

The minutes presented within this document provide a summary of the discussion that took place at the Board of Education meeting. For the complete discussion of the agenda items, please view the video of the Board meeting on our website at www.southingtonschools.org. These minutes are considered a draft until approved at the following regular Board of Education meeting.

SOUTHINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION

SOUTHINGTON, CONNECTICUT

REGULAR MEETING

MAY 23, 2019

The regular meeting of the Southington Board of Education (Committee of the Whole-Operations) was held on Thursday, May 23, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. in the John Weichsel 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 7:01 p.m.

Board members present: Mrs. Terri Carmody, Mr. Joseph Baczewski, Mr. Robert Brown, Ms. Lisa Cammuso, Mrs. Colleen Clark, Mr. David Derynoski, Mr. Brian Goralski, Mr. Zaya Oshana and Mrs. Patricia Queen.

Administration present: Mr. Timothy Connellan, Superintendent of Schools; Mr. Steven Madancy, Assistant Superintendent; Mrs. Sherri DiNello, Director of Business and Finance; and Ms. Margaret Walsh, Director of Special Services.

Student Representatives present were Trevor Messina, Nicholas Mangene, and Bianca Spataro.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The student representatives led in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Goralski called for a moment of silence in honor of Memorial Day for those who served and sacrificed their life for our freedom.

3. CELEBRATION OF EXCELLENCE

In Celebration of Excellence, Mr. Connellan invited Mr. John Duffy, Science Coordinator, to the podium who introduced the 2019 Connecticut Invention Convention award winners and their invention:

- Chris Jozczyk, Grade 6 at Kennedy Middle School, The Bio-Stamp and Pratt & Whitney /UTC Award winner for “Moving the World Forward”.
- Kamil Gacizrz, Grade 5 at Plantsville School, Easy Sleeve, CIC Recognized Inventor Award.
- Jennifer Russo, Grade 4 at Plantsville School, The Rescue Reed, CIC Recognized Inventor Award and invited to the National Invention Convention.

- Michaela Colwell, Grade 5 at Hatton School, The Power Catcher and Eversource Energy Award for “Best Invention related to Energy” and CIC Recognized Inventor Award. Also invited to the National Invention Convention.
- Drew Niro, Grade 5 at Hatton School, IV Bot and CIC Recognized Inventor Award. Also invited to participate in the National Invention Convention.

Mr. Duffy recognized the following Kennedy Middle School students who were awarded First Place, statewide, sixth grade for their 2019 e-Cybermission project “Oil Spill Clean-up.” The team was named “Cyber UniCats” and comprised of students Lauren Mellitt, Leighann Melanson, Josh Pintek and Emma Pintek. They learned that a sock filled with cat hair was the most successful at soaking up oil spills. Each student will receive a \$1,000 U.S. Savings Bond.

Mr. Brian Stranieri, Principal of Southington High School, introduced the Class of 2019 top three students from a class of 464 students: Valedictorian - Maxwell Heath, Salutatorian - Mia Langston and Essayist - Aliya Sarris.

Mr. Goralski and Mrs. Carmody presented the graduating Board of Education Student Representatives, Bianca Spataro and Nicholas Mangene, with a gift from the Board members.

On behalf of the Board, Mr. Goralski presented all the above-named students with a Certificate of Excellence.

Mr. Goralski called for a recess at 7:24 p.m.

Mr. Goralski reconvened the regular session at 7:44 p.m.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES ~ MAY 9, 2019

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

“Move to approve the regular Board of Education minutes of May 9, 2019, as submitted.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

5. COMMUNICATIONS

a. Communications from Public

Katrina Toce, 114 Lepage Drive, addressed the self-contained ACHIEVE Program at the high school for students with complex special needs and the need for a second full-time teacher. She read letters on behalf of parents Tiffany Gillis and Sue Mikosz, whose sons also attend the ACHIEVE program, requesting a second teacher for the next school year because more than one teacher was needed in a classroom of 15 students with different abilities and behaviors. They were aware that the second teacher was requested in the 2019-2020 school budget but wanted to ensure that it was not cut during reallocation.

b. Communication from Board of Education Members

Board members addressed the following:

- Mrs. Carmody reported that the ad hoc School Renaming Committee met on Tuesday, May 21 with representatives from Plantsville, South End and Flanders Schools. The committee's next meeting is June 6 and plans to present a recommendation to the Superintendent of Schools on June 11, 2019.

c. Communication from Administration

Administration reported on the following:

