

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 on the video recording of the Board meeting, please contact the Superintendent of Schools. These minutes are considered a draft until approved at the following regular Board of Education meeting.

SOUTHINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION

SOUTHINGTON, CONNECTICUT

REGULAR MEETING ~ Via Combined Video and Teleconference

APRIL 23, 2020

The regular meeting of the Southington Board of Education (Committee of the Whole – Operations) was held via combined video and teleconference on Thursday, April 23, 2020, at 7:00 p.m. with an Executive Session held prior at 6:30 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mrs. Terri Carmody, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 6:37 p.m.

Board members present were Mr. Joseph Baczewski, Mr. Robert Brown, Mrs. Terri Carmody, Mrs. Missy Cipriano, Mrs. Colleen Clark, Mr. David Derynoski, Mr. David Falvo, and Mr. Zaya Oshana. Absent was Mr. James Chrzanowski.

Administration present were Mr. Timothy Connellan, Superintendent of Schools; Mr. Steven Madancy, Assistant Superintendent; and Mrs. Sherri DiNello, Director of Business and Finance.

2. EXECUTIVE SESSION ~ UPSEU CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS

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

"Move to go into Executive Session, excluding the public and the press, for the purpose of discussing UPSEU Contract Negotiations, and upon conclusion reconvene to public session."

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

Mrs. Carmody ended Executive Session at 6:50 p.m.

3. RECONVENE MEETING ~ REGULAR SESSION

Mrs. Carmody reconvened the Board of Education Regular Session at 7:04 p.m.

Roll Call of Board members present: Mr. Joseph Baczewski, Mr. Robert Brown, Mrs. Terri Carmody, Mr. James Chrzanowski, Mrs. Missy Cipriano, Mrs. Colleen Clark, Mr. David Derynoski, Mr. David Falvo, and Mr. Zaya Oshana.

Administration present were Mr. Timothy Connellan, Superintendent of Schools; Mr. Steven Madancy, Assistant Superintendent; Mrs. Sherri DiNello, Director of Business and Finance; Ms. Margaret Walsh, Director of Pupil Services (via phone); Mr. Frank Pepe, Southington High School Principal; and Mr. Christopher Palmieri, DePaolo Middle School Principal.

Student representatives present were Mr. Trevor Messina, Mr. Brett Sheldrick and Miss Amrit Kaur.

4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The student representatives led in reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mrs. Carmody called for a moment of silence in memory of the following people:

MaryLou Derynoski, who was the wife of Board of Education member David Derynoski. She retired on December 31, 2017 after 31 years of service as a paraprofessional at many schools in the Southington Public School District. After retirement, she was a volunteer at Oshana Elementary School.

James Urban, who was hired in 2002 as a security guard at the high school and worked for the district until 2004.

Kathy Tuskowski, who worked for the school district as a secretary/clerk for 19 years and retired in November 1999 as a secretary for the special education and transportation departments.

Eugene Nebiolo, who was a well-known community member and Deacon at St. Dominic Church. He was a former elected official serving on the Board of Education from 1973 to 1983 and as Chairman during his last four years.

Harry Goralski, father of former Board of Education chairman, Brian Goralski. He passed away on April 19 from complications as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic virus. He worked for many years as a school bus driver after his retirement.

Art Rich, who was a well-known community member and prominent professional photographer. He was the school photographer for the Southington Public Schools and Southington High School graduates for many years. He passed away on April 14 from complications from the Covid-19 pandemic virus.

Richard Jutras, brother of Debi Albaitis, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent. He passed away on April 3 from complications from the Covid-19 virus.

