

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

MAY 14, 2020

The regular meeting of the Southington Board of Education (Committee of the Whole – Operations) was held via combined video and teleconference on Thursday, May 14, 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 6:34 p.m.

Board members present were 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; and Mrs. Sherri DiNello, Director of Business and Finance.

2. EXECUTIVE SESSION ~ TRANSPORTATION CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS

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

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

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote. Dave Falvo removed himself at 6:40 due to the nature of the contract discussion.

Mrs. Carmody ended Executive Session at 6:58 p.m.

3. RECONVENE MEETING ~ REGULAR SESSION

Mrs. Carmody reconvened the Board of Education Regular Session at 7:05 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.

Administrators 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. Rich Aroian, Southington High School Assistant Principal.

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

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 Anne Marie Lopiccolo, who was a district-wide, elementary ESL Tutor for six years resigning in 1986. She passed away on May 1, 2020.

Mrs. Carmody thanked health care workers and first responders for all that they are doing during this crisis and requested prayers for those affected by the Coronavirus.

5. CELEBRATION OF EXCELLENCE

For the Celebration of Excellence, the Board and administration recognized the Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) State Competition Winners who placed during the virtual competition. Ms. Joy Cooney, Business Teacher/Advisor, announced the following winners:

Aidan Dolan	Grade 11	5 th Place, Accounting II
Ethan Sutton	Grade 12	3 rd Place, Business Communication
Kayla DePodesta	Grade 9	3 rd Place, Intro to Business Communication
Nicole DePodesta	Grade 9	4 th Place, Intro to Business Communication
Matthew Geary	Grade 11	5 th Place, Cyber Security
Erika Kusiak	Grade 11	2 nd Place, Digital Video Production
Kayla Nguyen	Grade 11	2 nd Place, Digital Video Production
Rylee Indomenico	Grade 9	3 rd Place, E-Business
Samantha Proch	Grade 9	3 rd Place, E-Business
Katherine Crouse	Grade 12	1 st Place, Local Chapter Annual Report
Sarah Meade	Grade 12	1 st Place, Local Chapter Annual Report 2 nd Place, Organizational Leadership
Melaina Coleman	Grade 10	1 st Place, Intro to Business Presentation
Riley Tindall	Grade 10	1 st Place, Intro to Business Presentation
Ava Somsky	Grade 9	4 th Place, Intro to FBLA
Delaney Sicotte	Grade 9	5 th Place, Intro to FBLA
Amanda Kaczor	Grade 12	5 th Place, Job Interview
Lindsey Ardiuini	Grade 11	4 th Place, Publication Design
Grace Della Vecchia	Grade 11	4 th Place, Publication Design
Emily Solomon	Grade 12	4 th Place, Publication Design
Harshita Rayapureddy	Grade 11	3 rd Place, Public Speaking

Ms. Cooney announced that 12 of the winners who qualified would be competing at the National Competition in June. The state honored the high school chapter for having the largest chapter increase in membership for a second year in a row with 84 active members.

6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. Board of Education Meeting ~ April 23, 2020 (Video/Teleconference)

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

“Move to approve the regular Board of Education minutes of April 23, 2020, as submitted.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

7. PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

a. Communications from Public

Mr. Connellan read a lengthy letter that the Board members received on May 14, 2020 from Jim Morelli, Jr., Town Councilor, regarding amending the bus contract payments to New Britain Transportation (NBT). He referenced Governor Lamont’s executive order of March 16 and an April 14, 2020 memo from State Legal Director, Jessa Mirtle, advising negotiating an amended busing contract in good faith for reasonable costs incurred. Mr. Morelli listed in detail what he understood was supposed to happen and what did and did not happen due to the emergency shutdown of all the schools because of the Coronavirus. The Board of Education legal counsel, Shipman & Goodwin negotiated with NBT on behalf of the Board as well as 39 other communities. He stated that originally NBT wanted 100% of their contract but compromised with 70-75% without providing costs that they incurred. He did not believe that NBT paid \$922,500 to keep buses parked for three months. Mr. Morelli asked the Board to table any vote on payment to NBT until the Board was confident that money was spent, and the costs incurred were in good faith; otherwise, he thought that it was extortion. Mr. Morelli thought that this issue was wasting taxpayer’s money in a time of uncertainty because, “it was decided that we need to fulfill 75% of our contractual obligations [with NBT] after intense negotiations” when little to nothing was disclosed from NBT.

b. Communications from Board Members

Mr. Brown thanked all employees of the Southington Public Schools who were doing a wonderful job making everything work and going above and beyond during these difficult times.

