

*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**

**NOVEMBER 18, 2021**

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The regular meeting of the Southington Board of Education (Committee of the Whole - Operations) was held on Thursday, November 18, 2021, at 7:00 p.m. as a public meeting in the John Weichsel Municipal Center Public Assembly Room, 200 North Main Street, Southington, Connecticut.

**Ms. Sandra Brunoli, Deputy Town Clerk, conducted the swearing in ceremony and administered the oath of affirmation to the newly elected Board members.**

#### **1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Madancy, Superintendent of Schools, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

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

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

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

#### **2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

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

Mr. Madancy called for a moment of silence in memory of the following:  
Joanne Monaco, who passed away on October 24, 2021, held secretarial positions in several Southington Public School offices from 1986 until her retirement in 1998.

Angela Orsene, who passed away on November 13, 2021, began her career at Southington High School in 1954 teaching French and was the Chair of the Foreign Language Department before retiring in 1992.

#### **3. SWEARING IN OF BOARD MEMBERS BY THE DEPUTY TOWN CLERK (See Above)**

#### 4. ELECTION OF BOARD OFFICERS

Board Chairperson:

Mr. Madancy called for nominations for the Chairperson of the Board of Education.

Mr. Chrzanowski nominated Mrs. Colleen Clark as Chairperson. There were no other nominations.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YES – Mrs. Anastasio, Mr. Baczewski, Mrs. Carmody, Mr. Carson, Mr. Chrzanowski, Mr. Derynoski, Mr. Oshana, Mr. Williams, Mrs. Clark.

**Mrs. Clark was unanimously elected Chairperson of the Board of Education.**

Vice-Chairperson:

Mrs. Clark took over the meeting and called for nominations for the Vice-Chairperson of the Board of Education.

Mrs. Anastasio nominated Mr. Joseph Baczewski as Vice-Chairperson of the Board of Education. There were no other nominations.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YES – Mrs. Anastasio, Mr. Baczewski, Mrs. Carmody, Mr. Carson, Mr. Chrzanowski, Mr. Derynoski, Mr. Oshana, Mr. Williams, Mrs. Clark.

**Mr. Baczewski was unanimously elected Vice-Chairperson of the Board of Education.**

Board Secretary:

Mrs. Clark called for nominations for the Secretary of the Board of Education.

Mr. Baczewski nominated Mrs. Dawn Anastasio as Secretary of the Board of Education. There were no other nominations.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YES – Mr. Baczewski, Mrs. Carmody, Mr. Carson, Mr. Chrzanowski, Mr. Derynoski, Mr. Oshana, Mr. Williams, Mrs. Clark, Mrs. Anastasio.

**Mrs. Anastasio was unanimously elected Secretary of the Board of Education.**

*Mrs. Clark called for a recess at 7:11 p.m.*

*Mrs. Clark reconvened the regular meeting at 7:15 p.m.*

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

**“Motion to move Agenda Item 9.b ‘Approval of Out of State / Overnight Field Trip’ to Agenda Item 5.a.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

#### 5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – October 28, 2021

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

**“Move to approve the regular Board of Education meeting minutes of October 28, 2021, as submitted.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

- a. **Approval of Out of State / Overnight Field Trip** *(formerly Agenda Item 9.b)*

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

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

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

## 6. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

- a. **Communication from Student Representatives**

Ethan Solury reported on the following:

- Ethan introduced himself to the new Board members and stated that he was a senior at SHS and President of the Class of 2022.
- SHS Robotics Team 195 Cyber Knights attended their first in-person VEX robotics competition in two years at Ridgefield High School. All five teams made the play-offs with Team D qualifying for the finals. He gave an update on the Robotics Team activities.
- Derynoski School held a town meeting with the school classrooms developing a school character for the year. All students gave their input for their character electronically. The character will be displayed in the lobby. The Derynoski School-wide Halloween celebration was held on October 29 with a picnic and students and staff dressing up in costumes. The kindergarten students enjoyed their annual parade through the school.
- Air Force Lt. Colonel, Secretary of the Air Force International Affairs, and Country Director for the Republic of Korea and Mongolia and a Southington graduate, John DeMello, presented the high school with an American flag that flew over the U.S. barracks in Afghanistan on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11.

