

*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**

**JUNE 10, 2021**

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The regular meeting of the Southington Board of Education was held on Thursday, June 10, 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.

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

Mrs. Terri Carmody, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 7:00 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, and Mr. Zaya Oshana (*virtually remote*). Absent was Mr. David Falvo.

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

Student representatives present were Miss Jhalissa Vincent, Miss Amrit Kaur, and Mr. Brett Sheldrick.

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

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

Mrs. Carmody announced that Mr. Oshana was away on a business trip and was joining the meeting remotely.

#### **3. CELEBRATION OF EXCELLENCE**

##### **a. Class of 2021 Valedictorian, Salutatorian and Essayist**

Mr. Frank Pepe, Southington High School Principal, introduced the top three students of the Class of 2021 and spoke briefly on each student. The Board of Education members recognized and celebrated Gabriel LeBlanc, Valedictorian; Kevin Le, Salutatorian, and Matthew Luponio, Essayist for the Class of 2021. The students were presented with a plaque. The profiles on these three students are attached (*Attachment #1*).

##### **b. SHS Scholar Athletes**

Mr. Steve Risser, Athletic Director, congratulated the SHS Girls Softball team who have advanced to the State Championship game of the CIAC Class LL tournament against Fairfield Ludlow High School on Saturday, June 12 at 3:00 p.m. at West Haven High School. They are playing for the 19<sup>th</sup> Championship in the history of SHS. Mr. Risser also congratulated the Girls Track Team who finished fourth in the state overall at the State Open in New Britain.

Mr. Risser and the Board of Education members recognized and celebrated seniors Kevin Le and Diane Pillsbury as the Southington High School CAS/CIAC Scholar Athletes for the 2020-2021 school year who epitomize the successful combination of excellence in academics combined with athletics. Both Student Athletes are team members of the Cross-Country Team and Indoor and Outdoor Track teams (three-sport athletes).

**c. Board Student Representatives**

Miss Jhalissa Vincent thanked graduating seniors and Board Student Representatives, Brett Sheldrick and Amrit Kaur, for being the best role models and for having the opportunity to work with both. She thought that they were destined for great things in the future. The Board of Education members recognized and celebrated Board of Education Student Representatives Brett Sheldrick and Amrit Kaur and spoke highly of them and their contributions serving on the Board.

Miss Vincent announced that the two new Board of Education Student Representatives for the 2021-2022 school year were Angelina Micacci (current sophomore) and Ethan Solury (current junior) who briefly introduced themselves.

**d. Southington Public Schools Nursing Staff**

Mr. Connellan stated that the 2020-2021 school year was very challenging for everyone due to the pandemic and that all school employees were important to the success of the school year. However, he wanted to acknowledge the Southington Public School Nurses for their exemplary job this year in the face of difficult circumstances to keep students and staff members safe. Mrs. Cathy O'Hara, Nurse Supervisor, was unable to attend tonight but was very instrumental with the contact tracing. The Board of Education members recognized and celebrated the Southington Public School Nurses who were amazing during the COVID-19 pandemic (*Attachment #2*).

Mrs. Carmody and the Board members recognized Mr. Timothy Connellan, Superintendent of Schools, who is retiring June 30 after seven years as Southington Superintendent with this being his last Board of Education meeting. Mrs. Carmody spoke highly of Mr. Connellan and that he always put the best interest of children first. Mrs. Terri Connellan was in the audience and was asked to join her husband at the podium at which time the Board members presented them both a gift of a decorative house sign for the home that they were building on Pine River Pond depicting a firepit with two Adirondack chairs in a forest with their name on the sign. All the Board members (*including Mr. Oshana, remotely*) wished them well and thanked Mr. Connellan for his leadership and all he had done for the school district. Mr. Connellan thanked the administrative leadership team and staff who all play a valuable role in ensuring success of the students including bus drivers and crossing guards. He thanked Mr. Steve Madancy and Mr. Frank Pepe whom he thought will make a wonderful team as Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent, respectively, and wished them much success.