Mrs. Cipriano reported on the STEPS meeting held via Zoom last week. She sent the Board members a link regarding a video submitted for the national competition on Prescription Medication Overuse. She stated that STEPS was working hard on prevention issues of prescription medication overuse, alcoholism, depression, and suicide.

Mr. Falvo noted that last week was Teachers Appreciation Week and thanked all the teachers in the Southington Public School system currently working under difficult circumstances with Distance Learning.

Mr. Baczewski noted that last week was also Nurses Appreciation Week and thanked the district nurses. He addressed the role of parents teaching their children at home with Distance Learning and its challenges. He thanked the teachers for supporting the parents in this endeavor.

Mr. Derynoski thanked the Board members, administration, and retired and active teachers for their condolences over the loss of his wife. He and his daughter, Dawn, appreciate all the words of comfort.

c. Communication from Administration

Administration reported on the following:

1. Interim Report on Curriculum & Maintenance Staff Work: Mr. Connellan reported that Mr. Romano, Director of Operations, provided a list of custodian and maintenance staff work that had been completed to date. Mr. Connellan stated that, while practicing physical distancing, a lot of custodial and maintenance work had been accomplished. They have already started the summer cleaning. Mr. Connellan thanked John Crowley in the Maintenance Department for personally delivering the Certificates of Excellence to the homes of all the FBLA competition winners.

2. Special Education Transition Preparation: Ms. Walsh shared some of the planning for the transition of special education students from Pre-K to Kindergarten, Grade 5 to Grade 6, Grade 8 to Grade 9 and students transitioning from high school into the STELLAR program. Videos were made for students transitioning at these grade levels to ease student anxiety from not being able to visit the schools beforehand, which was past practice for them to know what to expect and anticipate. Virtual PPTs were currently being conducted.

3. Technology: Mr. Connellan reported that approximately 1,000 devices and 55 Hot Spots had been distributed to families, which was a complex task for the Technology Department. They continue to be a busy with maintaining the devices. Future discussion would be on getting a device for every student.

4. Food Service: Mrs. DiNello explained that Nya Welinsky, Food Service Director, had the Grab "N" Go Program up and running the next day on Monday, March 16, 2020 after schools were closed starting with two schools for three days the first week and distributing 1,594 meals and in week two they expanded the location to 10 schools and they distributed 5,000 meals. They are currently at eight school sites distributing 5,500 meals per week. To date, they have provided 39,450 meals to students. They plan to continue providing meals three days a week up to Monday, June 15, 2020. They are now serving meals with instructions on how to be heated at home.

Mr. Connellan shared that two weeks ago he heard from Mr. Stephen Bergin, former Plantsville Elementary School Principal, who was now the Assistant Superintendent in Ansonia. The Ansonia Public Schools had received a large donation of masks and were willing to share. Mr. Bergin delivered masks to Southington that are now being used by the Southington Public School Food Service employees.

Mr. Brown questioned an email that he received regarding the federal government giving the school system \$412,000 dollars. Mr. Connellan explained that it was part of the CARES Act and is in proportion to Title I based on the poverty level. This funding would come directly to the school district to decide the appropriate use.

d. Communication from Student Representatives

The Student Representatives reported that the 2.0 Distance Learning had improved since it was first implemented. The teachers and the students have a better regimen now. Mrs. Carmody stated that she gave the newspaper reporters Trevor Messina's name to address graduation from a senior's perspective. Mr. Messina reiterated that the seniors would like a live, in-person graduation, if possible. The seniors are optimistic and know that it is completely out of their control. They hope for the best but are planning for the worst. Mrs. Clark stated that the Board knows how difficult it is for the seniors and were working to give them the best possible graduation under the circumstances.

8. COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Elementary School Facilities Ad-Hoc Committee Meeting – April 30, 2020

Mrs. Clark reported that the committee was at the very beginning stages of planning and had more questions than answers. A virtual meeting will be held on Monday, May 18, 2020 at 4:00 p.m. to continue the discussions.

b. Curriculum & Instruction Committee Meeting – May 4, 2020

Mr. Brown, Chairman of the C&I Committee reported that the May 4 meeting was very long due to the lengthy agenda. He thanked the administrators and teachers who participated. There were five areas that the committee discussed in detail that are on this agenda as a first read. Presentations in Science for review and discussion were for Grade 3-Forces and Motion and Heredity, Grade 4-Circuits, Grade 8- Colossal Collisions, and SHS-Earth Science, SHS-Biology Unit on Matter and Energy. There also were presentations on ELA-Phonics Units of Study, SHS-MUSH (Modern U.S. History) Curriculum, Math-Algebra I Credit and GPA, SHS-Introduction to Piano, Ukulele and Guitar. The committee discussed a high school faculty and administration grading proposal. Mr. Brown stated that, in the past at the elementary schools, there were a lot of people changing curriculum without coordination and that Mr. Madancy has taken over the coordination now, so it does not happen anymore.

c. Finance Committee Meeting ~ May 12, 2020

Mr. Oshana, Chairperson of the Finance Committee, reported that the committee met virtually and discussed the transfer of funds for floor scrubbers for summer cleaning services at the high school.

Transfer of Funds:

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

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

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

The committee also discussed the Unexpended Funds Account for year end June 30, 2019, the status of the Food Service Program due to school closure, the 2019-2020 revenue and expenditure report for the Middle School Athletic Program, Board of Education Operating Budget 2019-2020, New Britain Transportation Contract Addendum for 2019-2020 and a draft BOE Operating budget 2020-2021 Reallocation Plan.

Mrs. DiNello explained that the Food Service Program was self-sustaining; however, due to the early school closure because of Covid-19, it has negatively affected the revenues and bottom line of this program. She explained in detail the Food Service Program loss of revenue and anticipation of ending the year with a large loss of \$300,000. To open the next school year, the committee discussed the BOE providing a subsidy to the program with parameters on repayment terms.

Mr. Derynoski questioned if there was any way to subsidize the Food Service loss with the small surplus at the end of the school year and the funds expected from the state/federal government. Mrs. DiNello explained that in June or July when the Finance Committee would have a better idea where the Food Service Program ends, they will be making a recommendation to the full Board on whether or not a subsidy would be needed and for how much.

Mr. Oshana explained that the committee agreed to return the Southington Middle Schools Athletic Association (SMSAA) surplus funds of \$8,400 to the SMSAA due to the cancellation of the spring season because of COVID-19 and to be put toward the 2020-2021 athletic program.

8.c.1 Transportation Contract – Addendum

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

“Move that the Board of Education approve and authorizes the Superintendent to enter into the agreement with New Britain Transportation on behalf of the Board of Education.”

Mr. Baczewski understood that there was a period of time where New Britain Transportation (NBT) employees were not paid that was reflected in a savings of 75% in the negotiation of the contract. Mrs. DiNello clarified that the discount that was negotiated was currently at 15% and with the payroll savings that they received, the Board would reach a 30% savings on the overall contract balance and would be paying 70%. To address Mr. Morelli's letter and BOE concerns, Mrs. DiNello read a lengthy list of ongoing expenses that NBT had to continue to pay that were not suspended during the closure. Mr. Derynoski requested further clarification. Mrs. DiNello explained that the fuel savings was part of the 15% discount. It had been a two-month negotiation process to reach the 70%, which the Board is paying. The 70% is part of the daily cost for the last 60 days that school was not in session. The daily cost of transportation for 64 vehicles is \$21,426, they discounted the \$21,426 per day by 15% and then by negotiating a 34-day payroll credit of an additional \$190,000. The savings to the district on the 60-days of the closure is just over \$383,000 or 70% of the balance that the Board would have had to pay on the to and from school transportation. Mr. Derynoski's understanding was that the labor was the biggest cost of bus transportation. Mrs. DiNello explained that NBT had a lot of overhead costs in addition to the payroll.

Motion carried with seven in favor and Mr. Derynoski and Mr. Baczewski opposed.

9. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

a. Personnel Report

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

“Move to approve the Personnel Report, as submitted.

