

The minutes presented within this document provide a summary of the discussion that took place at the Board of Education meeting. For the complete discussion of the agenda items on the video recording of the Board meeting, please contact the Superintendent of Schools. These minutes are considered a draft until approved at the following regular Board of Education meeting.

SOUTHINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION

SOUTHINGTON, CONNECTICUT

REGULAR MEETING

OCTOBER 8, 2020 (Revised)

The regular meeting of the Southington Board of Education (Committee of the Whole – Operations) was held as a combined Zoom video and teleconference on Thursday, October 8, 2020, at 7:00 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mrs. Terri Carmody, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

Board members present were Mr. Joseph Baczewski, Mr. Robert Brown, Mrs. Terri Carmody, Mr. James Chrzanowski, Mrs. Missy Cipriano, Mrs. Colleen Clark, Mr. David Derynoski, Mr. David Falvo, and Mr. Zaya Oshana.

Administrators present were Mr. Timothy Connellan, Superintendent of Schools; Mr. Steven Madancy, Assistant Superintendent; Mrs. Sherri DiNello, Director of Business & Finance; Ms. Rebecca Cavallaro, Director of Pupil Personnel Services; and Mr. Frank Pepe, Principal of Southington High School.

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

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Student Representatives led in reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mrs. Carmody read a letter to the public (*Attachment #1*) regarding the Board of Education meetings returning to virtual / teleconference meetings from in-person due to the concern all individuals attending would not wear a mask during the in-person meetings resulting in not being able to ensure the health and safety of those in attendance.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – September 24, 2020 – Regular Meeting

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

“Move to approve the regular Board of Education minutes of September 24, 2020, as submitted.”

Motion carried by voice vote with Mrs. Clark abstaining.

4. PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

a. Communications from Public

There was no communication from the public.

b. Communications from Board Members

There was no communication from Board Members.

c. Communication from Administration

Mr. Connellan reminded the Board members and student representatives to identify themselves before they speak if Mrs. Carmody did not recognize them by name.

Administration reported on the following:

1. Donation of Face Shields for Teachers: Mr. Connellan thanked B & V Jewelers for their generosity and ongoing effort of manufacturing the clear plastic face shields for staff members who requested one.
2. Donations of Masks – Rotary Club: Mr. Connellan thanked the Rotary Club for their donation of masks; especially, Board member Bob Brown who organized that effort with the “Rotary Million Dollar Mask” statewide program. The school district has been working on procuring PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) since March/April 2020. Mr. Brown stated that through the program he requested 12,000 masks and donated 10,000 to the school district, 1,000 to the Southington Police / Fire Departments, and 1,000 masks to Southington Community Services. Mr. Connellan thanked the Rotary for their generosity.
3. World Teacher Day: Mr. Connellan explained that October 5, 2020 was World Teacher Day. He publicly thanked all staff members for their commendable efforts and going above and beyond in their work due to the pandemic.

d. Communications from Student Board Representatives

Miss Jhalissa Vincent reported on the following:

- The October 14, 2020, PSAT was postponed resulting in a full day of school. The PSAT for grade 11 students was rescheduled to Thursday, October 29, 2020 following a half-day schedule while grades 9, 10 and 12 would have a full day of remote learning.
- Student Council elections were starting for grades 10, 11 and 12. Elections are on October 15 and candidates were required to create a one-minute video explaining the position they were running for and why they were the best choice. The videos would be shown during Social Studies classes. Since posters and handouts were prohibited, students were turning to social media to campaign and gain student body support.

Miss Amrit Kaur reported on the following:

- The National Honor Society and World Language Honor Society held inductions October 8, 2020 at the high school.
- Online learning was proceeding well with good participation and most students less stressed because everything was in one place. There were minor glitches with a few power outages.