Jhalissa Vincent reported the following:

- Jhalissa introduced herself to the new Board members and stated that she was a senior at SHS and the Class of 2022 Secretary.
- On Wednesday, November 10 the high school held their annual Veteran’s Day Concert.
- SHS Parent/Teacher Conferences were held on November 17. The middle school and elementary school Parent/Teacher conferences will be held on Monday, November 22 and Tuesday, November 23.
- The Class of 2022 held Spirit Week the week of November 15-19 with themed days and concluded with the Homecoming Dance on Friday, November 19 at the high school from 6:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m. The 300-student capacity was met within the first 48-hours of sales.
- Kelley School honored the brave men and women who serve in the military and Coast Guard with Veterans’ family members and neighbors of the school community attending a drive-thru recognition celebration. The afternoon of November 15, Kelley students and staff lined the school driveway dressed in red,

white, and blue waving an American flag with patriotic music playing to welcome the 50 cars of veterans' who drove around the school driveway. Each veteran was presented with a small gift bag.

Angelina Micacci reported on the following:

- Angelina introduced herself to the new Board members and stated that she was a junior at SHS.
- The traditional Blue Knights Thanksgiving Football game against Cheshire High School will be held at SHS Fontana Field on Thursday, November 25, at 10:00 a.m.
- She gave an update on the sports season to date. Eight SHS fall sports teams qualified for the CIAC post-season championship competition. She congratulated the Cheerleader & Dance Team for their support of athletics.
- The annual SHS Powder Puff Girls Football game will be held on Saturday, November 20, at 6:00 p.m. at Fontana Field against Rocky Hill High School.
- The Winter Sports Season starts the week after Thanksgiving with practice sessions.
- The fall sports teams and coaches thanked the Board of Education and community for their support during the 2021 season and wish everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.
- The Agricultural-Science program will be holding their annual poinsettia and wreath (handcrafted by students) sale.
- SHS Drama Club production takes place on December 3 and 4 at 7:00 p.m. directed by a junior student.

#### **b. Communications from Public**

Mrs. Clark read a statement into the record for the public. *“The Southington Board of Education offers communication from the public portion of the agenda as an opportunity for individuals to share their views regarding school operations and programs that are a concern to them. The Board listens carefully to all comments. It is important to note that communications from the public portion is not an interactive question and answer session nor is it a time to make personal complaints about any staff or employee of the Board of Education. As we now have a newly elected Board and Board Chairperson, it is important to clarify how the communications from the public portion of the meeting will be conducted. Board Bylaw 9325 provides that three (3) minutes may be allotted to each speaker. There is no provision for speakers to yield time to another speaker. Please be aware that each individual speaker will be able to comment for up to three minutes. Emails will not be read into the record but will be available to the Board members prior to the meeting and will be referenced in the minutes, when appropriate. If questions are posed by speakers, those questions may be addressed by the Chairperson or Superintendent at the discretion of the Chair during the Communications from the Board and Administration or at a later date.”* Mrs. Clark asked the residents who speak to complete a sign-in sheet with their name and address (*Attachment #1*).

There were numerous residents who came to the podium to voice their comments, opinions, recommendations, requests, complaints and concerns about the following: Congratulating new and re-elected BOE members; PTO fundraising to fill gaps in the budget; Southington lowest per pupil spending in the state; invitation to Board members to attend school PTO meetings; Thalberg School first grade Food Drive to benefit Bread for Life; SHS Citizen in