*Mrs. Carmody called for a short recess to congratulate all the recipients of the Celebration of Excellence at 7:33 p.m.*

*Mrs. Carmody reconvened the regular meeting at 7:43 p.m.*

**4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – May 27, 2021**

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

**“Move to approve the regular Board of Education meeting minutes of May 27, 2021, as submitted.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

**5. PUBLIC COMMUNICATION**

**a. Communications from Public**

Valerie Ragucci, 102 West Street, claimed that she was representing other parents that were concerned about a sensitive subject that some teachers of grades 6 & 7 students at Kennedy Middle School and grade 9 social studies classes at Southington High School are taking upon themselves to show unapproved YouTube LBGTQ+ videos addressing sexuality without parental consent during June Pride month in town. She claimed that despite a letter that parents received from the Superintendent, and the Record-Journal newspaper citing that it was a one-time isolated issue, she knew that it was untrue after speaking to others in the school district. She noted that Mr. Madancy told her that discussing LBGTQ+ sexuality was not part of the town Board of Education approved curriculum. She spoke at length about the subject. She asked the Southington Board of Education to support the removal of all LBGTQ+ material from schools immediately.

Alexandra Gizhitsa-Anderson, 659 Prospect Street, addressed that she is the parent of two children in the school district and a taxpayer. She understood that the school district was the recipient of a one-time COVID Relief Fund from the federal government amounting to a few million dollars. Because it was a one-time sum, most Financial Advisors would not allow these funds to be used for ongoing and recurring operational expenses such as salaries. Utilizing these funds for operational expenses would set-up all Southington taxpayers for a massive fiscal cliff two years down the line. She wanted to understand what these funds would be used for and confirm that they are not going to be spent on operational expenses, which would trigger a massive tax hike in the future.

Tom Galvin, 40 Richmond Court, addressed celebrations of any kind of special group like Gay Pride or LBGTQ or anything based on race had no place in the public schools.

Michael Kryzanski, 27 Hitching Post Drive, thanked everyone on the Board and the school district for how they handled COVID and thought that they were doing a great job. He was a big proponent of wanting his children in-school, not learning virtually. He was very happy how it was handled in Southington. He was very happy with the school system overall and had five children go through the school system. He addressed the mask mandate for children attending Southington Public Schools. He understood that Governor Lamont’s emergency powers end in July and hoped that children wearing masks will change.

Susan Zabohonski, 28 Werking Street, objected to any kind of sexuality being promoted in the school district. She understood by the Superintendent’s email that this was supposed to be an isolated situation and would be handled as a personnel matter. She thought that the public needed

to know how this was going to be handled with the two teachers who put this into a curriculum when they were not supposed to. She would like to see action taken against these two teachers and understand the consequences of teaching curriculum that is outside of approved curriculum. She hoped to get a response and to know how it would be handled in the future by the Board of Education members who supervise the Superintendent and how he handles things in the school system. She also addressed masks in the school district and the Governor's mandate. She wanted to make the public aware that the Governor's mandate did not regulate school systems. Letter F of the current mandate, which was issued by the Governor on May 20<sup>th</sup> states, *"Nothing in this order shall limit the authority of the Commissioner of Education or the Commissioner of Early Childhood to issue operational rules including, but not limited to, masks or face covering requirements."* She thought that the Board of Education should be putting pressure on the Commissioner of Education for children to not have to wear masks.

Effie Moltojan, 53 Rustic Oak Drive, stated that she heard about and watched the video in question and that she was fine with it. She likes seeing the kids being supported and did not think that sexuality was being promoted. She thought that the video was promoting that all children should be accepted and supported no matter how they identify.

Zbig Prusak, 79 Hitching Post Drive, addressed the mask mandate. He thanked the school administration and Board of Education for a very level-headed approach to education through the whole year during COVID. The students in Southington had the opportunity to attend classes. He addressed planning for the next school year and wanted to see the students free of wearing masks.

Brian Goralski, 80 Buckland Street, stated that he was a former colleague of many of the Board members. He was happy to see the Chair of the Town Council, Victoria Triano, in the audience. He was in attendance for the celebration of Mr. Connellan, whom he called his friend. When he served as Chair of the Board of Education, he had the habit of addressing things that were said in public communication. He addressed the comment made by Ms. Anderson about COVID funding. He noted that the fiscal cliff was due to the Town Council members reducing funding and directing the Board of Education to use the COVID funds and that the Board members had no choice but to use the funding and create exactly what Ms. Anderson said, "trigger a massive tax hike in the future". He thought that growing communication was the key to success in government. He challenged the Board of Education to avoid fiscal cliffs by bringing communication back to government for the next budget. Mr. Goralski trusted the school district leadership to address the videos and curriculum of the schools to make sure all teachers are consistent. He gave credit to the parents who took the time to speak tonight.

