

*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**

**DECEMBER 9, 2021**

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The regular meeting of the Southington Board of Education (Committee of the Whole - Operations) was held on Thursday, December 9, 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 with an Executive Session preceding at 6:30 p.m.

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

Mrs. Colleen Clark, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m.

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

Cabinet administrators present were Mr. Steven Madancy, Superintendent of Schools, and Mr. Frank Pepe, Assistant Superintendent.

#### **2. EXECUTIVE SESSION – STUDENT MATTERS**

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

**“Move to go 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.**

*Mrs. Carmody ended Executive Session at 6:39 p.m.*

*The Regular Board Meeting was reconvened at 7:00 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 Chrzanowski, Mrs. Colleen Clark, Mr. David Derynoski, and Mr. Jasper Williams. Absent was Mr. Zaya Oshana.

Cabinet administrators present were Mr. Steven Madancy, Superintendent of Schools; Mr. Frank Pepe, Assistant Superintendent; 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 the following:

- Paul Baillargeon who passed away on November 20, 2021. Mr. Baillargeon was the Principal at Thalberg Elementary School from 1967 until his retirement in 1996.
- Daniel Murawski who passed away on November 24, 2021. Mr. Murawski was a former Southington High School history teacher, boys' soccer coach and girls' tennis coach from 1969 until his retirement in 2007.

**5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – NOVEMBER 18, 2021**

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

**“Move to approve the Regular Board of Education minutes of November 18, 2021, as submitted.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

**6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – NOVEMBER 20, 2021**

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

**“Move to approve the Special Board of Education minutes of November 20, 2021, as submitted.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

**7. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS**

**a. Communications from Student Board Representatives**

Angelina Micacci reported on the following:

- SHS Drama Club performed their last show of The Last Gasp. The auditions for the spring musical The Little Mermaid will take place on Monday with the show taking place on March 4 and 5, 2021.
- The Winter Concerts for the band ensemble, orchestra, and concert choir take place December 16 and 20, 2021.
- South End School celebrated their November Charter Champions. Students are nominated by their peers for best living their classroom charter. South End participated in a Food Drive and Hat/Mitten Drive to help support Southington Community Services.

Ethan Solury reported on the following:

- At the Monday, December 6, SHS Key Club meeting the American Legion visited the Key Club to honor them for helping the American Legion at the Apple Harvest Festival in October. On Tuesday, they helped decorate the hallways for the holidays.
- The Key Club inducted the new members for the 2021-2022 school year the evening of Tuesday, December 7.
- The American Legion honored the SHS Band for their Veteran's Day Concert on Tuesday, December 7. The SHS Band is preparing for their Holiday Ensemble where they will continue the tradition of marching through the hallways playing Christmas music on the days leading up to Christmas break.
- Over the course of the last few weeks there was a lot of misinformation because of the current world events that are having an effect on students nationwide. When threats affect schools in nearby towns such as Farmington, it begins to hit too close to home. Students discussed with Mr. Michael Crocco, Principal of SHS, ways to improve communication. Mr. Crocco addressed everything that goes into investigating threats and handling school discipline. It was a productive conversation, and the students appreciated the difficult work administrators have. He noted that Mr. Crocco was very visible in the school, his door is always open for students, and that he is responsive and receptive to feedback.

Jhalissa Vincent reported on the following:

- The SHS fall athletic season ended with the Blue Knights Football team defeating Cheshire High School 17-10 to win the Apple Valley Classic Trophy Award and annual Thanksgiving Day game. The team qualified for the CIAC Class LL playoffs playing New Canaan High School in the state quarterfinals and lost to Rham.
- SHS winter sports competitions start Tuesday, December 14. She reported the on the first competition dates for Girls Basketball, Wrestling, and Boys Basketball.
- On December 8, Kennedy Middle School PTO sponsored their first entertainment assembly in years "Virtual Music Technology with Brett Daniels". Students got a virtual look into a recording studio and interacted with Brett.
- Kennedy Middle School was in the process of purchasing flags of 17 nations to be displayed in the front lobby. The flags represent some of the nations where current students were born.
- DePaolo Middle School music students will be performing holiday winter concerts prior to the winter break. The Orchestra Concert is Monday, December 13, Chorus Concert on Thursday, December 16, and the Band Concert on Tuesday, December 21.
- Students in the Leadership Program at DePaolo volunteered their time last week to do bell ringing for the Salvation Army at Southington Walmart and raised over \$850.

