

*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](http://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**

**FEBRUARY 24, 2022**

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The regular meeting of the Southington Board of Education (Committee of the Whole - Operations) was held on Thursday, February 24, 2022, at 7:00 p.m. as a public meeting in the John Weichsel Municipal Center Public Assembly Room, 200 North Main Street, Southington, Connecticut with an Executive Session preceding at 6:30 p.m.

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mrs. Colleen Clark, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

Board members present were Mrs. Dawn Anastasio, Mr. Joseph Baczewski, Mrs. Terri Carmody, Mr. Sean Carson (*arrived at 6:40 p.m.*), Mrs. Colleen Clark, Mr. David Derynoski, Mr. Zaya Oshana, and Mr. Jasper Williams. Absent was Mr. James Chrzanowski.

Cabinet administrators present were Mr. Steven Madancy, Superintendent of Schools, and Mr. Frank Pepe, Assistant Superintendent. Also present: Mrs. Sherri DiNello, Consultant (*left the Executive Session at 6:50 p.m.*).

**2. EXECUTIVE SESSION – STUDENT MATTERS, UPSEU CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS, REVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AUDIT PROPOSAL, AND SUPERINTENDENT’S MID-YEAR EVALUATION**

**MOTION:** by Mr. Derynoski, second by Mr. Oshana:

**“Move to go into Executive Session, excluding the public and the press, for the purpose of discussing Student Matters, UPSEU Contract Negotiations, Review and Discussion of Special Education Audit Proposal, and Superintendent’s Mid-Year Evaluation, and upon conclusion reconvene to public session.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

*Mrs. Clark recessed Executive Session at 7:01 p.m.  
The Regular Board Meeting was reconvened at 7:04 p.m.*

**3. RECONVENE MEETING – REGULAR SESSION**

Board members present were Mrs. Dawn Anastasio, Mr. Joseph Baczewski, Mrs. Terri Carmody, Mr. Sean Carson, Mr. James, Mrs. Colleen Clark, Mr. David Derynoski, Mr. Zaya Oshana, and Mr. Jasper Williams. Absent was Mr. James Chrzanowski.

Cabinet administrators present were Mr. Steven Madancy, Superintendent of Schools; Mr. Frank Pepe, Assistant Superintendent; and Mrs. Jennifer Mellitt, Director of Business & Finance.

Student Representatives present were Jhalissa Vincent, Ethan Solury, and Angelina Micacci.

#### **4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE & MOMENT OF SILENCE**

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

Mrs. Clark called for a moment of silence in memory of:

**Mr. Richard Jones** who passed away on January 21, 2022. He worked for the Southington Public Schools from September 1982 until his retirement in 2002. During that time, he served as the Department Head for the Southington Regional Agricultural Program.

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

**“Move to move Agenda Item 11.b ‘Approval of Out of State/Overnight Field Trip’ to Agenda Item 5.a.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

#### **5. CELEBRATION OF EXCELLENCE – NEO SEBASTIAN REYES**

The Board of Education recognized Neo Sebastian Reyes, a student at J. A. DePaolo Middle School, who submitted an essay to the Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Essay Contest sponsored by Senator Christopher Murphy and won. He was one of 15 students chosen out of hundreds of applicants. Mr. Madancy read a part of Neo’s Essay regarding discrimination and equality. Mrs. Clark presented Neo with a Certificate of Excellence.

*Mrs. Clark called for a short recess at 7:10 - 7:15 p.m.*

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

**“Move to move Agenda Item 11.h ‘Southington High School Graduation Date’ to Agenda Item 5.b.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

#### **6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

##### **a. January 27, 2022 Meeting**

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

**“Move to approve the Regular Board of Education Minutes of January 27, 2022, as submitted.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

##### **b. February 8, 2022 Special Meeting**

**MOTION:** by Mr. Baczewski, seconded by Mr. Williams:

**“Move to approve the Special Board of Education minutes of February 8, 2022, as submitted.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

**Point of Order:** Mr. Madancy called for a Point of Order and noted that the two agenda items that were moved up to 5.a. and 5.b. on the agenda were skipped over.

**5.a. Approval of Out of State/Overnight Field Trips** (*Moved from Agenda Item 11.b*)

Ms. Sandy Spinello, DECA Co-Advisor, Max Hotchkiss, SHS DECA President and A.J. Sena, SHS Vice President of Membership, addressed the request to attend the DECA International Career Development Conference in Atlanta, Georgia in April 2022 if the Southington DECA students win at the upcoming State Competition Conference.

