

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. These minutes are considered a draft until approved at the following regular Board of Education meeting.

**SOUTHINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION
SOUTHINGTON, CONNECTICUT**

**REGULAR MEETING
JANUARY 26, 2023**

The regular meeting of the Southington Board of Education (Committee of the Whole - Instruction) was held on Thursday, January 26, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. as a public meeting in the John Weichsel Municipal Center Public Assembly Room, 200 North Main Street, Southington, Connecticut. No executive session was held.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mrs. Colleen Clark, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Board members present: Mr. Joseph Baczewski, Mrs. Terri Carmody, Mr. Sean Carson, Mr. James Chrzanowski, Mrs. Colleen Clark, Mr. Zaya Oshana, Mr. Jasper Williams

Board members absent: Mrs. Dawn Anastasio, Mr. David Derynoski

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

Student Representatives present: Angelina Micacci, Ryan Ogren, Uptej Singh

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The student representatives led in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

“Move to move Agenda Item 6.a ‘Approval of Out-of-State/Overnight Field Trips’ to Agenda Item 3.a.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – January 12, 2023

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

“Move to approve the Regular Board of Education Minutes of January 12, 2023, as submitted.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

a. Approval of Out of State/Overnight Field Trip (formerly Agenda Item 6.a.)

1. SHS FBLA (Future Business Leaders of America) Trip to Atlanta, Georgia

FBLA officers, Sophie Kastner and Ryan Ogren, gave a brief overview of the FBLA National Leadership Conference in Atlanta, Georgia to be held June 26, 2023-July 1, 2023.

MOTION: by Mr. Oshana, Seconded by Mr. Baczewski:

“Move to approve the FBLA Out of State/Overnight field trip to Atlanta, Georgia, as recommended by the administration.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

2. SHS CyberKnights Robotics Team Trip to Houston, Texas

MOTION: by Mr. Oshana, Seconded by Mr. Baczewski:

“Move to approve the SHS Robotics Team Out of State/Overnight Field Trip to Houston, Texas, as recommended by the administration.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

4. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

a. Communications from Student Board Representatives

Ryan Ogren reported on the current events at Southington High School that included: the student representatives sending a general student survey questioning students on their experiences, concerns, struggles, and successes at the high school and proposed forming Student Advocate Focus Groups to address the responses with cooperation from administration and the Board. The survey would be sent out next week. Ryan addressed doing a survey on mid-term exams, which ended on Tuesday and taken for the first time since the Covid pandemic He reported on the second semester; NGSS (Next Generation Student Standards) test for all juniors; scholarship opportunities; Chinese New Year Festival; and the Oratorical Contest.

Angelina Micacci reported on the SHS winter athletic sports season to date: SHS Boys Swim and Dive Team is currently undefeated; Wrestling team is hosting the annual Connecticut Challenge Invitational; SHS Indoor Boys & Girls Track Teams will be competing at the CCC Indoor Track Championships; Varsity and JV Cheerleading Teams will have their first competition on Saturday; Boys Ice Hockey Co-op will be traveling to Enfield, Girls Ice Hockey Club will be traveling to Guilford; Gymnastics Team is currently undefeated. The middle school Boys & Girls Basketball games between DePaolo and Kennedy will be held on February 17.

Uptej Singh reported on the current events and festivities at the middle schools including: Kennedy (JFK) student Mame Diop and DePaolo (JAD) student Jack Denorfia were recognized as the recipients of the annual First Baptist Church Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Award; JFK Souper Bowl Contest and JAD Can Drive with cans of soup collected at both schools and donated to the Southington Community Services; eighth grade students attended the SHS elective presentation regarding freshman programming and course offerings; sixth grade students participated in an interactive online YouTube presentation; eighth grade JAD students will be representing the school at the Hartford County Math Counts Competition on February 4; JAD Basketball teams were off to a good start. All Algebra students will be taking their mid-term exams; JAD sponsoring a Taste of Culture. Uptej reported on rehearsals for the May Drama production of “Matilda Junior” at South End Elementary School; and the DES PTO Cultural Arts Program at Derynoski Elementary School that featured a former Globetrotter.