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

There were a number of residents (*Attachment #1*) who came to the podium to voice their comments, opinions, recommendations, requests, complaints, and concerns regarding the following: mask mandates, history full of bad laws, Board members pushing back against mask mandates, ventilation in classrooms, Critical Race Theory (CRT), policy that CRT is not allowed to be taught in Southington, student mental health crisis, uploading curriculum online,

implementing a policy to require 72-hours' notice to be given to parents before school sanctioned events, policy on reciprocal student punishment, not BOE job to mold student morals, gender identity, or political affiliations but to "stay in your lane" and teach reading, writing and arithmetic to improve test scores, Covid rules and mask mandates that students are forced to comply with that cause mental health issues, student choice to wear mask, COVID strategies and quarantining, thanking Mr. Madancy for allowing elementary students to spend more time outdoors, 40 adverse conditions due to long-term mask wearing, denial of mask exemptions, request that BOE take action on ventilation, send formal letter to Governor Lamont, DPH and State Dept. of Education requesting local Board of Education control school district's policies, asking BOE members to attend DPH and State BOE virtual Health & Safety meetings on Tuesdays from 8am-9am, Superintendent or Board provide a monthly summary at the BOE meeting of the COVID-related mitigation inquiries raised and received from the DPH and State, outdated HVAC ventilation systems, ventilated indoor air quality improves performance, other states purchasing portable HEPA Air Filtration Systems for their classrooms, BOE members speaking to all Southington residents and not just parents, all sub-committee meetings held in person and not virtually, BOE and administration reached out to student who spoke about how he was made to feel in a classroom that addressed diversity, social justice, and equity and student satisfied how it was being investigated, only nine (9) states have mask mandates in place for students and 27 states do not have mask mandates in place in their school systems, push back at the state level to have Connecticut not be part of the National Education Association (NEA), no longer yielding public speakers time and having time for speakers increased from three minutes to five minutes, not having vaccine clinics in schools.

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/>

**c. Communications from Board Members**

Mr. Baczewski thanked the Southington residents for speaking and voicing their concerns that the Board will work on to remedy. He agreed with parents concerns on air ventilation and was willing to spearhead looking into re-usable machines depending on the costs. He addressed mask mandates and social justice in response to the public communication.

Mr. Chrzanowski congratulated the SHS Blue Knights Football Team for beating Cheshire High School at the annual Thanksgiving football game.

Mrs. Clark attended a CAFE Conference on Wednesday, December 8 and had a folder containing the highlights of what was discussed for any Board member who would like to peruse it. Discussed was the role of the Board of Education, effective Board meetings, the state of public education in Connecticut, Board leadership in these times including the role and responsibilities of the Board and the Superintendent. Her take away from the conference was about building relationships within the community and within the state to get things done and for the Board to "stay in their lane". The Board does policies, and the Superintendent does the regulations.

**d. Communications from Administration**

Administration reported on the following:

1. STEPS, Youth Development Award: Mr. Madancy announced that the YMCA is recognizing the STEPS Program and Asset Building Classroom (ABC) for the Youth Development Award this year, which will be presented at the annual YMCA Awards Celebration in February. It is bestowed upon an individual or group who has worked to nurture the potential of youth in their teens in the Southington community. The Asset Building Classroom is being awarded for helping to instill 40 developmental assets in children and teens in Southington. Southington's Asset Building Classroom is a model program used across the state.

2. Connectivity Fund Grant: Mr. Madancy announced that the district received this optional grant that Tyler Savage, Technology Network Manager, worked on to procure \$710,000 in grant money to replace 2,000 Chromebooks and a savings on 310 MacBooks. This puts the device renewal and replacement plan on track for 1:1 instruction.