1. Teacher Participation in Professional Development Activities Outside of District: Mr. Connellan spoke at length to correct inaccurate information circulating regarding teachers, grants, attendance at conferences, and professional development.
2. Grant to Support Roll Out of Emotional Intelligence Work: Mr. Madancy spoke about a professional development opportunity through a Yale Fellowship that will provide two principals and a teacher the opportunity to study at the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence. These staff members would then in turn bring their training back to elementary school-based teams, thus building staff capacity and spreading knowledge over time. Mr. Connellan reported that Ms. Walsh and her special education team were awarded a \$34,000 grant to support their work with Emotional Intelligence and this will be discussed at the next Board of Education meeting.
3. Student Scholarship Awards Evening: Mr. Connellan stated that it was a very enjoyable evening.
4. Milone and MacBroom Presentation: Mr. Connellan stated that at the June 6, 2019 Board of Education meeting, the Board members would be given a PowerPoint presentation on the results of the remainder of the Facilities Study. He reminded the public that the Board of Education meetings were rescheduled to June 6 and June 20, 2019.

Board members were troubled and disappointed with the misinformation and lack of understanding by the Town Council regarding the 2019-2020 Board of Education budget. Even though workshops were held, and questions were answered, three Town Councilors voiced their opinions based on misinformation.

d. Communications from Student Representatives:

Miss Spataro reported on the following:

- She thanked the Board members for allowing the student representatives to express their opinions and views and for the positive experience.
- Academic Awards Night was held on May 8, 2019.
- The Art Show was held on May 13, 2019 with student artwork displayed.
- Scholarship Night was held on May 16, 2019 with more than 200 scholarships awarded.
- The Senior Prom was held on May 18, 2019 and she attended.
- She will be attending Smith College in North Hampton, Massachusetts.

Mr. Mangene reported on the following:

- He thanked the Board members for the memories and opportunities.
- He also attended the Senior Prom and took a photo with Bianca and Trevor.

- The Project Lead the Way Capstone Project was held May 22, 2019 and the winning project was a diabetes test that uses urine to determine if a person was positive for diabetes.
- Alta graduation was May 23, 2019.
- The Pep Rally will be held on May 24, 2019 during 8th period. Seniors are wearing white and juniors are wearing blue for a tug-of-war competition.
- Clubs and Activities Night for incoming freshmen will be held on May 28, 2019.
- May 30th is Senior Class Night at the Aqua Turf with a food buffet.
- He will be attending the University of Connecticut.

Mr. Trevor Messina reported on the following:

- He thanked Bianca and Nick for the honor of working with both of them.
- On June 4, the AP Expo will be held in the cafeteria with the AP students presenting their end of the year projects. Nick and Bianca will be showcasing their AP projects.
- On June 5, UNICO will be hosting the Top 25 Class of 2019 students as well as the Italian Honor Society Induction at the Aqua Turf.
- June 13, 2019 is graduation for the Class of 2019.

Trevor Messina announced that Amrit Kaur and Brett Sheldrick, both currently sophomores, were selected as the two new Board of Education Student Representatives who will be replacing the graduating seniors for the next school year. Amrit and Brett briefly introduced themselves.

Mr. Derynoski stated that the Student Representatives that served on the Board this school year were the best representatives so far with their interaction and the information that they provided to the Board and public.

6. COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Board of Education Finance Committee Meeting ~ May 16, 2019

Mrs. Clark reported that the committee did not have a quorum and held a non-meeting workshop.

1. SHS Custodial Staffing Proposal (SHS Contracted Custodial Contract)

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

“Move to approve the proposal to hire seven (7) part-time custodians for Southington High School for the 2019-2020 school year.”

Mr. Derynoski stated that this was tried once before, and it did not work for many different reasons. He was not 100% sure that it will work this time. Mrs. DiNello explained that this proposal came forward from Mr. Romano, Director of Operations, and the high school administration who were not happy with the current level of service. If it does not work out, they always can go back to bid contracted custodial service.

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

2. Proposed Facility Use Charges

a. Fee Tiers and Rental Rates

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

“Move to approve the new rental pricing tiers and rates proposed by the administration.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

3. Food Service Program

a. Student Account Balances

Mrs. DiNello recognized Jennifer Mellit, Accounting Manager, for the work that she did to prepare financial statements from the financial software system for the Food Service Program. Mrs. Mellitt was able to create a report showing balances on student accounts for students who were no longer enrolled in the Southington Public Schools. A recommendation was made to contact parents of graduates with a balance more than \$15 to see if they wanted a refund. Moving forward, a new practice will be established and posted on the website for how parents can request a refund.

b. 2019-2020 Pricing Proposal

Mrs. DiNello reported that there has not been a school lunch price increase since 2015-2016 and that administration proposed a 25-cents price increase for lunches and breakfasts at all levels. There has not been a price increase in the breakfast program since 2009. She gave reasons for the price increase. A history of increases was provided including details and financial statements. Mr. Derynoski recommended a 10-cent increase for elementary students instead of 25-cents and explained why he thought it should be phased-in, including that the school lunch program had a healthy fund balance.