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

**“Move that the Board of Education approve the DECA Out of State/Overnight Field Trip request, as presented by administration.”**

Mr. Oshana explained the benefits of networking with other participants at the conference.

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

**5.b Southington High School Graduation Date**

Mr. Madancy proposed adopting the Southington High School graduation ceremony date of Friday, June 17, 2022, with a rain date of Saturday, June 18, 2022. The rain date would be held earlier in the day instead of in the evening.

**MOTION:** by Mrs. Carmody, seconded by Mr. Oshana:

**“Move to approve Friday, June 17, 2022, as the date for the Southington High School Graduation with a rain date of Saturday, June 18, 2022.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

**7. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS**

**a. Communications from Student Board Representatives**

Ethan Solury reported on the following:

- For the first time in two years, Silver Star Band, comprised of fifth grade students, would be meeting again at the high school with the SHS Marching Band.
- The Annual Camp Sloper Polar Plunge takes place on Saturday, February 26. He noted that the high school principal, Mr. Michael Crocco, would be participating.
- The Kelley School fifth grade STEM Ambassadors held their annual Souper Super Bowl Drive in February and collected approximately 1,500 cans that were donated to the Southington Community Services.

- He reported on the athletic sports season to date for the SHS Girls Gymnastic Team, Girl Knights Basketball Team, and Boys Swimming & Drive Team.

Angelina Micacci reported on the following:

- The SHS Drama Club production of The Little Mermaid will be held on March 4 at 7:00 p.m. and March 5 at 3:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.
- The Southington Unified Theatre Show will be held on March 18 with the theme Inclusivity through the Decades. Miss Micacci is a co-director of the show and invited all to attend.
- SHS STEM without Boundaries is hosting STEM Day on March 11 for all elementary students with presentations from different STEM organizations. It is a virtual event from 6:00-8:00 p.m. Students can sign-up through an email that was sent districtwide.
- Junior Prom tickets will be sold starting Monday, February 28, from 7:15-7:30 a.m. and from 2:15-2:30 p.m. Table arrangements must be completed before purchasing the \$90 per person tickets. Students cannot purchase tickets if they owe money on schoolbooks.
- SAT testing for Juniors will take place on March 23-25. Resources for studying can be found with the Khan Academy.

Jhalissa Vincent reported on the following:

- A Connecticut State Trooper met with Kennedy Middle School students in grade level assemblies for a presentation on healthy decisions, positive communication, and the digital tattoo. This presentation is given to students throughout the state.
- She reported on the athletic sports season to date for the SHS Cheerleading Team, Wrestling Team, and Boys Co-op Ice Hockey Team.

Mr. Carson attended the Cheerleading competition on Saturday, February 19 and stated that the team put together a fantastic performance.

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

Mrs. Carmody toured the STELLAR Program facility for special education students aged 18-21 years old. She was very proud of the partnership between teachers and the community for the benefit of the students. Mrs. Clark explained that the special education STELLAR Program teaches life skills in a home-like atmosphere.

Mr. Williams thanked the Board members for putting together a letter to send to the state at a Special BOE meeting on February 8. The Board put aside politics and agreed on issues that impact so many children, parents, staff, and administrators across Southington. He spoke about the commitment to democracy and the current worldwide events over the last week with the assault of free speech, assembly and due process in Canada, and Ukrainians fleeing their homes as Russia aims to pull their country back into the clutches of a ruthless dictatorship. As a veteran, he reflected on how precious democracy truly is and that it was up to the Board of Education, parents, administrators, and voters to ensure that students are educated on the beauty and fragility of the United States system of government. They must continue to exercise their rights and responsibilities with respect and honor and remember the sacrifices that so many have made before them and cherish what it means to live free in the USA.