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

10. OLD BUSINESS

a. Town Government Communications

Mrs. Carmody stated that the Town Council met on Monday, May 11, 2020 and set the Town/BOE 2020-2021 Operating Budget that will be discussed later in the meeting.

b. Distance Learning Update

Mr. Madancy reported on the 2.0 Distance Learning and providing professional development for teachers shifting from asynchronous to synchronous learning. It was a challenge with multiple students in a household sharing one device. There will be some focus groups across every grade level where administrators will reach out to families to get some feedback from parents regarding distance learning and to continue to improve upon it through the remainder of the year and for next year with a blended model, if needed. Mr. Madancy noted that it was Teacher Appreciation Week last week and stated that the teachers were doing an amazing job learning new skills in a hurry as well as balancing teaching their own children at home. He noted that the focus now was on return and recovery with a lot of work to be done between now and September to be ready. The teachers are going to have to set-up two classrooms, the one that they did not get to close this year, and possibly a virtual classroom. He noted that it was going to be very complex. The administrative team was working hard behind the scenes on finding creative ways to provide time for the teachers so the return and recovery would be able to accomplish all that needs to be done and not just relying on the three-days in August. He will update the Board regarding 3.0 Distance Learning as it develops.

Mr. Baczewski questioned if they could set-up the physical classroom and the virtual classroom. He thought that even if schools were opened, there might be some parents who would not send their children to school and to continue virtual learning. He questioned if administration was considering that scenario. Mr. Madancy discussed that scenario in detail noting that parents would eventually be going back to work and administration needs to plan for both in person and virtual learning for the 2020-2021 school year. Mr. Baczewski noted that both he and his wife were essential employees and that working and helping to teach their young children was incredibly difficult as it was for many parents.

c. High School Graduation Options Update

Mr. Connellan reported that administration along with input from class officers and advisors for 2020 and 2021 were meeting frequently to look at different scenarios for a traditional high school graduation ceremony. The current Governor's Executive Order limits five people to a group. The students indicated that their priority was to have some type of in person graduation because they were missing so much of their senior year. One option was to move graduation to the first week in August for an in-person ceremony with no guarantees if it would be possible. Today, the administration received information for an option that was not previously considered. Mr. Connellan learned that Avon and Farmington High Schools were going to hold their graduation ceremonies at the Farmington Polo Grounds, with the approval of the Farmington Health Director, which is a large, open facility. The families would be in vehicles spaced 15 feet

apart for appropriate physical distancing. There is a large screen that could display videos and a stage. He thought that this was a good option to explore and arrange to have an in-person graduation in June when school ends. He stated that administration would be exploring this option and meet with students for their input. He pointed out that Mr. Rich Aroian, SHS Assistant Principal and Mr. Frank Pepe, SHS Principal were working hard on the logistics that go with along with either a virtual or in-person graduation and the complexities of planning both for 510 students. Mr. Pepe addressed the processes that were implemented in meeting and keeping the students and families informed, the resiliency of the class officers and the planning for five different live graduation ceremony options based on restrictions. Mr. Aroian explained in detail the options that they have been working on to guarantee a good event for the graduating students including a live YouTube channel dedicated to the Southington Public Schools, live-streaming, and contacting the Farmington Polo Grounds for more information to see if it is a viable option. They were doing parallel planning for virtual, for a live complete, and for limited live. Mr. Connellan read an email memo from the State Board of Education Commissioner that he received during the meeting regarding guidelines for graduations. He believed that using the Farmington Polo Ground facility was a very good option for an in-person and active ceremony.

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

“Move that the Board of Education authorize the administration to secure a date for a proposed graduation ceremony at the Farmington Polo Grounds, if it is possible to secure a date in June, 2020, and get approval by the Farmington Health Director.”

Mr. Derynoski questioned if the Southington Drive-in and Recreation Park area was considered. Mrs. Carmody stated that a group of parents investigated that possibility; however, it did not have capacity for all the cars. Mr. Falvo questioned if they used the Drive-In and football field at Recreation Park if they would have the capacity for 550 cars to keep graduation in the community. He questioned the potential cost to hold graduation at the Farmington Polo Grounds. He was concerned to hold an August graduation ceremony for students who were going into the Armed Forces and how many students would be affected. Mr. Connellan explained that the Drive-In was already considered as an option and had a 300-vehicle capacity. The Farmington Polo Grounds would cost \$3,500. Mr. Falvo heard that the Drive-In capacity was for 450 cars and thought that discrepancy should be investigated before outsourcing to the Farmington Polo Grounds. Mrs. Cipriano stated that she previously served on the Drive-In Committee and agreed with Mr. Falvo. Mr. Connellan noted that the Health Director in Farmington signed off on 15 feet between cars and that the Southington Drive-In would not have that spacing plus the Southington Health Director would not sign-off on it. The health, police and fire departments must review proposed plans and Police Chief Jack Dally looked into the logistics of the Polo Grounds. There was a lengthy discussion on the motion and date of graduation. Mr. Messina stated that his preference would be to set a date for August 7 and still look into the potential of holding the ceremony at the Farmington Polo Grounds so they are not in limbo and do not yet have a date for graduation. Mr. Derynoski did not think they needed to make a motion at this point on something that they do not have any tangible information on such as availability and should wait until it is investigated more. Mr. Connellan thought that if they waited until the May 28th meeting to vote and they hear back from Farmington Polo Grounds that dates in June were available, then they might lose that opportunity if they do not act quickly. Mr. Oshana questioned if they could have a Special Board meeting once the information is available.