Mr. Brett Sheldrick reported the following:

- The high school administration was in the process of setting up a Tech Help Desk in the school library/media center with a faculty member leading the project and tech savvy students helping the Tech Help Desk in off classroom periods.
- Senior and junior class officer meetings were held with administration to come up with ideas for events within the restriction guidelines and working with the local Health Director.
- The defending Class LL State Championship Runner-up SHS Girls Soccer team had an impressive 3-0 start. The Lady Knights Field Hockey Team had played two games and the Senior Night game against Lewis Mills High School ended in a 1 to 1 overtime draw. The Girls and Boys Cross Country Team celebrated their seniors and defeated Plainville High School in both races.
- On October 7, the Girls Swimming and Diving Team won their meet. The Boys Soccer Team was 0-1-1 with a draw versus New Britain and a loss to Plainville last Saturday night in a Senior Night game. The Girls Volleyball Team was off to a good start with wins over New Britain and Plainville and losing a close match with Bristol Central. The Blue Knights Football program planned to recognize seniors at its 7 vs. 7, non-contact competition versus Plainville on Friday, October 23 at Fontana Field.

5. COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Curriculum and Instruction Committee Meeting – October 2, 2020

Mr. Brown thanked the teachers and administrators who worked on the curriculum updates on top of everything that they were doing during these difficult times. The committee reviewed the continued work on the Grade 11 Civics curriculum of Citizenship in Action Units, with a unit “Across the Political Divide” appropriate at election time. The focus was to have respectful conversations on issues and biases, which are skills that needed to be taught. Mr. Nick Vargas, Mr. Kevin Curtis, and Mrs. Heather Allenback worked on these curriculum units.

The committee received an overview from Mrs. Nicole Raccio on high school Science Units that included CP Chemistry, Earth Science Climate and Plant Tectonics Units. Mr. Brown recognized Mr. John Duffy, Science Coordinator, who was retiring on Friday, October 9, 2020, for working with Mrs. Raccio and making the science curriculum relative to students, hands-on, interesting, and investigative. Mrs. Carmody noted that Mr. Duffy’s retirement was a loss for the school district because he brought science alive for the students.

The C & I Committee received a presentation by Mrs. Cathy Goralski and Ms. Mary Peterman on the PK Report Card incorporating new state standards and social and emotional health into the curriculum making it measurable and understandable for parents and including.

6. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

a. Personnel Report

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

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

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

7. OLD BUSINESS

a. Town Government Communications

Mr. Connellan stated that he and Mrs. DiNello would be attending the Wednesday, October 14, 2020 Board of Finance meeting to review the Non-lapsing Account funds with the Board of Finance members. Mr. Connellan will share the time and location of that meeting with the Board members as soon as it is posted.

b. Non-Lapsing Funds FYE'2020

Mrs. DiNello explained the documents that she provided to the Board in detail including the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) Grant, Recommendations for Education Non-Lapsing Account 2020, and 2020-2021 COVID-19 Reopening Expenditure Summary. She updated the Board on the actual grant amount that changed twice since it was initially awarded. The original grant was for \$401,265, it was adjusted for transportation to \$546,076 and increased for PPE funding by \$310,000 for a total grant now of \$856,076. The district is now able to revise the grant and reallocate transportation funds between personnel and non-personnel within the cleaning, health, safety, and PPE categories, which are the only ones that it could be applied. She would update the Board on how those funds would be used. Mr. Brown questioned if the bus company was paid the same whether they drive the buses or not like when the high school was closed this week and the students had to go to remote learning. Mrs. DiNello replied that the bus company is paid because they run the buses a little later for the middle and elementary schools. Mr. Connellan pointed out that the \$856,076 grant that the state gave Southington was far below the \$4 million requested by the school district.

Mrs. DiNello explained in detail the draft Recommendation for Education Non-Lapsing Account 2020 as requested by the Board of Finance and how the Board of Education planned to use the \$1,963,779 that was the two percent (2%) carryover from last year's operating budget. She addressed the estimated school re-opening costs of \$1,110,024, subsidy loan for the Food Service Program of \$300,000 and Capital Projects/Major Projects and Equipment of approximately \$553,755 (based on funds remaining after reopening expenditures). As of October 8, 2020, the Reopening of School Plan costs totaled approximately \$4 million. The funding source for the Reopening Plan would be done through the CRF Grant or the Non-lapsing Account. The CRF Grant is only good for expenditures through December 31, 2020. At this time, none of the technology expenditures of \$129,614 would come out of the CRF grant and would need to come out of the Non-lapsing Account. The software purchased was Go Guardian, Parents Square, Class Link and all the technology that Mr. Madancy shared at the last meeting.