3. Lisa Inc. Program at Karen Smith Academy: Mr. Madancy attended a program at the Karen Smith Academy offered by Lisa Inc. for seniors through a grant received from the Main Street Foundation. The program was for seniors who participated in workshops focused on improving their communication and employment skills for interviews.

4. Health Department Child Vaccine Clinic: Mr. Madancy announced that the town plans to offer a child vaccine clinic hosted by the Regional Plainville-Southington Health Department at the Calendar House on a Saturday in January 2022. Vaccine clinics will not be in held in the schools.

5. Town Board of Finance: Mr. Madancy, Mrs. Mellitt and some Board members attended the Town Board of Finance meeting on Wednesday, December 8, to discuss goals for this budget season and looking three years out given the potential for a fiscal cliff and the understanding that the grant funds will end. It was a strong and collaborative start with the Board of Finance.

## **8. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **a. Policy & Personnel Committee Meeting – December 6, 2021**

Mr. Williams, Policy & Personnel Committee Chair, reported that the committee discussed Policy 9325-Methods of Operations, which contains revisions. The committee discussed Robert's Rules of Order, meeting conduct, increasing public input time from three to five minutes that could be modified by the chairperson, previous sign-in process for public speaking, and a revision which codifies that a member of the public should be a Southington resident to participate during public comment.

Mrs. Clark stated that the current sign-in sheet has the name, address, and topic for public speakers to complete during Public Communication. Mr. Derynoski stated that in year's past, there was a bound, sign-in book that Southington residents, who wanted to speak during Public Communications, signed as they entered the meeting, and the book would then be handed to the Board Chairperson who would call the names (in the order that they signed) for people to come up to speak at the podium. Anyone who came in late was asked if they wished to speak. It would give the chair the option to adjust the three or five-minute time limit depending on the number of speakers. Mr. Baczewski questioned about an out-of-town student attending Southington schools, such as a Hartford Choice student or Agriculture-Science student, and if the parent would be able to speak at a BOE meeting. It was agreed that the language would be codified for the second reading to include any Southington resident and parent of any student enrolled in the Southington Public Schools could speak at the BOE meeting.

### **b. Finance Committee Meeting – December 2, 2021**

**1. Bid Award #2022-06, Varsity Softball Field Improvements**

Mr. Chrzanowski, Finance Committee Chair, reported that the committee discussed a bid award for various improvements on the varsity softball field at the high school. He reported on the scope of the project and there were two bids. The committee recommended that the lowest bidder, US Pitchcare, be awarded the bid in the amount of \$179,200.

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

**“Move to award Bid #2022-06 for Varsity Softball Improvements to US Pitchcare, as presented.**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

**2. Bid Award #2022-113, Varsity Baseball Field Improvements**

Mr. Chrzanowski reported that the committee discussed a bid award for various improvements on the varsity baseball field at the high school. He reported on the scope of the project with two bids received and that the committee recommends that the lowest bidder, US Pitchcare of Northford, Connecticut, be awarded the bid. The bid was for \$17,900.

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

**“Move to award Bid #2022-113, for Varsity Baseball Improvements to U.S. Pitchcare, as presented.**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

**3. Transfer of Funds**

Mr. Chrzanowski stated that the Transfer of funds was an accounting adjustment.

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

**“Move to approve the Transfer of Funds from the High School Library Account to the School-based Software Account, as presented.**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

**9. 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.**

**10. OLD BUSINESS**

**a. Town Government Communications**

Mrs. Clark reported that she, Mr. Williams, and Mr. Chrzanowski attended the Town Board of Finance meeting on December 8, 2021 in Town Hall to discuss the 2022-2023 school year budget process and praised Mrs. Mellitt and Mr. Madancy for their work. She was encouraged after hearing Mr. John Leary of the Town Board of Finance comments. Mrs. Clark noted that Reverend Vicky Triano, Town Council Chair, will be implementing the “Committee of the Chairs” again with the meeting date to be announced.