Action CCP level class and a video assignment on how white people are racist and biased making some students feel unsafe and unwanted in the classroom environment; cyberbullying on TicToc; white, non-white, and gender double-standards; Critical Race Theory (CRT); Equity, Inclusion & Social Justice Workshops at elementary level; cancel culture; diversity; mandates; masking/unmasking science and safety; late notification to parents from school about fifth-grade Social Justice and Equity lecture; developing policy for steps teachers need to take for parent notification including teachers posting online curriculum and class plans; parental control over their own children and staying involved as a parent; restricting parents from voicing their concerns; COVID mitigation strategies; outdated classroom ventilation at Flanders School, EPA study, airborne pathogens, portable HEPA Air Filtration Systems in classrooms including cost, scientific data from three gold standard sources and information on purchasing Air Filtration Systems; changing public communication rules without advance notice; COVID contact tracing in schools; requesting Board of Education (BOE) send delegate to the monthly state COVID meetings to represent parent concerns; requesting BOE to send formal communication to the Governor, Department of Public Health and State Board of Education to end masking in schools; children wearing masks diminishing breathing capacity and affecting oxygen levels; requesting special questions and answers session between BOE and parents; propose policy against zero tolerance for teaching six (6) CRT tenets; no teacher political biases taught in classrooms; request BOE vote on policy that vaccination clinics will not be allowed on school property.

Please see the YouTube video link of the meeting and public communication below that also can be found on both the Town of Southington and Southington Board of Education websites: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC59RScd50ReAqz-PnbXUSSQ/playlists>

**c. Communications from Board Members**

Mr. Baczewski reported that he attended a recent Diversity Workshop at Hatton School for fifth graders presented by Mr. Paul Vivian and Reverend Dr. Audley Donaldson and found it to be a positive experience that the students enjoyed. It was a good, wholesome, positive workshop with no shaming. He will be attending the remaining two fifth-grade workshops and the middle school program. He addressed the parents' concerns about masking and the HEPA Filtration System and thanked the parents for their input.

Mrs. Clark stated that the parents' concerns were heard and asked them to give the new Board the opportunity and time to address them and get back with answers.

**d. Communication from Administration**

Administration reported on the following:

1. CAPSS/CABE Conference: Mr. Madancy attended the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents/Connecticut Association of Board of Education's Annual Conference on Friday, November 12 in Mystic that addressed the roles and responsibilities of new Board members and relationships with their Superintendent of Schools as well as legislative updates. There will be another session for newly elected Board members and leaders to attend on December 8 in Rocky Hill.

2. Richard Santanella Memorial Scholarship: Mr. Madancy announced that the district held a Dress Down Day on November 18 to start a memorial scholarship in honor of Mr. Santanella who was the music teacher at DePaolo Middle School and recently passed away. The goal is to award a former band student, who plans to enter a career in education, a \$500 scholarship.

3. Paul Vivian and Audley Donaldson: Mr. Madancy addressed the parents' concerns regarding the Diversity Workshops that have been occurring in the district since 2017 long before it became a political issue. These workshops address how to bring people together instead of dividing people. He invited Mr. Paul Vivian and Reverend Dr. Audley Donaldson, who present these Diversity Workshops, to provide the Board and parents a summary of what is presented in the workshops.

Mr. Vivian and Rev. Dr. Donaldson gave a summary of their many years working with the district with their workshops. Mr. Vivian has lived in Southington for 40 years and had three sons graduate from the high school. He explained that he and Rev. Donaldson have been presenting their workshop throughout the state and nationally for 26 years. Their program does not spread hate, it addresses acceptance. The basic tenet that they talk about was that everyone is different with some differences visible and other differences invisible and to show acceptance of those differences. He uses himself and Rev. Donaldson as examples of being different (different races, sounding different, different likes and dislikes, from different places in the world) but friends for over 30 years despite those differences. They tell the students not to be intimidated by someone who looks or sounds different than them. They address diversity as tools to navigate the world and are not about hate or putting down white people or any other group; their workshop teaches the opposite...the acceptance of others. Their workshops do not address Critical Race Theory at all, which was not a "thing" 26 years ago when they started the workshops. In their diversity discussions they do not talk about race or making someone feel guilty or intimidated about their differences. They talk about other things giving examples of celebrating different holidays, liking different foods or music, speaking a different language, or someone with Dyslexia, who is smart and learns/reads differently, and accepting people with differences as a friend. They also discuss bullying and being an "Upstander" or a "Bystander". They provide a safe environment for students to comfortably discuss these differences.