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

- Mr. Derynoski wished graduating student representatives Brett Sheldrick and Amrit Kaur well in their college careers. He noted that this was the 24<sup>th</sup> year that the Board had student representatives on the Board and this student team was the best and had grown since they first started. He looked forward to them returning and attending a future Board meeting to give an update on their endeavors.
- Mr. Brown congratulated all the students and nurses who were recognized. Mr. Brown announced that the Southington Coalition for Social Justice was holding an event sponsored by the Southington Community Cultural Arts Center (SoCCA) on Wednesday, June 16, 2021, at 5:30 p.m. at the SoCCA. An organization called, Rise Up for the Arts, proposed to partner with 38 Connecticut towns to create a large-scale mural for each year of the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. They will be holding a public discussion asking for input about what this should look like. The public can attend in-person or virtually and would need to sign-up on the SoCCA website.

- Mr. Baczewski congratulated the student representatives and thanked the community for their input tonight and sharing their thoughts on doing what is right for the students. He is a product of the school system and invested in it with two children in elementary school in Southington. He would be happy to help in any way regarding addressing the curriculum and making sure it is consistent across the board.
- Mrs. Cipriano thanked parents and the community for coming to the Board meeting to speak. She agreed that it was in the best interest of the school system, community, students, and parents that they all work together. She noted how important the parent communication was to the Board and wanted the parents to trust that the Board has the best interests in mind for the students. As a Southington Townwide Effort to Promote Success (STEPS) representative for the Board of Education, she reported that STEPS was culminating their year with a party at Camp Sloper tonight. Under the leadership of Megan Albanese, Youth Prevention Coordinator, the Youth Council continued to meet through the pandemic and set goals for themselves and how to deal with ASSETS within the schools. STEPS was grateful for Youth Council member, Mary Miller, who will receive the YMCA Youth Leadership Award this year. The fourth and fifth grade classrooms received presentations on vaping prevention from STEPS.
- Mrs. Cipriano reported that during the pandemic the school district made sure that no student was without breakfast or lunch, prepared bag meals, and rearranged schedules so parents could pick-up the meals at DePaolo Middle School and Derynoski Elementary School to ensure that hunger was not an issue during these hard times. When the school year ends, Southington Bread for Life will continue doing the Summer Lunch Feeding Program for the families in need with a pick-up starting June 21 at DePaolo Middle School and at Summerbrook apartments three times a week to supply lunches. She noted that Bread for Life was always opened to serve meals to the families in need.
- Mrs. Cipriano addressed the Community Garden at Bread for Life and that the school district's special education STELLAR Program students came out for three hours to plant a pollinated garden on a very hot day. When digging the garden, the students found a naturally created heart-shaped rock and created a larger heart-shaped rock around it because they believed the love of Southington was for them.
- Mrs. Cipriano reported that the Bread for Life pollinated garden has three functional beehives that are an enterprise that Southington students were involved in as a marketing, Ag-Science, and a community-building project. A student from the Karen Smith Academy works tirelessly every Wednesday on the beehives wearing a bee suit. The Southington Honey Company will be in stores soon with student involvement in this enterprise.
- Mr. Oshana (remotely) announced that the live feed of the meeting was not working and hoped that the recording was working. He noted that the live feed went down after Public Communications. He addressed the funding cliff that was mentioned during the meeting and reiterated that if the Board has to use grant funds to pay for operating expenses then when those grant funds go away, those items will still need to be funded from operating budget funds that may, or may not be available, which is the fiscal cliff that people keep talking about. *At this point, the remote feed with Mr. Oshana was lost.*

**c. Communication from Administration**

Administration reported on the following:

1. UNICO Top 25 Dinner: Mr. Connellan thanked UNICO for their support and partnership every year and hosting the Southington High School's Top 25 students at a dinner held at Aqua Turf Club this year.