The Board members discussed the price increase at length including the fund balance, and equipment/appliances replacement. The price increase would bring the elementary lunches to \$3.00, middle schools to \$3.25 and high school to \$3.50. The middle school and elementary school breakfast programs would be \$2.00 and high school \$2.25. There are many students eligible for free and reduced breakfasts and lunches and the price increase would not impact them. Board members also discussed menus, offering local fresh fruit and vegetables and federal guidelines.

Student Representations, Nick Mangene and Bianca Spataro, stated that they enjoy the breakfasts and lunches at the high school, which are made fresh.

Mrs. DiNello acknowledged that the Food Service Director wanted to be more proactive at the middle and elementary schools, but with the turnover in her office it has been harder to do that. The Food Service Director is looking for assistance to be able to help her get into the schools and help the elementary managers do additional offerings.

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

“Move to approve a 25-cents price increase for school breakfasts and lunch prices effective with the 2019-2020 school year.”

Mr. Goralski understood Mr. Derynoski’s point about phasing-in a small price increase every year instead of a large increase every three years and asked the Food Service Department to bring back to the Board the costs to replace some of the equipment and look at providing the Finance Committee with food service financial information regularly. Ms. Cammuso questioned the impact of a price increase on a typical family at the elementary level. Mrs. DiNello explained that a student who is paying full price and bought lunch every day would have a \$45 increase over the course of a school year for lunch.

Motion carried with eight in favor and Mr. Derynoski opposed.

Mrs. Clark reported that also discussed on May 16 was the ASTE grant for a new 14-student bus, which is a state grant to be used solely for the Agriculture Science program at the high school. The committee also discussed the Special Revenue Fund. The Board of Finance approved the ability for the Board of Education to put funds that remain in the operating budget into a non-lapsing account that would provide the opportunity for the Board of Education to share a list of projects with the Board of Finance. The state statute allows to carryover up to 1% of the operating budget for educational purposes, which would be for larger projects, not day-to-day operational budget expenses. This Special Revenue Fund is specifically a unique idea that the superintendent brought forward in an effort to start meeting the needs for the high school auditorium. The stage curtain needs replacing as well as the lighting. In working with Emilia Portelinha, Town Finance Director, she can create a Special Revenue Fund for school and community members to fundraise to assist the school district in making improvements to the auditorium.

Trevor Messina stated that the high school auditorium is used by the public for many events, not just for school activities, and gets so much use and wear and tear. The lighting and sound systems in the auditorium do not work and the stage is cracking causing splinters. To put money into the auditorium would be beneficial for the community, not just for the school. Mrs. Clark pointed out that this was one of the creative ideas from administration who does not take credit but should make the public aware of. The rental money collected would be put into this fund for improvements. This is one way to fund something that the Board has wanted to correct for years but did not have the funding to do. Mr. Connellan added that the replacement of all the lights in the auditorium would cost \$250,000. The school district would have the ability to raise some funds just like they do for the turf field. He will speak to the people who want to move this project forward. Board members spoke at length about fundraising, safety, and the Special Revenue Fund.

7. OLD BUSINESS

a. Town Government Communications

Mr. Baczewski stated that he attended the Town Council meeting when they voted on the Board of Education budget and found the shortsightedness frustrating.

8. NEW BUSINESS

a. Middle School Health Curriculum ~ First Reading

Mr. Goralski requested that if the Board members had any questions or recommendations to bring it to the Curriculum and Instruction Committee. This item would be on the next Board agenda as a second reading.

b. 2019-2020 Operating Budget Reallocation / Adoption

MOTION: By Mrs. Carmody, seconded by Mrs. Clark:

“Move that the Board of Education adopt the 2019-2020 Operating Budget with adjustments made by administration.”

Mr. Connellan stated that administration was able to make adjustments to the original budget proposal, but this was not what they collectively wanted to happen. The administrative leadership team all worked hard on the reallocations to try to live within the budget parameters that the Town Council set for the Board of Education. Given the cuts, he thought that the reallocation was reasonable with the least impact on the classroom. He stated that the position that Mrs. Toce mentioned for the second ACHIEVE teacher was still in the budget. Administration would continue to watch over the next few months some hotspots that can literally change daily such as the Kindergarten enrollment. Mr. Connellan clarified that they are keeping two special education teachers, one at the high school and one at the elementary level and also one school psychologist.