Mrs. Clark questioned the mid-terms that were given this year for the first time since the Covid pandemic and Mr. Carson questioned how the Boys & Girls Hockey teams liked the long distance travel to Enfield and Guilford to play games. He was an advocate of reducing transportation costs.

b. Communications from Board Members

Mr. Oshana questioned the 2023-2024 Operating Budget Workshops and the Non-Lapsing Funds discussed at the workshops that he was not able to attend because he was traveling but was able to participate through Facetime with Mr. Madancy's help. He questioned whether there were start dates on the Non-lapsing Fund projects and was told there was not. He noted that agenda items were tabled at the last BOE meeting from the non-lapsing funds (except for safety items) and put on hold until the budget numbers were finalized. Mrs. Clark explained that those questions would be addressed later in the meeting.

Mrs. Clark announced that Board members Mrs. Dawn Anastasio and Mr. David Derynoski were absent from the meeting due to illness.

c. Communications from Administration

1. Elementary Firefighter Poster Contest: Mr. Pepe thanked the Southington Fire Department for inviting the fourth and fifth grade students to participate in the fire prevention poster contest with the theme this year, "Everyone, Every day." He announced the fourth and fifth grade winners at each elementary school and thanked the art teachers.

2. Mid-Year Tech Update: Mr. Madancy reported in detail on the multitude of devices and monumental accomplishments that the district Technology Department had addressed to date, without any increased staffing, so that the Board could be aware, acknowledge, and appreciate the work that they have done to date.

3. UConn Behavioral Health: Mr. Madancy reported that Mrs. Rebecca Cavallaro, Director of Pupil Personnel Services, was absent from the meeting because he asked her to attend the Grand Opening of the UConn Child and Family Development program on 115 West Street, Southington. Dr. Fitzgerald of UConn Behavioral Health is working in partnership with the school district.

Mr. Madancy reported that Mr. Pepe would be hosting a Kindergarten Orientation Session at DePaolo Middle School on Monday, January 30 from 6:00-7:30 p.m. with a presentation on the registration process and the life of a Kindergartener. In the springtime, the Kindergarteners and parents would be invited to visit their home school.

Mr. Madancy explained that on January 11th, former principals' and friends of Karen Smith, Sally Kamerbeek and Betty Lutz, re-started the Book Club at the Karen Smith Academy. Mrs. Smith started that Book Club initiative at ALTA, which was renamed the Karen Smith Academy upon her passing. Her friends are now carrying on her legacy.

d. Communication from Public

Jennifer Ouellette, 87 Johanna Circle, addressed her concerns that the fourth-grade classrooms at Thalberg Elementary School were at maximum capacity, busing students from other towns adding to the overcrowding, and her concern that the students were being given too much work to catch up on lost time from Covid. She was concerned that the overcrowding would continue into fifth grade at Thalberg the next school year.

Elyse Krantz, 44 Bridle Path Drive, was disappointed that the Board did not include the two major Jewish holidays Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur as official holidays on the approved 2023-2024 school calendar. She was happy that the Board decided to revisit the language in

Policy 5133 regarding Excused Absences. The current wording of “Appropriate Provisions” was subjective because the teachers interpret differently. She requested that the Board vote on language addressing three areas to be added to the policy: 1) prohibit administration of tests, 2) prohibit assigning homework; and 3) prohibit introducing new material on Jewish holidays. She would be happy to provide interested teachers information about the Jewish holidays and the importance of them. She stated that her Rabbi Alana Wasserman of the Southington Gishrei Shalom Jewish Congregation offered to serve as an advisor to the Board to provide guidance in making these changes.

Susan Zabohonski, 28 Werking Street, addressed the budget and workshops where Mr. Madancy shared data comparing Southington to other school districts. She did not think there was any comparison to some of the districts and gave examples. She addressed Southington’s long-term debt. She noted that the town does value education and that the majority of the town budget goes to the Board of Education more than any other services. She addressed keeping taxes low, seniors on fixed incomes, gave statistics, and asked the Board to not fight inflation with more spending.

Katherine Wade, 39 Madalyn Lane, thanked the Board (BOE) and administration for all the time devoted to the schools. She pointed out that for the second year in a row the proposed budget was for level services with no new positions, no new programs, no new major projects, or equipment needed by the district and still a 7% increase was needed to maintain the schools. She addressed the fiscal cliff due to the town cutting last year’s BOE budget. She supported the proposed budget. She questioned Mr. Carson’s comment of what “resetting of the foundational education costs and expenses in this town” meant per his statement at the workshop. She knew that the final decision on funding the BOE budget was up to the Board of Finance and Town Council. She stated that many parents wanted the BOE to fight to properly fund the school budget.

