

# **SOUTHINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION**

## **SOUTHINGTON, CONNECTICUT**

### **REGULAR MEETING**

**JANUARY 9, 2014**

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The regular meeting of the Southington Board of Education with Executive Session was held on Thursday, January 9, 2014 at 7:00 p.m. in the Municipal Center Public Assembly Room, 200 North Main Street, Southington, Connecticut.

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

**2. EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS PERSONNEL ~ 7:00 p.m.**

An Executive Session meeting was held from 7:02 p.m. through 7:30 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 (*left at 7:11 p.m.*); Mrs. Karen Smith, Assistant Superintendent (*left at 7:09 p.m.*); Mrs. Sherri DiNello, Director of Business and Finance (*left at 7:09 p.m.*); and Kimberly Hunt, Personnel Manager (*left at 7:09 p.m.*).

*At 7:30 p.m., the Board recessed from Executive Session to the Regular Session.*

**RECONVENE MEETING ~ REGULAR SESSION ~ 7:30 p.m.**

The regular session was reconvened at 7:35 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; Mrs. Sherri DiNello, Director of Business and Finance; and Mr. Frederick Cox, Director of Operations.

Student representatives present were Miss Gabrielle Baker and Miss Abigail Harris.

There were approximately 18 people in the audience.

**4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The audience recited the Pledge of Allegiance led by the student representatives.

Mr. Goralski called for a moment of silence in memory of Mr. Albert Pedrolini, a former biology, chemistry and botany teacher at Southington High School for over 30 years, who recently passed away.

**5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES ~ December 12, 2013**

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

**“Move to approve the Board of Education minutes of December 12, 2013, as submitted.”**

Mrs. Queen requested an amendment to the minutes (page 14).

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

**“Move to approve the Board of Education minutes of December 12, 2013, as amended.”**

**Motion carried by voice vote with Mrs. Johnson abstaining.**

**6. COMMUNICATIONS**

**a. Communications from Audience**

Art Cyr, 103 Berlin Avenue: He thanked Dr. Erardi for sending the Special Needs Registry Notice to all the schools. He noted that 80 people signed up; however, he believed that more students should have registered. He asked for a follow-up notice to be included with the February School Newsletters that are sent electronically. He noted that no one received it on time in January and that he would hate to miss a special needs child. Mr. Cyr addressed the gas leak situation at Kennedy Middle School and how well it was handled because of the potential of a disastrous situation. He praised the fire and police departments, New Britain Transportation, administration, staff and students at Kennedy. Mr. Cyr addressed the snowstorm in December where school should have been cancelled. He appreciated that Dr. Erardi, the Town Manager and Highway and Police Departments attended the Town Council meeting and “took it on the head a little bit.” He was disappointed that at the December Board of Education meeting it was not addressed and he took the Board to task for not mentioning it. Mr. Cyr addressed overcrowding school buses. He sent an e-mail and photo that was posted on Facebook (Southington Talks) to Mr. Goralski, Mr. Cox and Dr. Erardi addressing this. He received some phone calls from townspeople (and the Facebook thread) who told him that overcrowding on buses has been occurring for years at the middle schools and high school. This was not a one-time incident and seems to be the policy, which has been happening for years. It will be corrected for a while and then fall back. He had a problem with people at the bus company thinking that the photos were staged and with their arrogance. He noted that the Board recently did a transportation study, and he felt that it was time to switch bus companies after 20 years.

Mr. Goralski replied that each issue was being addressed and that follow-up information could be obtained from the Superintendent’s office.



Brian Robarge, 39 School Street: He is President of the Southington Band Backers. He addressed the cost associated with the Marching Band and how the funds were currently raised. His organization was looking for financial support from the Board. It cost \$80,000 to support the Marching Band, which includes the cost of paying instructors, buying instruments and music, renting trucks, etc. that are covered by the Southington Band Backer organization, which is comprised of parents of students who are in the band. They raise this money through membership dues and extensive fundraising. They hold a Mini Band Camp at the end of each school year to introduce the middle school students to Marching Band and to inform parents of the commitment for both the students and themselves. There is a \$300 per student Band Backer membership fee, which is optional because it is not a pay-to-play organization. However, the fee is critical because, if enough parents opted out, they would not have enough money to support the band. The membership makes up one-third of the budget. In addition, there is the uniform cleaning fees, meal plan fees and percussion fees, which is a significant financial investment by parents. Once parents are over the shock, they are provided ways to raise these fees such as selling cookie dough, Butter Braids, subs for Super Bowl, Tag Sale, etc. They have created a year-long fundraising machine. He pointed out that Southington High School has one of the top Marching Bands in the state, and last season at the USBands and National Championships they finished fifth in the nation for their class and first among other bands from Connecticut. They were recognized for their commitment to music education and received the first-ever Dinkles Spirit Award. Many bands that they compete against have nicer, newer instruments, fancier props or their own trucks to move their equipment. Mr. Robarge brought with him a tuba showing its wear and tear. They are able to replace a small percentage of instruments every year. They recently replaced the drums for the drum line at a cost of \$15,000 and put off replacing other instruments for years. Surround Sound is held to raise additional funds specifically for replacing instruments. He asked the Board to consider helping the championship caliber Marching Band at budget time with some monetary consideration to offset the costs currently incurred by the parents.