2. Summer School Update: Mr. Madancy announced that currently there are over 300 students who will be attending Summer School from July 6 to July 26. They will be using the air-conditioned DePaolo Middle School for Grades 3, 4 and 5 and Kennedy Middle School and the high school for the secondary students' combination of programming. For the K-Grade 2 students, air-conditioned spaces at Hatton Elementary School will be used. The Governor's Executive Order is in effect through July 20, so students will be asked to wear masks during the summer programming in air-conditioned spaces.

3. Return to In-person Learning Plan: Mr. Madancy explained at some point there will be an opportunity for public input as they progress and receive updated information from the state and the Department of Public Health. The plan, as part of the ESSER III requirement, is to have a Plan posted publicly by June 23. Southington is not finalized on the mask wearing because they do not know what that would look like for students aged 12 and under based on the vaccine schedules. Right now, masks would be optional unless otherwise directed to do so by the Governor, Commissioner of Education, Department of Public Health and Center for Disease Control (CDC). He stated that what would be posted on the website on June 23 would be an iteration of what it would look like in the fall and subject to change throughout the course of the summer.

4. Bread for Life – Summer Meal Option: Mrs. DiNello followed-up on the comments made by Mrs. Cipriano regarding the upcoming Bread for Life Summer Program. She wanted the community to know that the Grab 'N' Go program that the school district has currently been running for remote meals was going to end after the last two days June 14 and 16 next week. Monday and Wednesday will continue to have the remote Grab 'N' Go at DePaolo Middle School that has been done throughout the year. However, they will be transitioning with Bread for Life picking it up offering it three days a week at DePaolo on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m. There are hundreds of students attending Summer School and the times were aligned so parents could get in through DePaolo. Bread for Life and Summerbrook apartments will also have the lunch program. She thanked Bread for Life for picking up feeding children over the summer for the school district.

**d. Communication from Student Representatives**

Miss Jhalissa Vincent reported on the following:

- She congratulated the award winners, new student representatives and Mr. Connellan.
- In May, the SHS Mental Health Club raised \$125 through bracelet sales for the Institute of Living in Hartford. The club has been brainstorming for activities for the next school year including having guest speakers.

Miss Amrit Kaur reported on the following:

- Senior Prom was held last week at Lake Compounce.
- The Senior Motorcade is Tuesday, June 15 following the same route as last year.
- Graduation is Friday, June 18 on the SHS football field.

- Mr. Pepe will be giving his last Public Service Announcement (PSA) with details about all the end of year events.

Senior Student Representatives, Amrit Kaur and Brett Sheldrick, thanked the Board members for the opportunity to serve on the Board and appreciated experiencing how the school district was run. They praised Mr. Pepe for his zeal, charisma, and character as principal of Southington High School and wished him the best in his new role as Assistant Superintendent and Mr. Madancy in his new position as Superintendent. They thanked Mr. Connellan for always putting the best interests of students first, his incredible work, and wished him the best in retirement. They thanked the Board members for their unconditional goodwill, support, compassion, and commitment.

Mr. Oshana was back online after having technical problems and recognized what a difficult year it was for the teachers who taught remotely and would have technology problems. He addressed the discussion on masks and the pros and cons. The CDC has protocols in place about indoor and outdoor mask wearing and in Connecticut there is a mask mandate in place through July 20. He thought that the Board members should be modeling the behavior that they were asking the students, staff, and teachers to be doing on a daily basis. He was disappointed that the Board was not wearing masks at this meeting. If he were in attendance, instead of online, he would be wearing a mask now. He will wear his mask at the June 24 meeting and then see what happens after July 20.

Mrs. Clark questioned the time of the Senior Motorcade parade on June 15. Mr. Pepe confirmed that it started at 5:00 p.m. at the high school. Mr. Derynoski questioned if Mr. Pepe was riding again and if the Board members were going to get together. Mrs. Carmody stated the Board members would meet at the Municipal Center for a picnic like they did last year and cheer for the seniors as they pass in the motorcade.

## 6. COMMITTEE REPORTS

There were no Committee Reports.

## 7. SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

### a. Personnel Report

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

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

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

## 8. OLD BUSINESS

### a. Town Government Communications

There was no communication.