5. OLD BUSINESS

a. Town Government Communications

There was no Town Government Communications to report.

b. Policy 9321 – Time Place Notification – Second Reading

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

“Move to approve the Board Policy 9321 – Time Place Notification, as written.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

c. Policy 9325 – Meeting Conduct – Second Reading

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

“Move that the Board approve Policy 9325 – Meeting Conduct, as presented in the package.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

d. Science Grade 7 Unit 2: Metabolic Reactions – Second Reading

Mrs. Carmody reported that the Board of Education Curriculum & Instruction Committee was bringing the Science Grade 7 Unit 2: Metabolic Reactions to the full Board for a Second Reading. She questioned if a motion was needed and was told yes.

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

“Move to approve Science Grade 7 Unit 2: Metabolic Reactions, as recommended by the Curriculum & Instruction Committee.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

e. SHS English IV Course – Second Reading

Mrs. Carmody reported that the Board of Education Curriculum & Instruction Committee was bringing the SHS English IV Course to the full Board for a Second Reading.

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

“Move to approve SHS English IV Course, as recommended by the Curriculum & Instruction Committee.”

Mrs. Clark explained that Mrs. Carmody could make a motion to approve. Mrs. Carmody agreed.

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

f. SHS English I – Proposed Text Changes – Second Reading

MOTION: by Mrs. Carmody, seconded by Mr. Williams:

“The Board of Education Curriculum & Instruction Committee is bringing the SHS English I – Proposed Text Changes to the full Board for a Second Reading.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

g. SHS Conceptual Chemistry Unit 8: Aquatic Apocalypse – Second Reading

MOTION: by Mrs. Carmody, seconded by Mr. Williams:

“The Board of Education Curriculum & Instruction Committee is bringing the SHS Conceptual Chemistry Unit 8: Aquatic Apocalypse to the full Board for a Second Reading.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

h. SHS Special Education Course Proposals – Second Reading

MOTION: by Mrs. Carmody, seconded by Mr. Williams:

“The Board of Education Curriculum & Instruction Committee is bringing the SHS Special Education Course Proposals to the full Board for a Second Reading.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

i. SHS Proposal for First Aid/CPR Elective – Second Reading

MOTION: by Mrs. Carmody, seconded by Mr. Williams:

“The Board of Education Curriculum & Instruction Committee is bringing the SHS Proposal for the First Aid/CPR Elective to the full Board for a Second Reading.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

j. SHS ACHIEVE ArtShop Course Proposal – Second Reading

MOTION: by Mrs. Carmody, seconded by Mr. Williams:

“The Board of Education Curriculum & Instruction Committee is bringing the SHS ACHIEVE ArtShop Course Proposal to the full Board for a Second Reading.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

k. Science Grade 8 Unit 3: Colossal Collisions Unit – Second Reading

MOTION: by Mrs. Carmody, seconded by Mr. Williams:

“The Board of Education Curriculum & Instruction Committee is bringing the Science Grade 8 Unit 3: Colossal Collisions Unit to the full Board for a Second Reading,”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

l. SHS Consumer Math Course – Second Reading

MOTION: by Mrs. Carmody, seconded by Mr. Williams:

“The Board of Education Curriculum & Instruction Committee is bringing the SHS Consumer Math Course to the full Board for a Second Reading,”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

m. SHS Health I Course – Second Reading

MOTION: by Mrs. Carmody, seconded by Mr. Williams:

“The Board of Education Curriculum & Instruction Committee is bringing the SHS Health I Course to the full Board for a Second Reading.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

n. SHS Health II Course – Second Reading

MOTION: by Mrs. Carmody, seconded by Mr. Williams:

“The Board of Education Curriculum & Instruction Committee is bringing the SHS Health II Course to the full Board for a Second Reading.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

Mrs. Carmody stated that all those courses were presented so well by the teachers and that she was so proud of the work that the teachers did.

o. Review/Adoption of 2023-2024 Board of Education Operating Budget

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

“Move that the Board of Education approve the 2023-2024 Operating Budget in the amount of \$110,980,656.”