Patricia Mazzarella, 90 Applegate: She is Principal of Flanders Elementary School. On behalf of the Southington Administrators Association, she asked the Board to favorably consider the 2014-2015 School Calendar proposal with the professional development dates built-in. Mrs. Mazzarella gave numerous reasons why this was supported by the administrators.

#### **b. Communications from Board Members and Administration**

##### **Communication from the Board Members:**

Mrs. Queen reported that in the recent issue of School Band and Orchestra (SBO) there was an article entitled, "Directors Who Make a Difference - Report: 2013's 50 Directors Who Make a Difference." It is a list of Band Directors with one selected from every state who are actively fostering and inspiring future generations of musicians, music educators, and patrons of the arts. She announced that Jeff Shaw, Southington High School Band Director, was Connecticut's choice. She noted that there was a wonderful write-up in the article about Mr. Shaw. She shared what Mr. Shaw listed as his proudest moment as an educator which was, *"There have been many performance moments that are highlights, but there are two things that stick out: first, the number of music educators that have come from our program and secondly our partnership with our Local American Legion. To have our kids bond with the veterans and work together has been great."* She congratulated Mr. Shaw.



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

**“Move Agenda Item 10.c ‘Overnight / Out of State Field Trips’ to Agenda Item 8.c.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

Mrs. Carmody reported that there was an article in the newspaper regarding the SEED Committee (Southington Enterprise Zone and Economic Development) where they talked about promoting the regional Robotics competition that takes place in March. The SEED Committee is giving the Robotics team money because they felt it will promote further economic development in town and will give the town recognition.

Mr. Goralski noted he will be representing the Board of Education in the Polar Plunge at Camp Sloper this year on January 18, and that Mr. Lasbury has been the catalyst behind the team. Through Dr. Erardi’s office, he would like to challenge each school to produce one jumper. He pointed out that there was going to be a district-wide “Hat Day” fundraiser on January 17 with the funds going to the YMCA in support of the children of Southington. He asked that this information be shared with the schools.

**Communication from Administration:**

Dr. Erardi reported on the following:

1. Retreat – Saturday, February 1, 2014: Dr. Erardi reminded the Board of the annual Retreat and stated that it was a public meeting and will take place in the Municipal Center Public Assembly Room. He told the Board to contact his office if they wanted to add something to the agenda.
2. Kindergarten 2014-2015: Dr. Erardi stated that this will come before the Board at their next meeting. The 2013-2014 Kindergarten Program was launched as a choice program; however, all students chose the All-Day Kindergarten Program. Administration will be looking for direction from the Board for the 2014-15 school year. Kindergarten 2014-2015 enrollment informational sessions for parents will be taking place in February.
3. Personnel – Internal Evaluation: Dr. Erardi stated that he was proud of the work that is taking place in the Personnel Office. There will be a survey going out to staff that is a checkpoint regarding the service that they are receiving.
4. Budget Workshops - Videotaping: Dr. Erardi announced that the January 14 and 16 Board of Education Budget Workshops will be videotaped.
5. School Calendar 2013-2014: Dr. Erardi reported that this was an issue that will be coming before the Board in February, same as last year, regarding the number of snow days and April vacation. The last school day was scheduled to be June 10, and there have been three snow days to date. If nothing else happens the 181<sup>st</sup> day would be on Friday, June 13, 2014.

Mr. Goralski pointed out that the February Board meeting was moved from February 27 to February 20, 2014. He reminded the Board that he, Mrs. Clark and Mr. Cox will need to keep the Building Committee advised of the snow make-up days.

**c. Communications from Student Representatives**

Miss Abigail Harris reported on the following:

- She wished the Board a Happy New Year and a year of progress and success.
- She announced that Dr. Semmel, Principal of Southington High School, will be participating in the Polar Plunge.
- Students were studying for the upcoming mid-terms which were moved from Tuesday, January 21 to Wednesday, January 22 because of the snow days.
- The sport season has started for wrestling, basketball, gymnastics and the ski team. She wished them a successful season.
- She congratulated the football team for winning the State LL Championship.
- She congratulated Gabby Baker for being cast as Aida in the Drama Club musical.

Miss Gabrielle Baker reported on the following:

- She reported that the Drama Club musical *Aida* was cast before the Christmas recess. They are competing in the HALO Awards. She noted that Cheshire was also putting on *Aida* and advertising their show, which is making it competitive between the two schools. The shows are March 28 and 29, 2014.
- The Robotics Team had their kick-off on Saturday, January 4. The competition this year will be Aerial Assist.
- She congratulated Mr. Shaw and stated that the students were proud of him.