## 9. NEW BUSINESS

**a. ED-099 Agreement for Child Nutrition Programs – Authorized Signatures Change**

**MOTION:** by Mr. Baczewski, second by Mrs. Clark:

**“Move that the Board of education authorize Steven Madancy and Jennifer Mellitt as new signers for the ED-099 Agreement for Child Nutrition Programs.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

**b. Unaffiliated**

Mr. Derynoski questioned if there would be two separate motions regarding the grant-funded position of Youth Advocate at minimum wage and the duration of the contract for the Director of Operations. Mrs. Carmody stated that it was one motion at which time Mr. Derynoski made a motion to table the agenda item and to discuss under Executive Session at the June 24, 2021 Board of Education meeting.

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

**“Move to Table this agenda item to the June 24, 2021 Board of Education meeting for discussion under Executive Session.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote**

**10. ADJOURNMENT**

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

**“Move to adjourn.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
*Linda Blanchard*  
Recording Secretary



## ATTACHMENT #1

### **Top 3 Students – SHS Class of 2021**

#### **#1 Gabe LeBlanc**

Gabe is one of the hardest working, passionate, talented, yet humble students in the Southington High School student body. His many achievements have redefined the standard for academic excellence. Gabe is known for his unwavering determination, sincere enthusiasm for learning and applying new concepts, his leadership ability, and genuine concern for others. In addition to academics, Gabe is a talented musician. He has played the piano and viola for school or community-based orchestras, including UHART Orchestra. Gabe has demonstrated advanced leadership skills through his involvement in Southington's STEPS program, a community-based program focused on promoting positive youth development. In this program, he has developed and facilitated innovative programs to promote students making positive choices and has worked with school and community leaders as well as local businesses. Gabe has been a valuable member of the Project Lead the Way Engineering Program and will attend Harvard in the fall. His anticipated major is Electrical Engineering.

#### **# 2 Kevin Le**

Kevin is a highly intelligent, intellectually inquisitive, and self-confident young man. He has achieved academic excellence at Southington High School while balancing activities in and out school. What separates Kevin from other students are his self-motivation, persistence, organization, creativity, and attention to detail. Kevin has created one of the most detailed and professional resumes for someone his age. Most importantly, he is highly respectful, always demonstrates professionalism and possesses great personal integrity. Kevin always strives to be his best and sets high goals. To ensure success, he engages in detailed planning, self-critique and actively seeks and accepts feedback. In addition to focusing on academics, he is a very caring and compassionate young man. Kevin has been a leader in Southington High School's Project Lead the Way program. He will be pursuing Electrical Engineering at UCONN in the Fall.

#### **#3 Matt Luponio**

Matthew is a very intelligent, analytical, organized, and responsible young man. His demeanor is always professional, yet courteous and respectful. As a student, his tenacious, conscientious, and inquisitive personality allows him to excel and distinguish himself from other students. Mathew is known for his problem-solving ability and finding solutions. If he cannot find a solution using established, traditional methods, he will not hesitate to think outside the box. Matthew has been involved in a wide variety of school activities that enrich his academic interests and offer opportunities to display his interests and talents. For instance, he is a crucial and active member of First Robotics Team 195, the CyberKnights. Currently a Captain, his direct impact on the CyberKnights date back to his freshman year when he was awarded the Rookie of the Year award and a Varsity Letter. Mathew has stood out in Southington High School's Project Lead the Way Engineering Program. He will be majoring in Aerospace Engineering at Boston University in the Fall.

**ATTACHMENT #2**

**SPS SCHOOL NURSES**

CATHY O'HARA

AMIE MIRON

AMY ARNOLD

BETHANN HOOKS

CASIE MESSINA

DENISE BERRY

ELIZABETH MCQUATTERS

EVA BONENFANT

HEATHER PELLETIER

JACQUELINE MUROSKI

JOANN DONER

KELLY OSBORN-INGRASSIA

KRISTEN BRADLEY

LISA MECCARIELLO

LORI DANKO

MARITZA NADEAU

MARLENE CARBONE

MICHELLE BARBOUR

TAMMY PAYNE

MAUREEN COLEMAN

MILETZY ADORNO

MEGGAN KIMBALL