Mrs. Carmody thanked all the health care workers, first responders, caregivers, town of Southington leadership, school administration, teachers, students, and parents for doing their best during the pandemic crisis and with the Distance Learning Plan.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. Board of Education Meeting ~ March 12, 2020

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

“Move to approve the regular Board of Education minutes of March 12, 2020, as submitted.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

b. Special Board of Education Meeting Held via Teleconference ~ March 26, 2020

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

“Move to approve the Special Board of Education minutes of March 26, 2020 held via teleconference, as submitted.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

6. PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

a. Communications from Public

There was no communication from the public regarding the agenda items.

b. Communications from Board Members

There was no communication from Board Members.

c. Communication from Administration

Administration reported on the following:

1. Update Distance Learning Plan: Mr. Madancy gave an update on the complex Distance Learning Plan that has been evolving over time. He addressed the challenges with the short notice of closing the schools, distributing devices over time in a safe manner, the initial roll out of technology for live classes across all grade levels, synchronizing connections with students, Distance Learning 2.0, multiple students in a family sharing an electronic device, and the goal with the next iteration to provide more opportunities for staff members to connect with students virtually. He addressed the differences between synchronous (happens in real time) and asynchronous (video recorded) learning. Live tutoring is also provided to the teachers to get them to a comfort level in engaging in synchronous lessons with their students K-12. Mr. Madancy addressed the grading process of Pass/Fail, which causes concern for people used to the traditional grading system. He explained that administration would be looking for further guidance from the State Board of Education and higher education on the Pass/Fail process. Students will be receiving feedback from their teachers on exactly how they are doing, which is just as important as a letter grade.

Mr. Brown questioned curriculum changes when/if the students return to school in the fall. Mr. Madancy addressed truncating the curriculum, essential curriculum and collaborating with the State Board of Education and district coordinators.

Mr. Baczewski questioned synchronous vs. asynchronous and the benefit of standardizing certain courses. Mr. Madancy explained that asynchronous for the younger students was the go-to strategy at this time and finding a balance between the two.

Mr. Falvo questioned if there was a way for older students to opt-in to a letter grade particularly for students taking Advance Placement, ECE and honors classes. Mr. Madancy did not think there was a real advantage to students getting letter grades because

colleges were accepting Pass/Fail for those courses and that Pass/Fail would not affect admissions.

Mrs. Cipriano questioned how students with IEP's and disabilities were doing with the distance learning. Mr. Madancy explained that the special education teachers were being faced with some unique challenges based on the needs of the students that they were servicing and the needs of some of the students were more complex than what could be provided in a distance learning model. They were looking at what compensatory education would look like for those students when they return to the classroom. Mr. Connellan added that administration would make sure additional services would be available to those students, which would be an additional to cost to the school district that was not presently in the school budget. If there are unexpended funds at the end of the school year, Mr. Connellan believes the Board of Finance would put this in a non-lapsing account instead of expending those dollars on equipment and special projects. Moving forward, the district will need more devices to bolster distance learning.

Mr. Derynoski recommended that, until the Board returns to a regular meeting schedule, the Distancing Learning Plan Update should be an ongoing agenda item instead of having it as an Administrative Report.

2. Close-out South End School Partial Roof Replacement: Mr. Connellan reported that the close-out of the South End Elementary School partial roof replacement is now completed with the town applying for final reimbursement.
3. Electric and Oil Contracts: Mrs. DiNello explained that administration was taking advantage of some pricing changes that were occurring due to the pandemic. The oil contract had been locked into for the 2020-2021 school year in January 2020 at \$2.03/gallon and because prices have dropped to \$1.76/gallon they decided to also lock into prices for the 2021-2022 school year. Alberio Energy, who is the Commodities Manager for the Town and Board of Education, went out to bid for the generation of electricity pricing because the prices have also dropped. The last update she received is that they would be entering into a new contract (current contract expires in November 2021) with a three-year term with Constellation, which would provide a three-year savings to both the Town and Board of Education combined of approximately \$478,000.
4. Alternative End of Year Celebration Planning: Mr. Connellan stated that this was extremely difficult for high school seniors, kindergarteners, and transitions to other grades. Mr. Frank Pepe, Southington High School Principal, had been meeting with groups to discuss creative options for graduation and other celebrations like the Military Luncheon. Mr. Baczewski and Mrs. Cipriano shared the idea of turning on the stadium lights at 8:20 p.m., which is the equivalent of 20:20 military time and burning the lights for 20 minutes and 20 seconds to honor the graduating Class of 2020. The high school stadium lights are manual and not on timers, which would require someone to turn the lights on and off. Mr. Connellan explained that Mrs. Christine Romano came up with the idea of using the scoreboard that could show the numbers 2020. Administration is looking at all types of celebrations for the end of the year for the critical milestones of the students.