**7. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT**

**a. Personnel Report**

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

**“Move to approve the Personnel Report, as submitted.”**

Mrs. Carmody asked if the people who are on unpaid leaves of absence are guaranteed their positions when they returned to work. Mrs. Hunt replied that for these particular situations two are teachers and, per their contract, they are allowed to request unpaid childrearing leave. Their job is held with a certified substitute while they are on leave. The paraprofessional was a family situation and the leave is not that long, so her job will be there when she returns; her position will not be changed. For the teachers, there is contractual language. They are not necessarily guaranteed the same job, same school; they are guaranteed a job.

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

**8. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**a. Curriculum & Instruction Committee Meeting ~ December 19, 2013**

Mrs. Carmody thanked Dale Riedinger, District Math and Science Coordinator; Mrs. Stephanie Lawlor, District Language Arts Coordinator; Mrs. Rosemary Burdick, Math Specialist and Mrs. Jill Chapman, Literary Specialist, for their review and presentation on Common Core State Standards. The purpose of Common Core is to prepare our students for college and career



expectations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, apply knowledge and actively solve problems, and focus on higher level skills in reading, writing, speaking, listening and language. She believed that the intent of Common Core was to improve the overall academic skill of all students. She noted that it was a paradigm shift, but a shift that will have students thinking in different ways, be able to explain and demonstrate the knowledge of how they got an answer. Mrs. Carmody explained that Mrs. Smith, Assistant Superintendent, created a website for parents and the public to learn more about Common Core, along with addressing the myths about it.

Mrs. Queen noted that she had to dig to find Mrs. Smith's website. She pointed out that there were links to many articles and more on this website than a person can read at one time. She explained that to access the website people need to go to Southingtonschools.org, click on "District Information," then "Curriculum and Instruction," and then there is a link to "Common Core Corner." Mrs. Smith explained that the website was going to be moved to be more easily accessible, and that she would keep the Board updated.

Mrs. Johnson added that the Thalberg Newsletter had a Common Core Corner in their newsletter and thought that it was a wonderful idea to have it in school newsletters.

**b. Finance Committee Meeting ~ January 6, 2014**

**a. Transfer of Funds**

Mrs. Notar-Francesco reported that the committee reviewed the rationale for the transfers. Some transfers reflect just a formality of moving the budget dollars from one line item into the more appropriate lines. Another transfer reflects the moving of funds to partly cover increased magnet school tuitions due to increased enrollment of our students at the magnet schools.

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

**"Move to approve the Transfer of Funds, as presented."**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

**b. Bid Award – 2014-BID-18 - Bus for Ag-Science Tech. Department**

Mrs. Notar-Francesco reported that the committee approved, as presented, the bid award to Dattco Sales & Service for \$51,475. The funding source for this bus is through an Ag-Science grant. This award is a savings of approximately \$33,500 from the estimated cost of the bus. The committee recommended approval.

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

**"Move to approve Bid Award – 2014-BID-18 to Dattco Sales & Service for \$51, 475, as presented."**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**



**c. Bid Approval – 2014-BID-20 – Lawn Mowing & Trimming (SHS, JAD, JFK, Kelley, Plantsville, South End Schools)**

Mrs. Notar-Francesco reported that the committee reviewed and recommended approval on this bid, which seeks lawn mowing and trimming services at six school locations.

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

**“Move to approve Bid Approval – 2014-BID-20, Lawn Mowing & Trimming (Southington High School, DePaolo Middle School, Kennedy Middle School, Kelley, Plantsville, and South End Elementary Schools).”**

Mrs. Queen asked if the lawn mowing and trimming would start at the middle schools once they are done. Mrs. DiNello replied that Mr. Cox was consulted regarding the areas that would need mowing, which have been adjusted in the bid specifications. Mr. Derynoski added that those questions were addressed at the Finance Committee meeting and the numbers were reduced compared to if the project had been completed.

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

Mrs. Notar-Francesco reported that an additional item on the Finance Committee agenda was discussion about the upcoming New Britain Transportation (NBT) one-year contract renewal and the subsequent negotiation of a new five-year contract. The one-year contract renewal will be brought to the Board for approval at the January 23, 2014 Board meeting. Administration will begin negotiations on the new five-year contract within the coming months. The current contract with New Britain Transportation is set to expire in June 2014. The Committee thoroughly reviewed the recommendations by Transportation Advisory Services (TAS) to be negotiated within the new five-year contract. During the lengthy discussion, the Committee had several questions regarding a few of the recommendations in which they would like some follow-up. Mrs. DiNello will consult with TAS and the town attorney, and get back to the Committee.