This does not include the devices purchased with the Esser Funds or with funds that remained from last school year. It is strictly software related costs. The PPE items total \$230,000 with \$215,170 purchased with CRF funds and \$15,000 with non-lapsing. The total CRF grant funding for items would total \$286,787 and the district would be requesting a reallocation of grant funds of \$474,459 and there would be \$94,830 left with a couple of options. An option would be the ability to purchase additional PPE if needed or find other areas to spend the state funds on.

Mrs. DiNello explained in detail the Food Service Program subsidy loan. She was disappointed with the participation numbers with the free breakfast and lunch that the district offers. There are some elementary schools where they are only serving 15-20 free breakfasts served in schools where there are 200 students who are eligible for free meals. The free breakfasts and lunches are available for all students. The shutdown of the high school due to the virus and hybrid classes has hit the Food Service Program negatively. The income statement for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020 resulted in a loss of \$337,000. The Food Service Program spent between \$15,000-\$25,000 on packaging materials to serve the meals that was not budgeted. Mrs. DiNello spoke at length about the reasons for the Food Service Program shortfalls and the funds needed to keep the program afloat. Administration was recommending that \$300,000 be utilized from the Education Non-lapsing Fund FYE'2020 and give in the form of a loan to the Food Service Program to cover the overhead costs through the fall until the district starts receiving grant reimbursements for the meals actually served.

Mr. Baczewski questioned if there was enough data in the last couple of weeks to start to compile what the payments with the USDA plan would look like and if it would be enough to compensate for where the school district had been fiscally in the same period of the previous couple of years. Mrs. DiNello replied that there was not enough data at this time. She believed the overhead for the month of September was almost double from what she expected to get from the claim reimbursement. Mr. Baczewski questioned if they should put in more money such as \$400,000 to be utilized from the Non-lapsing Fund and spoke at length on his recommendation. Mrs. DiNello spoke at length on how quickly things change and that it was too hard on October 8 to give a good picture of where the operating budget was going to end up but there was a good likelihood of more funds needed than the \$300,000 loan to make it through the year. Mr. Brown agreed with Mr. Baczewski and did not see a negative in adding \$50,000 or more. Mr. Connellan acknowledged that they were trying to be conservative in terms of dollars. He was not making any recommendations at this time to expend any of those funds on projects because they need to ensure there is an ample amount of money in there for school reopening costs and Food Service. There were a lot of uncontrolled variables. There is another Board of Education meeting scheduled for October and November and they could revisit this discussion then. According to state statute, the funds in the Non-lapsing Account are subject to Board of Education approval once the Board of Finance establishes it. The Non-lapsing Account funds, once it is established, are legally for the Board of Education to use. He thought it was in the Board's best interest to not commit more dollars than already committed from the Non-lapsing Account until they have a better handle with additional data on the Food Service Program and related costs of school reopening. This is an unusual school year, and they would not typically be making a recommendation to use these types of funds for any type of operating expenses. Mr. Derynoski agreed with Mrs. DiNello and Mr. Connellan and thought that they would have more information by the next two Board meetings if they need to make an adjustment to the Food Service loan.

Mrs. DiNello explained the Capital Projects/Major Projects Equipment draft document that Mrs. Jennifer Mellit, Accounting Manager, prepared for the Board's review. She reviewed the BOE Five Year Capital Plan and projects that were not funded as part of the Major Projects and Equipment section of the Board of Education Operating Budget, the new project requests that were considered important to the district's infrastructure and operations, the Athletic Facility Master Plan Projects and the year that they were added. This was not a priority list. The list contained the budget location and year, the project name, school, original budgeted amount, updated cost of projects and projected funds available.

Mrs. DiNello explained that these documents were informational and would be brought to the Board of Finance to show the type of projects that the administration would rather be spending the Non-lapsing funds on. Once they know there is funding available, the administration would work with the Board members to approve a prioritized list of projects.