Mr. Oshana and Mrs. Carmody questioned where that number came from and what the percentage was because it was new to them from previous discussions. Mrs. Clark explained in detail that it was a hard year with the combination of inflation, sky-rocketing insurance, transportation costs, and reduced Title I funding, that after the workshops she met with Mr. Madancy and discussed the money that they had available in the Non-lapsing Account and what the five non-negotiables items were that would stay in the non-lapsing account and take the rest of the non-lapsing account funds to use for this year’s operating budget. Mrs. Carmody wanted to know how this number was arrived at. Mrs. Clark explained that she did not want to have to do this. She met with Mr. Madancy and discussed what they absolutely had to keep on the non-lapsing list of projects and equipment and agreed on keeping the 1) Various Technology Infrastructure Renovations, which they cut by \$100,000; 2) Continued work on Elementary School Projects – to go to Referendum; 3) Required PCB Monitoring JFK, JAD, Municipal Center; 4) Required AHERA Asbestos Testing; and 5) Title I funding that was cut by the Federal Government in October. The total for these projects amounted to \$454,012. Mrs. Clark addressed teacher salaries and that the consultant had not provided the number to budget for electricity for

the school district. The total amounted to \$795,228 from the non-lapsing account, which brought the operating budget down to \$110,980,656, for an increase of 6.28% from the original 7.64%. Everything else on the Non-lapsing Account list was being cut.

Mr. Oshana requested to discuss everything on the non-lapsing list because he was not involved in any of this. Mrs. Carmody asked who made this decision. Mrs. Clark explained that she and Mr. Madancy discussed it then she had a caucus with her fellow Republicans earlier in the week after the workshops to reach the reduction in the budget. Mrs. Carmody asked why the Democrats on the Board were not included in that conversation because it was a nine-member Board. Mrs. Clark understood that this was not something that the Board had done in the past. She explained that she was not able to contact the Democrats because there was a recent death in her family that required traveling out of town and time was a factor. She tried to reach out to Mr. Oshana and Mrs. Carmody before the meeting but was not able to have a full conversation as she did with her fellow Republicans. Mrs. Clark took full responsibility and did not think that a 7.31% BOE Operating Budget increase would pass so reduced it to 6.28% totaling \$110,980,656. Mrs. Carmody was upset that the Board of Education had become very political and that they should all support a budget that was best for the students and what was needed, which was their responsibility. She thought that the Non-lapsing Account should not be touched in case of emergencies. Mrs. Carmody asked Mr. Madancy for the actual number for the reduction in state aid that was not going to change.

Mr. Madancy explained the ECS (Educational Cost Sharing) funds from the state were reduced for the next school year by (14.6%) with subsequent larger reductions in future years, which was a source of revenue that will affect the budget. He explained in detail what drives the ECS revenue. He stated that the Student Center Funding Bill will have a new formula for 2025 and that Southington would hopefully receive \$725,000. Mr. Oshana thought that the Board should create a budget on fact, not on hope. Mrs. Carmody summarized that the reduction in Title I funding and ECS funds were a big loss of revenue for Southington that would not change. Mr. Madancy noted that time was a factor, and that the Governor presents his state budget on February 8, 2023 and that he could not predict what the Governor would do.

Mr. Oshana again requested that the Board review item by item on the List of Projects and Equipment recommended for funding with Non-lapsing Accounts on page 50 of the Superintendent's proposed Operating Budget. He did not want to spend any of this money and put it on hold until they get through the budget process, and then figure out where they were with the budget without cutting it. The Board discussed at length and in detail the items on the list including safety items and what was being cut from the list. Mr. Peter Romano, Director of Operations, came to the podium to explain the projects and costs in more detail. Mr. Oshana questioned how much they were cutting from the non-lapsing accounts and applying now to the budget. Mrs. Clark replied that it was \$795,228, which brings the percentage down to 6.28% from the original 7.64%.

Mr. Oshana questioned the data comparisons with other districts. Mr. Madancy explained in detail the multiple data sets that he chose to try to create different visuals and comparisons for staffing and funding levels in various communities, DRGs (District Reference Groups), Hartford County, and across the state. He noted that there were flaws in data and it was not always comparing apples to apples with some similar districts receiving more state aid. He explained that for every municipality in the state of Connecticut, other than regional districts, the BOE budget is the biggest part of every town's budget.