Mrs. Notar-Francesco reported that Board has discussed purchasing a Time & Attendance System. She stated that Mrs. DiNello would like to move forward with a system for hourly employees. Mrs. DiNello has received quotes from Time Centre, which interfaces with Alio. Prices range from approximately \$29,000 to \$38,000, depending on the server used. Pricing was also based on 500 employees and 25 fingerprint scanners. Within this year's current budget, \$16,284 has been allocated for this. There is an additional amount of \$16,000 proposed in the budget for 2014-15. The Committee was pleased with this plan to move forward, and asked for quotes from other vendors for comparison purposes.

Mrs. Lombardi noted that the Board makes decisions on savings and cost avoidances at many meetings and has asked administration to keep track of these savings and efficiencies and report about them regularly through the Finance Board.

Mrs. Johnson asked if Board action was needed for administration to begin negotiations with New Britain Transportation. Mrs. DiNello replied that a one-year contract extension with New Britain Transportation would come before the Board for action at their next meeting. At that time, administration would also look for a motion to waive the bid process based on the



report received from TAS allowing the administration to begin contract negotiations; however, if they are unsuccessful in negotiating the terms that they are looking for in a long-term contract, administration would come back to the Board with the suggestion of going out to bid.

Mrs. Johnson asked when the Board would see the transportation contract that is to be negotiated so the Board could give input during Executive Session. Mrs. DiNello replied that the one-year renewal would keep the current contract terms the same with the exception of pricing. For the long-term renewal, the Finance Committee reviewed at length the recommendations that were made by TAS regarding items that they are looking to have negotiated into the next contract. Based on the committee input, the administration was planning to move forward with negotiations. Mr. Goralski replied that he and Mr. Derynoski attended the Finance Committee along with the other Board members serving on the committee and noted that they discussed in detail the specific items in Section 4, pages 4-6 of the TAS Report. What they learned from this report and the advice of the experts was that the bus service that they are getting is good, but better reliability and consistency could be provided by upgrading the contract.

Dr. Erardi stated that, in answer to Mrs. Johnson's question, administration would continue their present practice and bring the one-year renewal to the School Board, because it is a contract, to be discussed in Executive Session with the following meeting being an action meeting. The Board would have it two weeks in advance to review it. Mr. Derynoski thought what Mrs. Johnson was looking for was that, once a contract is put together, which would be used for the negotiations, that the Board would have a discussion on it in Executive Session. The recommendations from TAS would be folded into a new document that the Board will review before there is actual discussion with the vendor.

**c. Overnight / Out of State Field Trip** *(formerly Agenda Item 10.c)*

Ms. Kasia Kalinowski, teacher at Southington High School, came to the podium to discuss the FIRST Robotics Team recurring field trip requests. She thanked the Board for their support. The team was looking to attend the Robotics National Championship in St. Louis, Missouri again this year; however, the change in the district event has put a lot of pressure on them. At the District Regional Championship they are normally given six weeks to find out whether they qualify for National Championship or not. Unfortunately, with the movement of the district event, they only find out eight days before. Because of the tight timeframe, they looked at traveling by plane, train or bus. If they fly by plane, by March 5 they would have to put down \$34,000 and at that point they do not know if they have qualified for the National Championship yet. If they don't qualify, they lose the \$34,000. The bus company, Dattco, provided them a quote of \$15,000 for the bus trip with three different bus drivers that would be meeting at different states. They would have frequent stops, and it would be a 19-hour travel time. If they take the bus, they would have to leave on a Tuesday, instead of Wednesday if they had taken the plane, which would be an additional day that the students would miss school. She requested that the Board approve this request.

Dr. Erardi stated that Robotics was probably one of the smartest organizations on the planet and for them to plan this way was almost criminal. It was absurd to be held hostage, not knowing what you are doing eight days prior to trying to get from Southington to St. Louis. Dr. Erardi acknowledged that, as a high school principal, he had actually taken a bus trip like this. He noted that the students are fine. Ms. Kalinowski pointed out that the team has driven to Virginia on an 11-hour bus ride, and the students had fun.



**MOTION:** by Mrs. Queen, seconded by Mrs. Lombardi:

**“Move that the Board of Education approves the attached field trips for the Southington High School FIRST Robotics Team to Boston for the District Championship and, if applicable, to St. Louis for the National Championship.”**

Mrs. Notar-Francesco’s concern with the second field trip was that it would need to be updated with the information that would be current for taking a bus. The dates would need to change as well as other information. If the Board approves the motion tonight, it would be under the condition that those changes would be made. Ms. Kalinowski replied that she would make the changes tonight or tomorrow and send it to Mrs. Smith.

Mrs. Clark asked if anyone brought before the FIRST Robotics organizing Board the predicament that these dates present. Ms. Kalinowski replied that Mrs. Brino has been in touch with the FIRST Committee, voicing her opinion of the hardship this creates on us and other school districts.

Mr. Goralski asked if the Robotics Team had any fundraising planned to pay for that trip and if the sponsors understand the situation. Ms. Kalinowski replied that they have talked to the sponsors, and they are aware of the eight-day turnaround.