**c. Communications from Administration**

Administration reported on the following:

1. **STEPS/SPD Partnership:** Mr. Pepe reported that in December, Mrs. Meghan Albanese and Southington Deputy Chief Palmieri presented a new prevention curriculum, which will begin in fifth grade and then up to grades 6-12 and then down to grades 4-K in subsequent years. The curriculum delivery involves the Southington Police Department working with the students in the classroom. This homegrown curriculum has been picked up by a marketing company and will be made available nationally.
2. **STEPS Parent University:** Mr. Pepe explained that STEPS (Southington Town-wide Effort to Promote Success) was sponsoring a Parent University on March 10, from 6:00-8:00 p.m. at the Calendar House. Film screening of “Finding Hope” hosted by Christine Gagnon will be shown. Finding Hope is the same short film that the senior class will view during the upcoming Capstone Advisory session.
3. **Masks in Schools:** Mr. Madancy reported that a letter was sent to staff and families regarding the school district becoming mask optional starting Monday, February 28, 2022. He sent out correspondence today highlighting anticipated questions.
4. **SEF Gala:** Mr. Madancy announced that the Southington Education Foundation Gala fundraiser will be held on May 7, 2022, in the Pavilion at the Back Nine at the Southington Country Club. The SEF are ambassadors for the Southington Public School students.
5. **DECA Gold Certification:** Mr. Madancy announced that the high school DECA chapter was one of 461 schools out of 4,000 that received the Gold Star recognition.
6. **Cable Advisory and PEGPETIA Grant:** Mr. Madancy reported that he has been working on funding to update the audiovisual equipment in the Municipal Center Public Assembly Room and has received a \$1,000 Cable Advisory Grant and has applied for and awaiting an answer for a \$140,000 grant from the PEGPETIA organization, which would update all the cameras, audiovisual and the rack system in the AV room as well as virtual telecasts.
7. **Athletic Facilities and Roof Update:** Mr. Madancy invited the Board of Education, Town Council and Board of Finance members to a walking tour of the Southington High School athletic facilities in conjunction with the revised Capital Improvement Plan that the BOE approved at their last Board meeting. His office will be sending an invitation to all elected officials. As a follow-up, Mr. Madancy will present to the Town Council visuals at their March Town Council meeting. He explained that the Town Council authorizes the Town Manager to go to the Bond Council, which occurs in May, in order to get on the Referendum for November of 2022.

**d. Communication from Public**

There were a number of residents (*Attachment #1*) who came to the podium to voice their comments, recommendations, requests, and concerns regarding the following: Personal questions on a recent survey regarding use of drugs, alcohol, and social behavior administered to 12 year old students; concern with the direction of government and school system mandates moving in the direction of a nameless, faceless bureaucracy without regard for humanity and current local, state, federal, and world events, parent distributed to the Board copies of the book, One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn; parent choice of optional masking and effects on students still wearing masks, questioning of wearing masks on buses; thanking the Board for their mask decision and that the Boards impact and decisions goes beyond the school system; students falling behind in school due to pandemic and mandates put into place and the effects on their mental health, requesting Board to not make medical decisions for students attending school and not repeating history of the past two years; gratitude and

questions regarding new masking guidance, amending mandate that children have to wear masks on school buses.

Please see the YouTube video link of the meeting and public communication that can be found on both the Town of Southington and Southington Board of Education websites.

## **8. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **a. Policy & Personnel Committee Meeting – February 2, 2022**

Mr. Williams reported that the committee discussed revising Policy 3542.1, Purposes and Facilities - Food Service, to comply with recent legislative changes. Discussed were procedures for charging for a meal, subsequent collection of owed money, and that no student would be deprived of a reimbursable meal due to forgotten or lost money. Revision of Policy 5145.3, Sexual Harassment of Students, to comply with recent legislative changes. The committee discussed Title IX and the district's responsibility to investigate allegations. These revisions come before the Board as a first read later on the agenda.

### **b. Curriculum & Instruction Committee Meeting – February 11, 2022**

Mr. Pepe reported that the committee received a presentation on First Grade Science Units and the four new units titled, 1) Playground Shadows, 2) Film Animation, 3) Senses in Nature, and 4) Seasonal Changes. These units will keep the students actively engaged in exploration and creation. The committee also received a presentation on three new Library Media Units for grades 3-5 titled, 1) Tech and Digital Citizenship, 2) Research and Info Literacy, and 3) Innovative Design. The committee addressed questions posed from the January 14 Curriculum & Instruction meeting regarding five implicit bias videos utilized in grade eight ELA classes. The lesson is not focused on implicit bias and the video is used to instill the importance of rereading through a turn and talk that identified what was complicated and what was not understood. Mr. Pepe answered the committee's questions on the Citizenship in Action course description, enrollment for the required course for all juniors, and talking points regarding when and if the implicit bias videos are used. The exercise is used as a steppingstone to define and introduce media bias. The committee also discussed Policy 6144, which deals with teaching controversial issues.