Mr. Oshana addressed a letter the Board received from the Town Manager about the grand list and the mill rate and thought that the Board was putting themselves in a hole. Districtwide projections were discussed along with the SLAM Enrollment Study recently done showing steady increased projections over the next 10 years. The Board discussed the fiscal cliff, AARP ESSER Funds, keeping the staff intact, the need to present a bare bones budget that provides an opportunity to reset a way that the Board was properly funding the schools and maintaining levels of services to begin to have honest conversations with the other Boards in town in moving that forward. Mr. Oshana thought that it was prudent to hold on to the items in the Non-lapsing Account and present a level services budget and keeping teachers in the classrooms. He thought that they should be presenting a budget with what the BOE needs were and not cut anything further and talk to the community on what all the BOE needs were to educate the students in Southington. The bottom line is the Board of Finance and Town Council have the ultimate decision on the final number of the BOE budget. He thought that they were being fiscally responsible by presenting a level services budget without adding anything new. Mrs. Carmody stated that the BOE had the responsibility to maintain a level services budget with nothing new, and not to touch the non-lapsing funds because there were still a lot of variables. She thought that the new proposed budget was too big of a cut and unacceptable and that touching the non-lapsing accounts was the wrong move for them to make at this point.

Mr. Williams thought that the BOE should not be “kicking the can down the road” to the Board of Finance and Town council to make decisions on how the BOE should budget their money and that it was the responsibility of the BOE to present a responsible budget. He agreed that there were unusual circumstances this year and stated that they were not cutting services by reallocating the non-lapsing fund. He noted the Board was not happy with the current situation that they were in and that everyone was frustrated but they had to do what was right for the BOE, schools, students, and taxpayers. He wanted the BOE to be honest with the statements that they were making.

Mr. Carson stated that the conversation in the community had not started yet, and they were now starting that conversation. He was not part of past years’ conversations and did not like the budget process and budget cycles, but he was committed to starting the conversation in the community, which the BOE, Finance Board, and Town Council had not done yet. He was willing to reset the budget and have the difficult conversations for future budget cycles. He did not agree that the BOE should put the non-lapsing funds on hold. Mr. Oshana agreed that they should have the community conversation and educate the community on the \$2,000,000 reduction that the Board was discussing. He thought that the “can” they were kicking was the financial “can” to next year and the year after because they would have the same problems. Mrs. Clark agreed that this was the beginning of a bigger conversation. Mr. Oshana thought that the BOE Democrats should have been part of this conversation as was normally done on a budget, but they were not included in any of this, which was why he was frustrated because he did not know any of the data being presented tonight. Mrs. Clark took full responsibility for that acknowledging that she was not available.

Mr. Oshana called for a motion to table approval of the 2023-2024 Operating Budget until the full Board could meet to have another workshop to discuss the reductions of the safety items on the list of projects and equipment recommended for funding with Non-lapsing Accounts.

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

“Move to table the budget this evening.”

ROLL CALL VOTE:

YES: Mrs. Carmody, Mr. Oshana

NO: Mr. Baczewski, Mr. Carson, Mr. Chrzanowski, Mr. Williams, Mrs. Clark

Motion to table denied with two in favor and five opposed.

Mrs. Clark called for a roll call vote on the original budget motion, as presented.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

YES: Mr. Baczewski, Mr. Carson, Mr. Chrzanowski, Mr. Williams, Mrs. Clark

NO: Mrs. Carmody, Mr. Oshana

Motion passed with five in favor and two opposed.

6) NEW BUSINESS

a. Approval of Out of State/Overnight Field Trip (*Moved to Agenda Item 3.a*)

b. Appointment of UPSEU Negotiating Committee

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

“Move to table the UPSEU Negotiating Committee Appointment.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

Mrs. Clark explained that this item was tabled because she had not asked anybody to serve on this committee yet.

c. Approval Removal of Visitor Verification System from the FY’20 Non-lapsing Approve Project List

MOTION: by Mr. Chrzanowski, seconded by Mrs. Carmody:

“Move to approve the Removal of the Visitor Verification System from the listing of approved projects on the FY’20 Non-lapsing Account.”

Motion carried by voice vote 6-1 with Mr. Oshana opposed.

d. Approval of Educational Specifications for SHS Partial Roof Replacement Project

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

“Move to approve the Educational Specifications for the SHS Partial Roof Replacement Project.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

7) ADJOURNMENT

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

“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
Public Communication

Date	Speaker	Address	Topic
1/26/2023 18:55:00	Elyse Krantz	44 Bridle Path Drive, Southington, CT 06489	Address the board re: the possibility of prohibiting homework and tests on Jewish holidays
1/26/2023 18:56:18	Jennifer Ouellette	87 Johanna cir	Thalberg school at max capacity etc..
1/26/2023 19:26:41	Susan Zabohonski	28 Werking St Plantsville, Ct	budget
1/26/2023 19:27:09	Katherine Wade	39 Madalyn Ln. Southington Ct	Budget