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

## **9. OLD BUSINESS**

### **a. Town Government Communications**

Mr. Goralski reported that an invitation to the Board of Education Budget Workshops was sent out to all the other elected Boards to attend and participate. The workshops are January 14 and 16 at 7:00 p.m. in the Municipal Center Public Assembly Room. The anticipated adoption of the Superintendent’s proposed budget will be at the regularly scheduled January 23, 2014 Board of Education meeting. He was excited by Mr. Joe Labieniec’s challenge of what is needed to be done to get the Board of Finance to support the Board of Education’s work as is.

### **b. Construction Update**

Mr. Cox reported that the Building Committee for the two middle school projects met this week and much work took place during the Christmas vacation internal to the building. The exterior work on the additions continues. The construction manager and architect reported that the progress of the projects was still on task with the April move into the new additions.

Mrs. Johnson questioned the cost overruns. Mr. Goralski replied that there were two issues. One issue was the sound attenuation unit for the heat exchange in the DePaolo gymnasium. It was discussed at length at committee level and is something that is necessary and required. It was in the documents for Kennedy. In all building projects that are certain things that are missed and they are keeping track of these things so it can be appropriately followed up on as part of the closing out of the project. The second issue was the lockers. When the Board did the Education Specification documents, they implied that they wanted the lockers that they



had. However, the type of lockers we wanted was not specified, it was the amount of lockers. When the proposal documents were put together, they did over/under lockers, which were wider, but they were not usable or appropriate for Southington. It was caught by Mr. Cox and Mr. Palmieri in the owner's meetings, and it involved redesign and a change of materials. The cost overruns are addressed through change orders and are part of the final closeout of documents and contracts with the different vendors. It is part of the project and the terminology is called "Errors and Omissions." Mr. Cox added that Attorney Mark Sciota collects this information throughout the project, and at the end of the project there is mediation on those items.

Mrs. Johnson questioned the significant roof leakage recently at South End School. Mr. Cox reported that on Monday they were addressing the leakage through a pitched roof, not a flat roof, and professionals were brought in to remove the dampened insulation with the damage reported to the insurance company. The roof has a 35-year warranty and the manufacturer's representative has been advised. Mrs. Johnson noted that the Board still has not closed out on that building yet. She questioned the rationale for this roof failing. Mr. Cox replied that the leakage came through two valleys with ice dams. The cause is being looked into. Mrs. Johnson asked whose responsibility it would be if it was a design flaw. Mr. Cox replied that it was weather-driven and not a design factor at this point. Mrs. Johnson asked if any other schools had this issue. Mr. Cox responded that there was a slight leak at Kennedy Middle School on the auditorium roof, which was unique.

#### **c.      Enrichment Update ~ Talcott Mountain Science Center**

Mrs. Erin Nattress and Mr. Jonathan Cop, Aspiring Administrators, gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Grade 5 enrichment partnership with the Talcott Mountain Science Center (*Attachment #1*). They shared with the Board what the students were working on.

Mr. Cop explained that the Talcott Mountain partnership was an enrichment opportunity for the Southington gifted students to virtually take part in Talcott Mountain experiences, but stay on-site in Southington. They virtually communicate with the scientists at Talcott and log in to them through a database. Mrs. Nattress and Mr. Cop gave an update of what has been done to date and the plans for the future. Initially, they had a meeting with parents of 32 students to explain the opportunity. Mr. Cop explained that Mr. John Pallino was the representative whom they are working with from Talcott Mountain and gave the parents an overview. He explained that they split up the district and met with all eight building principals. The principals were 100% onboard with the program, and helped in the quick turnaround from their meeting on Friday to the program up and running with students on Monday. There is a facilitator in each building who monitors the students and keeps them on target. There was district training at Thalberg School for these site level people with Mr. Pallino. He stated that Mr. Pallino contacted each principal, went to each elementary school, and met with each student who accepted this opportunity to teach them on how to use the software. There was a kick-off at Thalberg School with facilitators, students, and parents with Mr. Pallino and the scientists that the students would be working with.

Mrs. Nattress explained that the students have time allocated each week within their schedule. They have approximately a half-hour of in-school time and they work on the projects at home. The students work virtually through the Canvas software, which enables them to communicate with the Talcott scientists and other students throughout the district. The students are responsible for submitting a blueprint, similar to a proposal for a Science Fair project. The



students are beginning to carry out their experiments. Students from Kelley School are going to Talcott Mountain this weekend to meet with their scientist and carry out portions of their experiments and to use Talcott's higher tech equipment. Mrs. Nattress showed a screen shot of the Canvas software and explained how it worked. She noted that each student has a different scientist that has a background in the topic area that they are focused on. Some of the topic areas are: DNA cell mutation and the effects on cancer, using various resources to create usable energy, Great White Shark attack patterns, Robotics, controlling algae, measuring thrill on roller coasters, weather patterns, and bio-rhythms-parent behavior.