Mr. Baczewski stated that he watched the five implicit bias videos and thought there was still uncertainty regarding them. He questioned if the committee should re-evaluate the usefulness of the videos in the curriculum. Mr. Madancy stated that the Board had a policy for the review of curriculum material. A form would need to be filled out and a committee appointed to review the instructional material in question. Any Board member or member of the public could request that. Mr. Baczewski requested a review of the material.

### **c. Financial Committee Meeting – February 15, 2022**

Mr. Oshana reported that the committee discussed the Food Service comparative income statements for June 30, 2020 and June 30, 2021. Losses were incurred due to COVID; however, through the ESSER II funds the losses were covered in a way of a loan from the Board of Education to the Food Service Program. The school district continues to participate in the Seamless Summer Option where students are provided breakfast and lunch at no cost. Because of this, the Balance Sheet shows a significant decrease in cash because of the free meals. He noted

that government reimbursement had increased. In the end, it came out to a virtual wash. The committee discussed the loan it gave to the Food Service Program and the parameters put around potential repayments. Even with all these challenges, the program had a net income of \$149,218. Mr. Oshana acknowledged and praised the hard work that Ms. Nya Welinsky, Food Service Director, and her team put into the program during the two pandemic years. With the schools back to full in-person learning and meals being free, the number of meals increased by over 100,000. The committee also received the Board of Education financial update through January 2022 with projected surpluses and deficits. Currently, a large surplus is not anticipated at year end.

Mr. Carson stated that he had concerns about the loan of \$300,000 given to sustain the Food Service Program by the previous Board. He recognized that this was a one-time loan, and that Food Service is a high level, self-sustaining, in-house program and the loan was necessary due to COVID. He pointed out that a loan will not be needed and considered moving forward. Mr. Carson noted that Southington was one of the few school districts in the state that runs their own internal Food Service Program. He wanted the public to know that the Board was being fiscally responsible with this.

## **9. SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT**

### **a. Personnel Report**

**MOTION:** by Mr. Baczewski, seconded by Mr. Williams:

**“Move to approve the Personnel Report, as presented.  
Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

## **10. OLD BUSINESS**

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

Mrs. Clark reported that the Board of Education 2022-2023 budget presentation to the Board of Finance was on Wednesday, February 9 and that administration presented the budget in a way that it could be understood. The Budget Questions and Answers grid was being shared between the BOE, Board of Finance, and Town Council. The Budget Public Hearing is at J. A. DePaolo Middle School on March 7 and the Board of Education Workshop is on March 9.

Mrs. Clark reported that the meeting of the Town Board of the Chairs was not held in February due to some Chairpersons being out of town. The next meeting would be in March.

### **b. Science – Kindergarten Units – Second Reading**

**MOTION:** by Mr. Baczewski, seconded by Mr. Williams:

**“Move to approve the Science – Kindergarten Units, as recommended by the Curriculum and Instruction Committee.”  
Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

## **11. NEW BUSINESS**

**a. Air Quality Discussion**

Mr. Peter Romano, Director of Operations, explained that the subject of indoor air quality was broad reaching and that he was going to be as succinct as possible for the public's understanding. He explained that the indoor air quality is programmed and monitored by the school district's staff, outside consulting and monitoring companies, including the regional health district and state Department of Public Health (DPH) with guidance from the state of Connecticut, Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP), and United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Mr. Romano spoke at length on the Connecticut General Statutes Chapter 170, Section 10-220, subsection (d) regarding the duties of a Board of Education as it applies to indoor air quality. He identified and spoke in detail on 14 items that could affect air equality, which are monitored. Mr. Romano included and spoke about other areas that are monitored in the school facilities that were not included in the state statute, such as CO<sub>2</sub> (Carbon Dioxide) levels. He stated that he also was the Chair of the Safety Committee for the school district that meets quarterly to discuss safety and health concerns districtwide and noted the committee members were from administration, teachers, nurses, paraeducators, food service, custodians, and maintenance employees. He was also a member of the Connecticut School Building & Grounds Association comprised of 97 members across the state that discusses indoor air quality frequently.