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

“Move to table.”

ROLL CALL VOTE – YES: Mr. Baczewski, Mr. Chrzanowski, Mrs. Cipriano, Mr. Derynoski, Mr. Falvo, Mr. Oshana. OPPOSED: Mr. Brown, Mrs. Clark, Mrs. Carmody.

Motion carried to table with six in favor and three opposed.

Mr. Derynoski requested that the administration have a discussion with the Farmington Polo Grounds to see what dates are available.

d. Operating Budget 2019-2020 Update

Mrs. DiNello explained that she provided an update to the Finance Committee at their meeting on May 12, 2020 regarding the status of 2019-2020 operating budget. In March, there was an estimated surplus of over \$850,000 with items still being negotiated. She summarized some of the additional items realized due to the closure, which provided a \$1.4 million surplus. However, with a reallocation from the 2020-2021 budget to purchase some budgeted items using the current budget funds would reduce the projected surplus to \$1.3 million. In addition, there is a potential need to subsidize the Food Service Program. She noted that with the sudden closure of schools many textbooks went home with the students and that the district would make every attempt to recover them at the end of the school year.

Mr. Baczewski questioned the additional quantity and cost for every student to have their own Chromebook. Mr. Madancy explained that administration was currently working on that and should have more information for the Board at their next meeting.

11. NEW BUSINESS

a. Ratification of UPSEU / Southington BOE Physical Therapist & Occupational Therapist Local 425-Unit 113 Contract

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

“Move to approve the tentative agreement between the Southington BOE Physical Therapists and Occupational Therapists Local 425, Unit 113 and the Southington Board of Education.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

b. 2020-2021 Operating Budget Options

Mrs. DiNello stated that this was the Board’s first opportunity to review the reallocation document and to discuss options prior to acting on the Reallocation Plan at the May 28, 2020 Board of Education meeting. On Monday, May 11, 2020, the Town Council made an additional reduction to the Board of Finance recommendation (2.21% increase) leaving the Board of Education with a 1.77% increase for the 2020-2021 operating budget totaling \$100,301,445, which reduced the original budget request in the amount of \$1,327,000. The Reallocation Plan leaves a shortfall of \$123,000 to balance the budget. Mr. Oshana questioned the removal of math consumable workbooks. Mr. Madancy gave a detailed explanation regarding the math

workbooks. Mrs. Carmody wanted to keep the math consumable workbooks in the budget. Mr. Connellan stated that administration wanted to make reductions where it had the least impact in the classroom. Mr. Falvo questioned copying of consumable workbooks. Mr. Brown thought they could save money with the new position of the Math Specialist by hiring later in the year and partially cut in the surplus amount of \$8,000 that was to be given back to SMSAA. Mrs. Carmody asked the Board members to contact administration with any questions regarding the Reallocation Plan prior to the next Board meeting when they would be voting on it. The answers to the questions received would be sent and shared with all Board members.

- c. **Science Curriculum Units for Grades 3, 4, 8, Earth Science, and Biology – First Reading**
- d. **ELA K-2 Phonics Units of Study – First Reading**
- e. **SHS MUSH Curriculum – First Reading**
- f. **Introduction to Piano, Ukulele and Guitar – First Reading**

The Board members did not have any questions regarding the first readings of the curriculum units that will come before the Board at the May 28, 2020 meeting as a second read for action.

12. ADJOURNMENT

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

“Move to adjourn.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

The meeting adjourned at 10:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Blanchard
Recording Secretary