**b. Capital Improvement Plan 2022-2023 to 2026-2027 – Second Reading**

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

**“Move to approve the Capital Improvement Plan, as presented.**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

**11. NEW BUSINESS****a. Proposed 2022-2023 School Calendar – First Reading**

Mr. Derynoski questioned if the calendar would be sent to the school PTOs for comment as in the past. Mr. Madancy explained that after he receives any questions/comments from the Board the proposed calendar would be sent to the schools. Mrs. Clark stated that she liked the new change and color coding to the layout of the calendar and that it included the schools, addresses, administrators, telephone numbers and hours all on one page. Mr. Madancy credited his Executive Assistant, Mrs. Colegrove, for the more user-friendly format.

**b. Superintendent’s Annual Report 2020-2021**

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

**“Move to approve the Superintendent’s 2020-2021 Annual Report, as presented.”**

Mrs. Carmody was proud of all the things the school system had accomplished in 2020-2021 and asked that the Annual Report be made public. Mr. Madancy explained that it was a requirement of the Town Charter. Mrs. Carmody pointed out to the public that the ELA/Social Studies report included a new unit of study in social studies for grade 5 called, “Reading in the Content Areas: How Key Events Shape Nations” with a focus on the Civil Rights Movement and the continuing fight for equality. The unit explores the struggle for freedom, equality, and social justice by studying the Civil Rights Movement. She thought that when history is taught it needed to be inclusive of what happened in the past. Mrs. Clark thanked all the administrators for their work on this excellent report.

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

**c. Policy 9325 – Methods of Operation – Meeting Conduct – First Reading**

Mrs. Clark asked that if Board members had any questions regarding this policy to contact Mr. Williams. Mr. Williams stated that the committee would make the recommended changes that were discussed earlier in the meeting.

**d. SHS – GPA and Weighting Proposal – First Reading**

Mr. Pepe explained that this presentation was given to the Curriculum & Instruction Committee in October with the request that it be presented to the full Board. He introduced the presenters Ms. Jennifer Discenza, SHS Director of School Counseling, Ms. Ana Napolitano and Ms. Beth Viens, School Counselors, with Ms. Viens joining the presentation virtually. The presentation was on Grade Point Average (GPA) and Academic Levels at Southington High School. The presentation included a history of the SHS current GPA system, which in 2010 was changed, after a visit from NEASC, from four levels to the current three levels: 1) College and Career Preparatory-CP, weighted at 1.0; 2) Competitive College Preparatory-CCP, weighted at 1.10; and 3) Honors and Advanced Placement both weighted at 1.20. NEASC visited in 2020 and recommended changing the leveling practices and GPA weighting system.

The school counselors gave a lengthy and detailed presentation that included the following:

- The SHS Class of 2021 had a high GPA Range with 89% of SHS students having a GPA of a “B” or above, which can lead to students not understanding that their GPA (after recalculation by colleges/universities) may be lower than what is on their transcript, especially for students who take mostly CCP courses.
- The SHS counseling staff has had numerous conversations with college representatives over Southington’s top heavy GPA range with most colleges recalculating Southington’s GPA System during the application process.
- The Class of 2020 GPA Range with 87% of SHS students having a GPA of a “B” or above, which had resulted in negative feedback from students and parents when colleges recalculated.
- The challenges of the current GPA System including realigning with colleges and students missing out on Merit Scholarships.
- Post-secondary data of 2020 students’ top choice of colleges/universities.
- Couple of years ago, class rank had been removed from the official student transcript; however, it is tracked internally at the high school. Colleges are looking at students holistically and not by a number due to different school size/senior classes depending on the school district.
- Area high schools in Southington’s DRG (District Reference Group) were researched on how they calculated their GPA, which resulted in moving away from Southington’s current 100+ and moving to a weighted 4.0 system.
- Recommendations to revise the GPA System for 2022-2023, renaming all the levels for 2022-2023 and phased collapse of levels until 2023-2024 for Southington students to have a fair admissions process.
- The school counselors proposed three different levels that would be weighted differently: 1) Academic Level (Actual grade); Accelerated Level (add .50 to GPA conversion); and College Level/Credit Courses (add 1.0 to GPA conversion). These would align with many college/university recalculation guidelines.
- Ms. Viens explained the proposed new grading system of converting the numerical grade to an alphabetical grade and the new leveling, which is similar to what the



- colleges use to calculate GPA and would be a more accurate representation of what they could expect regarding college admission and scholarships.
- Significant changes would be made to CCP level courses.