Mr. Romano explained that health and safety of the district's staff and students were paramount to what the Operations Department and Maintenance staff do every day. He praised the school district's custodial and maintenance staff who take excellent care of the facilities and are knowledgeable about the areas he discussed that could affect indoor air quality. The plan moving forward was to post operations reports on the Southington Public Schools website, continue to explore opportunities to improve indoor air quality, pursue CO<sub>2</sub> monitoring systems for the elementary schools, and get air conditioning into all the elementary schools. In closing, Mr. Romano added that the Southington Public Schools Operation Department would continue to strive for improvement.

Mr. Carson thanked Mr. Romano for the indoor air quality report, which was one of the reasons why he ran for election on the Board of Education. He valued transparency, safety, and excellence, which the report conveyed, as well as Mr. Romano exuding excellence in his job performance including the maintenance and custodial staff, whom he praised. Mr. Carson noted that all the compliance reports were on record and looked forward to them being put on the school district's website for public perusal. He questioned if the school district was cited in the past three years by DPH, DEEP, OSHA, or other agencies, regarding the indoor air quality not meeting standards. Mr. Romano replied that the district had not been cited. Mr. Carson summarized that the Board had been reassured that they were putting the students and staff in environments that had good air quality, met standards and legal requirements, and allowed students to get an education.

Mr. Baczewski asked if there was a particular number on the CO<sub>2</sub> levels parts per million (ppm) that a building needed to stay under. Mr. Romano explained that their goal is to have CO<sub>2</sub> levels be less than 1,000 ppm and that the state did not have a standard number, which he found shocking. If CO<sub>2</sub> levels go above 1,000 ppm, it could affect cognitive abilities and make a person sleepy. He found that the state requirements and standards were outdated regarding CO<sub>2</sub> and that Southington can do better than the state standards. Mr. Baczewski addressed filters and



homemade apparatuses. He noted that filters just filter the air in the building and did not make more oxygen. He was pleased that systems were in place for monitoring and creating a better climate control in the elementary schools.

Mr. Oshana pointed out that the issue of indoor air quality was not new and was being monitored pre-COVID and will continue to be monitored. Mrs. Clark praised the report, Mr. Romano, custodial, and maintenance staff for always putting safety first and taking pride in their jobs.

- b. Approval of Out of State/Overnight Field Trips (*Moved to Agenda Item 5.a*)**
- c. Policy 3542.1, Purposes and Facilities – Food Service (*Policy Revision*) – First Reading**
- d. Policy 5145.3, Sexual Harassment of Students (*Policy Revision*) – First Reading**
- e. Science – Grade 1 Units – First Reading**
- f. Library Media Proposal for Grades 3-5 – First Reading**

These were first readings and will come before the Board at their next regular meeting for action.

- g. Leonard & Gladys Joll Scholarship Committee Appointment**

Mr. Madancy explained to the new Board members the background, past practice, responsibilities, and timelines of the Ad-Hoc Joll Scholarship Committee. Mrs. Clark asked for Board volunteers to serve on the committee. She appointed Mr. Derynoski, Mr. Carson, and Mr. Williams.

- h. Southington High School Graduation Date (*Moved to Agenda Item 5.b*)**

*Mrs. Clark reconvened Executive Session at 8:44 p.m. for the Superintendent's Mid-year Evaluation.*

All Board members were present except Mr. Chrzanowski. Also present was Mr. Steven Madancy, Superintendent of Schools.

*The Board returned to Public Session at 9:39 p.m.*

## **12. ADJOURNMENT**

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

**“Move to adjourn.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Linda Blanchard*

Recording Secretary

**ATTACHMENT #1 – PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS**

From: FRANK PEPE  
 Sent: Friday, February 25, 2022 3:15 PM  
 To: LINDA BLANCHARD  
 Subject: Speaker list

Sent from Mail for Windows

Timestamp	Name	First Name	Address	Reason to Speak
2/24/2022 19:15:04	Colleen Dabkowski		363 Mulberry Street	parent's choice
2/24/2022 19:15:32	Britt E Lynch		12 Sheldon Road	thank you for mask decision
2/24/2022 19:15:54	jennifer Couture		181 prospect st plansville	survey
2/24/2022 19:16:41	tyler young		berkeley ave	masks
2/24/2022 19:17:22	Jayne Krisak		21 Candewood In	gratitude and questions regarding new masking guidance
2/24/2022 19:18:04	Michael Kryzanski		27 Hitching Post Drive	Concern with direction of schools