Mr. Cop explained that there will be a recognition evening at Talcott Mountain early in the spring when the students complete their projects and have the opportunity to share what they worked on. Southington staff will reevaluate the program with Mr. Pallino and discuss the next steps. He pointed out that, when the students are working on their projects in school, it is in addition to and above and beyond their curricular responsibilities.

Mrs. Johnson asked what the identification criteria were for these gifted students. Mr. Cop replied they used the district identification criteria for gifted and talented and had a conversation with Mrs. Smith on the students eligible for it. Mrs. Johnson asked why the turnaround was so quick from a Friday meeting to the Monday start. Mr. Cop responded that they wanted to get the program up and running and under a crunch time. The meeting with the parents was on a Wednesday night, and they wanted the parents to respond by Friday afternoon if they were interested so that the student could be added to the list. They ended up extending that because many of the parents wanted to have the opportunity to see Talcott Mountain. Mr. Pallino made that opportunity available over that weekend. Dr. Erardi pointed out that he attended that meeting and, of the 32 eligible students, 29 students are in this program.

Mrs. Johnson questioned the funding for this program. Dr. Erardi replied that the program was presently being funded through one of the federal grants, and it appears that there will be funding for a second round for a spring launch.

Mrs. Lombardi thanked Mrs. Nattress and Mr. Cop for all their efforts. She requested that this opportunity be offered to other students who are gifted in science, but not in other areas. Dr. Erardi replied that he had communication with Middlesex Community College and there is a very good chance that they will be launching a Saturday program for highly qualified children as well as identified children. He hoped to bring to the Board a similar presentation and noted that the Middlesex presenters on Saturday may be our own staff members.

#### **d. Proposed 2014-2015 School Calendar ~ Second Reading**

Dr. Erardi encouraged the Board to pay attention to present legislation which means that they presently have jurisdiction over the 2014-2015 school calendar. There is a strong push to become a voluntary Board in concert with our local RESC, which is CREC, that in a year from now to have a common calendar for 2015-2016. Presently, the legislation mandates that for the 2016-2017 school year the Board relinquishes their right to have jurisdiction of their own calendar, and it becomes a regional conversation. He hoped to have this discussion at their Legislative Breakfast. He, personally, believes that it should be a local decision only. The administration continues to support the proposed 2014-2015 school calendar based on previous discussions.



Mrs. Johnson stated that the present calendar was something that the Board has been avoiding for many years because of the huge lack of instruction time. This school system has worked hard to add incremental minutes to the school day, so there is more instructional time for children, and yet this calendar was diminishing student instructional time. She understood the need for professional development with all the changes that are going on in education. She stated that she strongly supports Southington's wonderful, hardworking teachers; however, she hoped that they could come to a compromise between student instructional time and professional development. She was very dismayed at the lack of student instructional time.

Mrs. Notar-Francesco asked how the February and November full-day professional development days differed from the half-day that also occurs during that same month. Mrs. Smith replied that those days amount to six hours of professional development and sustained learning. A tentative plan for the shortened days versus the full days would be bringing in, for example, a group that is working with teachers and administrators on calibration. The first part of the day they are learning technical skills and the second part of the day they are pairing up with peers and practicing what was learned in the morning session. It is very intensive professional development. There are thoughtful plans that are tentatively in place for full-day implementation of newer learning that would require more than two hours.

Mrs. Notar-Francesco questioned the number of instructional hours. Dr. Erardi distributed information addressing this (*Attachment #2*). He noted that Mrs. Johnson was correct regarding lost hours with the 10 proposed two-hour blocks that are in the calendar. It is a reduction of 20 hours. He noted that Connecticut statute is clear that there must be 180 days of school and Southington's practice for a very long time has been 181 days of school. The other major statute is that, when the year is over, students must have been in school for 900 hours. Mrs. Notar-Francesco noted that for the month of December, which is already a drastically short month because of the holidays and vacation schedule, they could do without the professional development. She would also look at another month, such as April, and pare it down from the 9 days to 7 days. This was her recommended compromise on the calendar.

Mrs. Carmody was in total support of the proposed calendar because the teachers have been mandated with Common Core instruction and the new evaluation system and they need this collaborative time to work together. There are many school systems throughout the state that have professional development days once a week. She thought that to have quality instructional time they needed to have the teachers properly instructed.

Mrs. Queen supported the calendar with the early release days for professional development, and agreed with Mrs. Carmody's comments. She thought that the teachers needed this time. She thought that they should be talking about how the students would be using their time on those days. Direct instructional time is not the only time students are learning. A major theme of Common Core is teaching students how to learn so that their learning continues beyond the classroom. This could be time for students to work on long-term projects, pursue flip learning or a personalized learning opportunity. This could be time for high school students to pursue an authentic learning experience outside of the classroom. She noted the 20/20 Vision Statement and the six action steps that the Board endorsed. She thought that the early release days tied into two or three of the six steps: 1) Learning is the constant, time is the variable; 2) Building staff capacity through professional development; 3) Partnerships that create experiences beyond school. She felt that the 2014-2015 calendar spoke to the 20/20 Vision and would be beneficial to the Board moving in that direction.