Mr. Carson questioned if there was a standard recalculation formula used by colleges for a baseline or if each college admissions office used their own formula. The school counselors replied that colleges use their own formula, but they are all very similar, and Southington was trying to align with what would be most beneficial for students. Mr. Carson questioned if UConn or an Ivy League college was the baseline that Southington was trying to align with for recalculation. The school counselors tried to align to the top 10 colleges that Southington students have applied to and were accepted, which included UConn. Mr. Carson questioned how it would affect the top tier and bottom tier students and was concerned how changing the GPA profile would better position Southington students to get into better institutions. Mr. Carson questioned how colleges look at Advanced Placement (AP) courses versus Honors courses and why they are ranked the same. Ms. Discenza stated that they are currently ranked the same and that the proposal is to change and rank them separately.

Mrs. Clark gave an example of her eldest son applying to five different colleges, being accepted at all five colleges with all five colleges changing his GPA and looking at him differently.

Mrs. Carmody added that she received phone calls from parents who could not believe the recent large number of students on the honor roll in grades 9-12 that were listed in the newspaper. She asked if the proposed changes would affect this. Mr. Madancy pointed out that this phenomenon started with the opening of the Parent Portal in PowerSchool when families log on every time a grade was posted and emailed the teacher that they were not meeting their child's needs and constantly attacking the teacher resulting in grade inflation due to pushback, which is a national trend and not unique to Southington. Everyone receives a trophy mindset. Mr. Carson questioned if there was one or two model school districts in the state who have researched the data and statistics that show their model to be successful on going to the next level of colleges/universities compared to Southington. Mr. Madancy stated that colleges/universities were looking at many factors besides Grade Point Average (GPA) such as well-roundedness, extra-curricular, civic service, and SAT scores, etc.

Mr. Derynoski thought that this change was long overdue and would be a culture shock to many parents and students. Mr. Pepe added that this proposal was a first read and that if anyone had any further questions to contact him. This agenda item would eventually be going back to Policy & Personnel Committee to develop a policy on grading and weighting. The Board thanked the counselors for all their hard work.

**e. Appointment of UPSEU Negotiating Committee**

Mrs. Clark requested that if any Board members were interested in volunteering to serve on the UPSEU Paraprofessional / ABA Therapists Union Negotiating Committee to contact her. Mr. Madancy stated that administration would provide the Board members with the dates and times for the start of negotiations.

**f. Resolution for Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS)**

Mr. Madancy explained that the school district received a grant in the spring with Mrs. Christina Simms, former Youth Services Director, as the signatory. This resolution would transfer the signing to Mrs. Megan Albanese who oversees the STEPS grant, and that this was just a procedural motion.

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

**“Move to approve the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services Resolution, as presented.**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

## **12. ADJOURNMENT**

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

**“Move to adjourn.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Linda Blanchard*

Recording Secretary

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

Southington Board of Education <b><u>PUBLIC COMMUNICATION</u></b> December 9, 2021			
	NAME	ADDRESS	TOPIC
1	Britt Lynch	12 Sheldon Rd.	mask mandates
2	Steven Baleski	191 Queen Street	(R)
3	Tyler Yang	48 Berkeley Ave	CRT/mask
4	Valerie Ragucci	102 West St	Mental Health crisis
5	Michael Krzanski	27 Fitching Blvd	in our children
6	Kate Ritchie	Cheswood Ter	mask
7	Todd Ritchie	Cheswood Terrace	no ventilator
8	Colleen Dabkowski	303 Mulberry St	_____
9	Susan Dabkowski	working ST	Various
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