Mr. Chrzanowski questioned if anyone at the state level addressed graduation. Mr. Connellan explained that the Commissioner of Education was very supportive if school

districts wanted to delay graduation in order to have an in-person graduation and working with the Department of Public Health at the state level to try to make it happen. Mr. Connellan was also working closely with Mr. Shane Lockwood, Regional Health Director, who has been very helpful.

Mr. Falvo questioned if there was a way to have a virtual open forum for the public to weigh in with ideas for public celebrations. Mr. Connellan replied that it could be done but he wanted to work with the talented professional team at the high school who have organized graduation numerous times and know what could be done organizationally.

d. Communication from Student Representatives

Miss Amrit Kaur explained how the distance learning classes affected her and that her teachers took different methods on how best to teach the various lessons. One of her teachers records the lessons and has office hours. Miss Kaur preferred the recorded lessons because she could make her own schedule with it.

Mr. Brett Sheldrick thanked the administration, parents, first responders, medical providers and everybody helping in this crisis. He has had only asynchronous lessons where teachers had recorded lessons and posted on Google Classroom and he could take notes and expand on what was on the slides and in the textbook. One of the most helpful things for him was the office hours for teachers and he could get help with any questions that he had.

Mr. Trevor Messina reported that he had live lessons with a couple of his teachers, which he found beneficial, and that all the teachers record the live lessons for students who need to go back and review. The students only lose the benefit of asking questions. He thought that the transition of maintenance learning to distance learning and then to Distance Learning 2.0, was hard for many students and presented different challenges because the students had to self-teach what they were learning. He felt that in the last four days in which he had Distance Learning 2.0; it had been much better. Mr. Messina stated that the senior class was missing out on many of the end of the year milestone events. He thanked the staff, administration, Board, and parents. On behalf of the Class of 2020, he thanked the Board for all the hard work that they had done.

Mr. Baczewski addressed different options for graduation and asked if they could talk to Mr. Lockwood to get a handle on what a graduation ceremony would like if they were to stay six feet apart and wore masks. He mentioned having a ceremony at the drive-in where everyone would stay in their car and practice social distancing.

7. COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Finance Committee Meeting ~ April 20, 2020

Mr. Oshana, Chairperson of the Finance Committee, reported that the committee reviewed the Self-Insurance claims through February 2020, which were \$896,000 under budget and that the March numbers came in at \$13,000 under budget.

7.a.1 Transfer of Funds:

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

“Move to approve the Transfer of Funds, as submitted.

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

7.a.2 HQ Contract Extension – Five-Years:

Mr. Baczewski questioned that with school not in session if there was discussion to reduce the cost to the district. Mrs. DiNello was working with legal counsel on several contracts including this one; however, per the Governor’s Executive Order, districts need to continue to pay vendors.

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

“Move to approve the five-year contract extension with HQ Dumpsters and Recycling, as presented.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

7.a.3 Bid 2020-02, Award of Custodial Contract for Derynoski Elementary School 12-Month Cleaning – Three-Year Contract:

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

“Move to award Bid 2020-02, Contract Custodial Services to Champion for three-years excluding the summer of 2020 if school does not reopen.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

7.a.4 Bid 2020-01, Award of Custodial Contract for High School Summer Cleaning, Three-Year Bid:

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

“Move to award Bid 2020-01, Contract Summer Custodial Services to SMG Services Management Group, LLC excluding Year-One, the summer of 2020, if school does not reopen.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

7.a.5 JFK and JAD Middle School Contract Custodial Extensions, Three-Year Extension:

Mr. Brown questioned if the summer work would still be completed. Mrs. DiNello replied that the custodians were all working their full schedules and they would work with staff on a staggered schedule over the next couple of weeks to go into the school to clean out individual classrooms so the current custodian would be able to start the summer projects and do the summer cleaning.

Mr. Messina questioned if the students would have an opportunity to retrieve their belongings. Mr. Pepe, Southington High School Principal, explained that custodians were cleaning out lockers and “bagging and tagging” locker contents that would be brought to a central location and when the district receives the “all clear” from the health department, they would start to bring students in on a schedule to retrieve their belongings. The same process would apply to the specialty areas such as the music room for instruments.