Mr. Derynoski agreed with Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Notar-Francesco. The most important element in the students learning career is the classroom teacher in front of the students. The total of 13 professional development days in the calendar with nine half-days and four full-day sessions was too much at this time. He thought that it was a great opportunity for teachers to work together, collaborate, and get up to speed with Common Core, and what they learn will benefit the students one year from now. The problem is that they will miss a year of time that will never be made up. He would compromise with going to seven professional development days. In December and April, where there is extended vacation time, he would eliminate those professional development days.

Mr. Oshana asked how many professional development days they have in the calendar for this year. Dr. Erardi replied that they have three opening days where one is considered a work day with Convocation and teachers take care of their rooms, they have two to start and two additional days in the course of the school year. Mr. Oshana noted that it is an additional four and one-half full time days. Mr. Goralski pointed out that these are two-hour professional development blocks, they are not days. Every three would then equal one day. Dr. Erardi thought that Mr. Oshana was talking about how many full days this year. Mr. Oshana stated that he was going to amalgamate the hours. They need to count the number of hours that are associated with this because they need to make sure that the teachers are in front of the students. He noted that they had a discussion a few months ago that this was one of the creative ways that the administrative team came up with in keeping the teachers in front of the students. He asked why this was a good way of keeping the teachers in front of the students and providing the professional development that is needed. Dr. Erardi replied that administration assured the Board that they would be back with data at the end of the second quarter and they are two weeks away from that. They shared with the Board some initial data regarding time away from students. Administration's concern is that they are putting qualified substitute teachers in front of students; however, they are not the classroom teachers to whom Mr. Derynoski referred. Dr. Erardi thought that this would mitigate that opportunity, and allow the classroom teachers to teach their class. Professional development is not going away. Next year is going to be a burdensome year for everybody regarding professional development.

Dr. Erardi explained that this calendar comes before the Board as a request from the teachers due to time and anxiety, which is still prevalent across the district. It is also a response to do something reoccurring because it is what is easiest for parents. Mr. Oshana noted that professional development was not only important, but it was a priority set up by the Board so they have to find a way to do both and be creative.

Mrs. Lombardi looked at this situation as a whole and what they have is a situation where the state is saying, "Plan it, design it, development it, learn it, do it, and by the way let me test you on it within a 12-month period." She agreed that instructional time was critical, but they have a situation where all this is compressed to a certain period of time with our teachers saying, "We are having difficulty, we need help." She did not think that every year they would have these professional development days. She thought that they need to do this to address this situation in the next calendar year, with one caveat: they need accountability. She was in full support of the calendar as is, providing that it is a one-year calendar and there is no assumption on continuing this every year.



Mr. Clark agreed with Mrs. Lombardi. She was comfortable with a one-year period only for the teachers to get the expertise that they need to be in front of the students.

Mr. Oshana stated that the Board heard from the teachers many times that they need time to do other school-related things, not just professional development. He asked how these professional days would help that. Mr. Goralski wanted to make sure that the teachers know what these professional days built into the calendar are for, which is not to correct papers. Mrs. Lombardi added that was why they need accountability. Mrs. Smith responded that on December 12, 2013, she sent to the Board seven main themes, based on two-hour meetings, of initiatives that are considered to be new and required. This will be time that students will be with the substitute because these seven topics have to be addressed as some are state mandates and, more importantly, it is the right thing to do. Mrs. Smith added that the December professional development was debatable; however, she wanted to keep the April professional development on the calendar because of the timing of some of the interim assessments. She noted that, two or three years ago, it was how to collect data and now it is how to use data, and that was how they plan to spend most of the professional development time.

Mr. Oshana stated that made a lot of sense because they have to learn how to use the data. Much learning could come out of it. However, one other problem that the Board hears repeatedly is that they still have to collect it, still have to put it into something, they still have to crunch it, and before they get it out there to analyze it, they have to get it. He felt that is a problem because the teachers tell them that they don't even have time to do that now. Mrs. Smith replied that this would allow them to take their Tuesday meeting schedules, which are already built-in afterschool hours three times each month in all settings, to be able to differently utilize that time for what Mr. Oshana just described.

Mr. Oshana added that it was a horrible idea for the state to tell the district what their calendar should be. Mr. Goralski added that this will be one of their key points at the Legislative Breakfast, along with funding.

Mr. Goralski explained that he works in a school district that has weekly two-hour release professional days. They use that time for PPTs, collaboration, and data assessments. They don't use that time at all for individualized work. No teacher is alone during that period of time. There is team process everywhere. It is weekly and that is keeping teachers in classrooms every week. He sees real benefit from this approach. Mr. Goralski stated that morale and opinion of the district's experts matter and the Board relies on the administration as the direct experts. The teachers are the everyday experts and the proposed 2014-2015 calendar is what they want. Mr. Goralski proposed doing a consensus on the calendar, asking Board members if they would be comfortable removing the December professional day and keeping the April professional day because Mrs. Smith expressed how important it is to keep it.