Mrs. DiNello provided the Non-lapsing Fund Account FY'2019 document that the Board approved as informational to update the Board members on the status of previously approved projects funded.

Mrs. DiNello reiterated what the recommendation to the Board of Finance would be. She was confident that when they meet on Wednesday, administration would not have a revision submitted or approved from the state so they would continue to talk about the \$1.1 million of potential costs for reopening of schools with the caveat that administration anticipated that it would be reduced once grant revisions were approved, that the \$300,000 was the initial loan installment to the Food Service Program and the Board most likely would be requesting additional funding for the program, and review with the Board of Finance the types of projects that were needed in the district.

Mr. Baczewski questioned if the upgrade of the SPS Network included the one-to-one devices. Mr. Connellan stated that it was for the infrastructure only. Mr. Baczewski thought that it might be something to bring to the Board of Finance to move up on the list. Mr. Connellan stated that they have been working with the AdNet company and are moving cautiously to stabilize the network. They are continuing to look at other strategies and not looking at major hardware purchases at this time.

Mr. Falvo questioned the Visitor Verification System and thought the Board voted to take it out of the budget, but it was listed on the Major Project and Equipment 2021-22 project list. Mr. Connellan stated that after that budget discussion, he mentioned to the Board that he would be happy to bring in people from Raptor Technologies but did not do that in the spring because of the Coronavirus issues. Raptor Technologies gave a presentation to the district Safety & Security Committee, who endorsed it, and a presentation was scheduled for the Board of Education at the October 22, 2020 meeting in public session for all Board members to have the information and ask questions regarding school safety. Mrs. DiNello explained the budget process and that this item was pushed back a year. Mr. Falvo thought it would be better to have the presentation in executive session for specific questions about specific schools. Mrs. Carmody explained that this presentation would just be informational.

Mr. Chrzanowski questioned the COVID-19 Reopening Plan and the \$129,614 for technology purchases and if the software was a one-time purchase. Mr. Madancy responded that

the software purchases were mostly an annual, one-time purchase. It is subscription service and once it was paid there were no more costs.

8. NEW BUSINESS

a. Review and Approval of 2020-2021 Teacher Evaluation and Support Plan

Mr. Madancy explained that because of the COVID-19 pandemic the Commissioner of the State Board of Education implemented “flexibilities” to the 2017 legislation and relaxed it with the caveat that the district Professional Development and Evaluation Committee would review those flexibilities and agree to adopt them, which the committee unanimously agreed to do. It is more frequent observations, but much shorter with feedback in narrative form to teachers instead of a lot of paperwork. Approval by the Board of Education is a formality. Mrs. Clark questioned how Remote only teachers could be evaluated. Mr. Madancy explained that their supervisors could jump into the remote classes at any time to view the instruction, resource materials, and interactions. Mr. Brown questioned the provision where the goals were “mutually agreed upon”. Mr. Madancy replied that the Commissioner indicated they must consider social and emotional learning as one of the primary goals. The “mutually agreed upon” is if they want to add academic indicators as well, as part of their goals setting. Within the plan is a dispute resolution process for when it cannot be mutually agreed upon. Mrs. Carmody summarized for the public that the teachers were being evaluated.

Mr. Oshana questioned if the state would go back to the more complex, not as effective plan when things go back to normal. Mr. Madancy stated that the Commissioner indicated that this was a process to a revision of the old plan now with remote learning included.

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

“Move to accept the revised copy of the Teacher Evaluation and Support Plan as presented by the administration for implementation during the 2020-2021 school year.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

b. Budget Assumptions and Priorities 2021-2022

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

“Move to adopt the Budget Assumptions and Priorities for 2021-2022.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

c. SHS Citizenship in Action Units – First Reading

d. SHS Science Units – First Reading

Both these agenda items were a first reading and would be voted on at the October 22, 2020 Board of Education meeting as a second reading.