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

“Move to approve the negotiated custodial contract three-year extension to SMG Services Management Group, LLC as presented excluding the summer of 2020, if school does not reopen.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

7.a.6 Bid 2020-03 Award of Painting Bid for High School Select Spaces:

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

“Move to approve funding \$16,370 for painting at SHS in the 2020-2021 budget.”

Mr. Baczewski questioned if staff could do the painting. Mr. Connellan explained that the maintenance department had only one painter and that these projects were very large spaces.

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

7.a.7 Bid Threshold Recommendations:

Mr. Oshana addressed updating the Board of Education’s Purchasing Policy to align with the Town’s Purchasing Policy and bid thresholds. The Finance Committee had a lengthy discussion on this and felt that prior to changing the amounts that the Policy and Personnel Committee look into it and advise on aligning the BOE thresholds with the Town; especially now that they are doing more joint projects together. This would come back to the Board at a future meeting.

Mrs. DiNello addressed the financial update of the Board’s Operating Budget through March 2020 showing an anticipated surplus of over \$850,000 and explained the reason for the surplus. Not included in that projection were savings for transportation, salaries and expenses for spring athletics. Administration was working hard to comply with the Governor’s Executive Order. She explained that the district contacted New Britain Transportation to enter negotiations to amend the existing contract and follow the Executive Order of actual and reasonable costs. Districts across the state are also in the same situation. The school district’s legal counsel, Shipman & Goodwin, was working on addressing the contract negotiations for appropriate payment, which could be approximately \$250,000 in savings to the budget based on what other school districts were negotiating, which was not currently reflected in the anticipated surplus. Mr. Connellan would be sending a memorandum to elected officials addressing questions that arose from the Record-Journal article on budget savings. Mrs. DiNello also addressed the Special Education costs and that the Pupil Personnel Services Department was reviewing contracts with vendors for out of district special education placements who were continuing to provide services to students with disabilities. She addressed in detail the Special Education Excess Costs Grant,

and the unknown adjustments and compensatory services for these students. The administration believes the budget reallocation would include purchasing the 2020-21 new textbooks with current year funds, but the remainder of the surplus should be placed in the Non-lapsing Account to cover the compensatory services, to review some of the projects that would be cut out of next year's budget, and the reduction to the Educational Cost Share Grant. Mr. Connellan commented on the Record-Journal Article and the Governor's Executive Order regarding transportation and that the Southington School district was correctly complying with everything based on the Executive Order, State Board of Education and the advice of legal counsel.

Mr. Oshana addressed prorating the lease payments for the YMCA because of school closure and that refunds or credit would be provided for preschool tuition payments.

8. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

a. Personnel Report

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

“Move to approve the Personnel Report, as presented.

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

9. OLD BUSINESS

a. Town Government Communications

Mr. Connellan stated that the Town Budget Hearing on the 2020-2021 budget was Monday, April 27, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. via electronic communication. He also addressed a letter from Victoria Triano, Chair of the Town Council, regarding the referendums for the Southington Library and school projects, which would be pushed back and rescheduled due to the current pandemic circumstances. The School Project referendum would be postponed until November 2021 and the committee should begin having those discussions. Mr. Connellan would be in contact with Mrs. Clark to try to move that committee forward.

10. NEW BUSINESS

a. Leonard and Gladys Joll Scholarship Recipient

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

“Move to approve the recipient recommended by the Leonard and Gladys Joll Scholarship Committee.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

b. Adoption of 2021 Board of Education Meeting Dates

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

“Move that the proposed schedule of regular Board of Education meeting dates for 2021 be approved, as submitted.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

c. Southington High School Graduation

Mr. Connellan stated that the date cannot be set due to physical distancing and until they hear from the Governor and Regional Health Director, Mr. Shane Lockwood. Many different options have been discussed. This would be put on the agenda for the meetings in May for further discussion because information continues to change day to day.

Mr. Derynoski requested a motion to table setting a date for the high school graduation to the next Board meeting.

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

“Move to table this agenda item until the next Board of Education meeting.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

11. ADJOURNMENT

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

“Move to adjourn.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

The meeting adjourned at 8:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Blanchard
Recording Secretary