CONSENSUS:	To remove the December professional development day
	YES – Mrs. Notar-Francesco                      NO – Mrs. Lombardi
	YES – Mrs. Queen                                      NO – Mrs. Carmody
	YES – Mr. Derynoski                                  NO – Mrs. Johnson
	YES – Mr. Oshana                                      NO – Mrs. Clark
	YES – Mr. Goralski



Mr. Oshana reiterated that this should not be cast in stone and needs to be tried. The teachers have come out really strongly for this, and the Board has come out strongly in favor of professional development. He thought that they have also come out very strongly as a Board in terms of teacher time in front of the students, and they have to figure out a way to do all of that. It is not an easy task. They have to have the development days, but they have to make sure that it is working, there is value to it, and that, if it does not work, they can attack it quickly and correct it.

**MOTION:** by Mrs. Lombardi, seconded by Mrs. Carmody:

**“Move to accept the 2014-2015 School Calendar, as presented.”**

**ROLL CALL VOTE:** YES – Mrs. Lombardi, Mrs. Notar-Francesco, Mrs. Queen, Mrs. Carmody, Mrs. Clark. NO – Mr. Derynoski, Mrs. Johnson, Mr. Oshana, Mr. Goralski. **Motion passed with five in favor and four opposed.**

Mrs. Smith stated that she would be happy to collect data on the use of those days with surveys and agendas, and share them with the Board both before and after as a way of tracking this. Mrs. Queen requested that Mrs. Smith ask how the student work was being structured on those days.

## **10. NEW BUSINESS**

### **a. Naming of Two AFSCME Negotiating Committees**

Mr. Goralski explained that the last time they negotiated with AFSCME they had a four-person subcommittee, and all four Board members have volunteered to do so again. The committee for both AFSCME groups will be comprised of Mrs. Carmody, Mrs. Notar-Francesco, Mrs. Queen and Mrs. Johnson. Mr. Goralski stated that he would be the alternate.

### **b. Southington Board of Education / Veterans Partnership Long Range Planning – Vision Statement**

Dr. Erardi explained that he would like to come back to the Board after the Veterans Committee meets next week with their endorsement. He wanted the Board to see the draft first. He felt that the document that the Board had in front of them is one that every local Board of Education should consider across the country. It is a very powerful document. Dr. Erardi shared that the document came from within, and that Mrs. Queen was influential and instrumental in putting this together along with two other committee members. He asked for feedback from the Board of any comments to bring to the committee next week.

Mrs. Queen stated that the document was a collaboration of many phrases from many people. Much of it was Mr. Terino’s work, with pieces from other members of the committee that were weaved within the document. It was a collaborative effort. Mr. Goralski stated that after the Veterans Committee endorses this he thought that it should come back to the Board for a motion and approval.

### **c. Overnight / Out of State Field Trips (*Moved to Agenda Item 8.c.*)**



*At 9:25 p.m., Mr. Goralski requested that the Board members return to the recessed Executive Session. All nine Board members were present.*

*At 10:14 p.m., the Board of Education members returned to public session.*

**11. ADJOURNMENT**

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

**“Move to adjourn.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

The meeting adjourned at 10:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Linda Blanchard*

Recording Secretary



## Grade 5 Enrichment Partnership with Talcott Mountain Science Center



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## Getting Started

- Initial information for parents of identified students
- Building based roll out plans created with Principals and Facilitators
- Facilitator orientation with Mr. Pellino
- Student orientation at each school with Mr. Pellino



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## TMSC Kick-Off

Parents, students, facilitators and TM Scientists meeting together to launch this great opportunity



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## Happening Now...

- Students are working virtually with the scientists from TMSC to revise and critique their Blueprints
- Students are beginning to carry out their research and experiments
- Many students have plans to visit TMSC to take advantage of materials and staff




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## Canvas




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## Project Topics

- DNA: Cell Mutation, Cancer Affects
- Using various resources to create usable energy
- Great White shark attack patterns
- Robotics: Detecting Fire, Play Piano, Navigation
- Controlling Algae
- Measuring Thrill on Roller Coasters
- Weather Patterns
- Bio Rhythms- Parent Behavior

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### Some of Our Scientists



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### Looking Ahead

- Students will work to complete their projects
- We plan to have a Recognition Evening at TMSC early in the spring
- Southington staff will reevaluate our next steps with TMSC, analyze budget and look in to further grant funding

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**INSTRUCTIONAL HOURS**

<b>Level</b>	<b>Current Hours</b>	<b>Subtraction of Additional PD Hours</b>	<b>Total Hours of Instruction</b>
Elementary	976	10 days @ 2 hours = 20 hours	956
Middle School	1025	10 days @ 2 hours = 20 hours	1005
High School	933	10 days @ 2 hours = 20 hours	913