Rev. Dr. Donaldson addressed one of the commitments that they made 26 years ago when they started the program was that they would never embed anything that leads to blaming or shaming in their workshops. Students should feel better and valued when they leave the workshop, not worse or provoked. Rev. Dr. Donaldson noted that they were not attending the Board meeting to discuss their program due to an incident-based problem, but because they were invited by the Superintendent who was a visionary and had the Southington children at heart. The bottom line is there are three basic principles that they are talking about: 1) everyone should listen more to each other; 2) everyone should observe and see because everything is not always the way it appears; and 3) everyone should ask questions of each other.

Mr. Carson stated that he works at Yale and asked Mr. Vivian to share his view on equity, which is a sticking point with people. Mr. Vivian stated that the word "equity" was something that they do not talk about with fifth-grade students, and it is not a part of their lexicon. Their workshops are about the basic differences people can see and cannot see. His personal feeling about equity was that everyone should have equal availabilities and opportunities. Not outcomes – opportunities.

4. Elementary Facilities Project Update: Mr. Madancy stated that now with a newly elected Board and the assignment of committees, the Elementary Facilities Project Committee could reconvene again. There was a setback when the state official, who oversaw the Office of Construction, resigned due to conflict with Governor Lamont. Two weeks prior to resigning, the state official was supposed to come to Southington to sign-off on the remaining three facilities

that needed to be renovated-to-new or built as new construction. This has set the project timeline back to get a commitment from the state in order to move forward.

**7. SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT**

**a. Personnel Report**

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

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

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

**8. OLD BUSINESS**

**a. Town Government Communications**

Mrs. Clark recognized the re-elected Town Council Chair, Reverend Vicky Triano, and Christopher Palmieri from the Town Council who were in the audience. Rev. Triano came to the podium and stated that the Committee of the Chairs would be reinstated next month because it was imperative that they keep communication open between all the Town Boards for transparency especially with the new budget discussions coming up starting in January.

Mrs. Clark announced that the Board members were invited to a Town Board of Finance meeting on December 8, 2021, in Town Hall at 7:00 p.m. to discuss the 2022-2023 school year budget and the process. Mr. Madancy will confirm the location.

**9. NEW BUSINESS**

**a. Capital Improvement Plan 2022-23 to 2026-27 – First Reading**

Mr. Madancy explained that this was a first read and would be brought before the Board at their next regular meeting on December 9, 2021. He instructed the Board members to call him or Mrs. Mellitt, Director of Business & Finance, if they had any questions regarding the process or regarding items within the plan. If a Board member has a question, it is shared with all the Board members for the flow of communication.

**b. Approval of Out of State/Overnight Field Trip *(Moved to Agenda Item 5.a)***

**10. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

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

**“Move to recess into Executive Session, excluding the public and the press, for the purpose of discussing Student Matters, and upon conclusion reconvene to public session.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

*The Board convened to Executive Session at 8:43 p.m.*

*The Board reconvened to Regular Session at 9:01 p.m.*

**11. ADJOURNMENT**

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

**“Move to adjourn.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
*Linda Blanchard*  
Recording Secretary

**ATTACHMENT #1 – PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS - SPEAKERS**

Southington Board of Education  
PUBLIC COMMUNICATION  
 November 18, 2021

	NAME	ADDRESS	TOPIC
1	Katrenkide	39 Madelyn Ln	Funding
2	Patricia Pinchhorn	37 Wyndcrest Ct	Food Drive
3	JJ Ross	910 Prospect Street	CR
4	Patricia Family	99 Westbrook Rd.	CR
5	Steven Bujshka	191 Queen Street	CR
6	Skylar Pinchhorn	37 Wyndcrest	Masks
7	Tyler Yane	48 Bondy Ave	Mandates
8	Todd Pearce	210 Chestnutwood Terrace	Masks
9	Jennifer Coakere	181 Prospect St	Todd's <sup>Continued</sup> Speech masks
10	Kristin Ritchie	Chestnutwood Tr	Masks
11	Thomas & Laura	99 West Hill	Happy Air
12	Michael Kozanski	27 Hitching Post Drive	CR Diversity Workshop
13	Jayne Misak	21 Chestnutwood Ln	Masks
14	Susan Zabehorski	28 Working St	Parent Advocate
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