the graduation rate get even better.

Mrs. Johnson stated that the numbers are fabulous and asked, since the new leveling started, what is the success ratio percentage for students passing? Dr. Semmel stated that they look at the number of students who take the course, how many take the test, and how many pass. He commends the number of students for taking AP classes that do pass. The College Board says that students who take an AP class and get a 1 on the test are still better off. Mr. Goralski suggested putting a cohort of students together who are now in college that have taken AP classes to talk about how that has helped them. Do they feel better prepared for college coursework? He also asked for follow up about the disproportionate number in the social studies area.

Dr. Erardi stated that this is an extraordinary demonstration of administrative leadership and stewardship and that committee members worked hard to make this happen. To move conversation to practice in a school of 2,000 students is not an easy task. He stated that this was the most powerful educational leadership he's seen, and he thanked Dr. Semmel and his staff for making Southington High School a special place despite its resources.

c. Student and Staff Use of Technology at Southington High School

A presentation was given by Rich Aroian and Candace Patten, both teachers and administrative interns at Southington High School. The purpose is to increase technology, allowing students to use their own devices as learning tools. An online survey was given to the teaching staff. They found that 60% used BOYD at least six times this year. Teachers found that one advantage of using BYOD was not losing time moving classes from room to room. Most use it as a quick look-up tool. One completely false perception among teachers that they found was that WiFi was not reliable. There were issues, but they have been fixed. Another issue is equity, as a number of students don't own a tablet. CP classes show a higher number of students who don't have them. The purchase of mobile carts and Chrome books are coming and will be a big help. The third concern is that there is no accurate way to monitor student use while in the classroom. They explored two opportunities for future use, with Google Docs as one way for all students to be actively involved.

Board members also went on-line in a demonstration and were shown an example using the program SOCRATIVE. Mr. Aroian stated that professional development is an important part of this. There is the need to draw on this knowledge and the need to have a standing committee that meets on a regular basis to look at apps, analyze which ones are worthwhile and present to other teachers. Mrs. Lombardi stated that she is troubled about the equity issue with CP students. Dr. Erardi stated that the Long-term Technology Plan Committee will be addressing this issue and, when they report back to the Board, an answer will be coming. Mrs. Lombardi asked about the pilot and when it will be done? Dr. Semmel stated that the pilot to look at Schoology came from a student who used it at GHAMAS. Schoology is a platform for teachers to communicate with students. Board of Education policy talks about not having devices in

buildings, and the pilot allows us to suspend certain policies. Dr. Erardi stated that this was an 18- month pilot, and the results will come to the Board by the close of this school year for policy writing in 2014-15.

d. Leonard and Gladys Joll Scholarship Committee Appointment

Mr. Goralski stated Mr. Oshana, Mr. Derynoski and Mrs. Notar-Francesco will serve on this committee. The protocol will stay the same, and he asked those Board members to please coordinate through Mrs. Passamano.

e. Timeline for Hiring Assistant Principal ~ Southington High School

Dr. Erardi stated that the proposed date for interviews with the three finalists will be April 23, the same night as the SEF Spelling Bee.

f. Bid Award ~ BID #2014-BID-20 Lawn Mowing and Trimming for SHS, JAD, JFK, Kelley, Plantsville and South End Schools

Mr. Goralski stated that this is an action item, but is asking for a motion to table.

Mr. Oshana stated that he asked some time ago for language to be added to bid documents regarding legal actions against vendors doing business for the town. He feels that it is important to take that information to heart when looking at whom we are going to hire. If we have vendors who have had large lawsuits against them in our town, it has to be a significant part of what we look at before we hire them again. He stated that we don't want to hire people who have cost our town a lot of money and who have potentially hurt or injured our staff and residents. He feels strongly that we need look at that. Information came out regarding this bid and looking at some of the rationale behind it, saying certain things about some vendors and not holding other vendors to the same level of accountability makes no sense to him. He would like to publicly discuss this at the next meeting. People need to know whom we are hiring and why we're hiring them and, if we have an issue with them, it should be known. Mr. Goralski stated that we will look for advice and revisit this and act appropriately. He asked Board members to go through him or Dr. Erardi with any questions and advice within the next few days. This information will be compiled for the Board as a whole.

MOTION: by Mr. Oshana, seconded Mr. Derynoski:

“Motion to table Bid Award – BID #2014-BID-20 Lawn Mowing and Trimming for SHS, JAD, JFK, Kelley, Plantsville and South End Schools.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

g. Job Description Approval Superintendent of Schools

Mrs. Clark requested to waive the first reading of the job description and approve as recommended by the Personnel and Policy Committee.

MOTION: by Mrs. Clark, seconded by Mrs. Johnson:

“Motion to waive the first read and approve the job description for Superintendent of Schools, as recommended by the Policy and Personnel Committee.”

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

Mr. Goralski thanked the Policy and Personnel Committee for the speed and thoroughness in which they worked, and to Mrs. Smith for her role in this process.

11. ADJOURNMENT

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

“Move to adjourn.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

The meeting adjourned at 9:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Patricia Smolinski
Recording Secretary