Mr. Brown felt strongly about keeping the proposed elementary Spanish program in the budget and asked to put what was proposed back into the budget and proposed funding the language program by instituting a \$100 parking fee at the high school or a fee for participation in sports and clubs at the high school. Mrs. Carmody stated that they are constantly asking the parents for more money and did not want to ask the parents for any more money. The Board discussed the proposed adjustments to the budget at length including the special education caseloads, elementary school psychologists and costs versus the cost to keep the elementary Spanish program. Mr. Baczewski pointed out that the Board of Education gets their hands tied to do certain things because of state mandates and that every successful district in Connecticut that made the top 10 list offered K-12 languages.

Mrs. Queen stated that special education positions are necessary, and she also has been advocating for the world language in the elementary schools for many years. She challenged the community to start speaking up and saying that they want world language in the elementary schools starting in Kindergarten. They need to speak to the Board of Finance and Town Council members who decided the amount of funding to the requested Board of Education budget. It is not a question of special education versus world language because both are needed. She quoted Mr. Brown who said, “the world is changing, and our students are changing.”

The student representatives addressed the fee for parking at the high school. They did not want the parking lot to become a place for privilege for some students. They wanted to ensure

that everyone could get a spot because some students work all the time to get a cheap car and can't afford it. Mr. Goralski added that the moment that they start charging for parking the students would be parking on all the side streets. They would be moving the problem, not fixing the problem. Mr. Mangene thought that if they kept the price reasonable, it should not be a problem because some students have paid seniors \$50 to get a parking pass. Mr. Mangene thought that K-12 world language was essential to advance the school into top ranking and also develops memorization skills. Miss Spataro agreed with Mrs. Queen's point that they don't want to deny the special education individuals because they are a smaller majority; however, she wished that she had world language starting in Kindergarten. Mr. Messina agreed with Mr. Brown's point and liked the general idea of paying for parking at the high school; however, as a student who was in special education every day those programs were also a necessity. He questioned if Southington collaborated with other towns on what they were doing. Mr. Goralski explained that we do, and that Southington is the sixth lowest funded per pupil town in the state of Connecticut. The Town Council compared Southington's rank across the nation, not its rank in the state of Connecticut.

Mr. Goralski stated that because they do not have the funding for K-12 World Language this year and the two proposals that Mr. Brown presented would cause public concern, he recommended that rather than an amendment to the motion they begin a discussion with parents and community members about how to find funding in the future. Mr. Brown felt very strongly about the language program and feared it would be put off again next year. Mr. Derynoski asked if there was any way to look at the paraeducators count because some special education students are graduating this year who may relinquish coverage. Mr. Connellan stated that they had taken that into consideration and already made cuts in that area. Mr. Derynoski pointed out that he received the proposed budget reallocation late on Tuesday and there was not a lot of time to digest it. As it stands now, he was not going to vote for it. Mr. Goralski noted that for the 16 years that he has sat on the Board of Education as a volunteer elected official, he would never have the knowledge or experience as the administrators who are the experts and put together this proposal. They have been working on this reallocation since the day the Board of Finance voted to cut \$1.3 million from the Board of Education requested budget for 2019-2020. He liked the proposal that was before the Board that was prepared by the professionals.

Mr. Brown asked if he could get a pledge that the Board would look seriously at the K-12 world language program that would need to be phased-in and get a feeling from the Board members, talk to the community, look for ways to fund it, then he would be willing to withdraw his recommendation and accept the motion without an amendment.

Mr. Derynoski asked for a count of how many paraeducators that were employed in each of the last three school years.

Mr. Goralski asked Ms. Sheridan Cyr and Mr. Jesse Buchanan, from the local newspapers, that when they write their articles to state that the Board of Education members were not comfortable with the reallocation because they all want more for the school district, students and community with world language, special education and the arts. They don't want families to pay more than they already are to participate in sports. The public needs to let the Board of Finance and Town Council know how they feel because those town officials equally own responsibility. The Board of Education asked for what they needed, and the Town Council and Board of Finance gave the Board of Education what they thought was needed.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YES ~ Mr. Brown, Mrs. Carmody, Mrs. Clark, Ms. Cammuso, Mr. Oshana, Mrs. Queen, Mr. Goralski. NO ~ Mr. Derynoski, Mr. Baczewski.

Motion carried with seven in favor and two opposed.

9. ADJOURNMENT

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

“Move to adjourn.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

The meeting adjourned at 9:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Blanchard
Recording Secretary