9. ADJOURNMENT

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

“Move to adjourn.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

The meeting adjourned at 8:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Blanchard
Recording Secretary

ATTACHMENT #1

Mrs. Terri Carmody, Chair, Statement
Read at the October 8, 2020 BOE Meeting

Good evening. My name is Terri Carmody, and I am the Chairwomen of the Southington Board of Education. As you may know, the Board of Education is meeting virtually this evening as a health and safety precaution. The number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 has continued to rise in Connecticut. In our own Health District, the number of new cases has increased from sixteen cases in July to eighteen cases in August to fifty cases in September. Our own school district has experienced cases that effected dozens of students and staff members. Thankfully, the state still has a lower number of cases per one-hundred thousand residents than most other states in the country. I believe the favorable metrics are due to the fact that most Connecticut citizens are engaging in the strategies recommended by the Centers for Disease Control, the State Department of Public Health, and local Health Departments. Those recommended strategies are familiar to just about all residents and include wearing a mask or face covering, maintaining an appropriate social distance, frequent hand washing, good ventilation and increased cleaning and sanitizing. These are the most effective strategies to prevent the spread of COVID-19 according to public health experts.

Wearing a mask or face covering is universally acknowledged as the primary strategy in what is termed “source control” or the prevention of droplets spreading from one individual to other individuals. According to the CDC and DPH, these strategies are intended to be used together and are not mutually exclusive. They are often referred to as a *“suite of mitigation strategies”*. The recommended use by experts in infectious disease control of all these strategies *simultaneously* is designed to help keep us safe. Dr. Matthew Carter, our State Epidemiologist, and a veteran with more than thirty-five years in the study and control of infectious diseases continues to emphasize that *wearing a mask is the single most effective mitigation strategy*.

Unfortunately, we as a Board have been placed in the uncomfortable position of not being able to guarantee at our meetings the health and safety of all members of the Board of Education, or members of the Administration and most importantly our Student representatives. As Board Chair, I have become increasingly concerned of the risk engendered by those attending Board of Education meetings. In addition, I feel strongly that the entire Board of Education should provide a strong example to the students in our schools and to the staff members who are employees of the Board. At present, we are not able to do so in a unified fashion. I feel that at the very least, the full Board should be able to demonstrate respect for our students and our staff members who are required to wear masks in school buildings and in offices for six, seven or eight hours a day, *even when they are six feet apart*. I do not believe it is too much to ask all Board members to wear a mask for a two-hour meeting. I believe it is blatantly disrespectful not to do so.

Events at recent Board of Education meetings have demonstrated that in some instances personal opinion and political ideology have taken precedence over our number one priority, the health and safety of our students and staff. That is a situation that has not occurred previously during my long tenure on this Board. Placing personal interests over the best interests of students, staff and others in this community is unacceptable and untenable. Until that condition changes, we are forced into a situation in which the Board of Education meetings must be held virtually, even

though that is not my preference. Therefore, Board of Education meetings will remain virtual until the present situation is rectified.

Prior to the last meeting of the Board Education, we were forced to postpone the annual Celebration of Excellence in which our Teacher of the Year, Paraeducator of the Year and our Thirty-Year employees were to be honored. The Celebration was postponed because our honored guests indicated a significant level of discomfort in attending an event in the Public Assembly Room in which all individuals attending would not be wearing face coverings. They were willing to give up being recognized for their accomplishments publicly due to the considerable risk to loved ones who would be in attendance, some of whom are in a high-risk group. It is my pledge that we **will** celebrate the significant and singular career accomplishments of these amazing individuals. We may be forced to create virtual celebrations in lieu of holding them in-person. We will still celebrate these accomplishments and post recordings of the events online so the entire community can congratulate and thank these worthy individuals for their contributions to the students and families of our wonderful community.

In closing, I would like to express my gratitude to all the staff of the Southington Public Schools for their magnificent and unrelenting efforts to provide our students with an in-person educational experience that is second to none. No other district in the state of Connecticut is providing for students what we are providing here in Southington. Your efforts are nothing short of heroic given the circumstances under which we are all operating. This is the most significant public health emergency in living memory. I applaud you all and you have my heartfelt thanks for what you do every day.

God bless, stay safe, and please keep our children safe.