

*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**

**JANUARY 11, 2024**

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The regular meeting of the Southington Board of Education (Committee of the Whole - Operations) was held on Thursday, January 11, 2024, 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 Executive Session preceding at 6:30 p.m.

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mrs. Clark, Board of Education Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

Board members present: Mr. Joseph Baczewski, Mrs. Terri Carmody, Mr. Sean Carson, Mrs. Colleen Clark, Mr. David Derynoski, Mr. Zaya Oshana, Mr. Cecil Whitehead, Mr. Jasper Williams. Absent: Mr. Robert Brown

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

**2. EXECUTIVE SESSION – Personnel Matters and Student Matters**

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

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

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

*Mrs. Clark ended Executive Session at 6:55 p.m.*

*The Regular Board Meeting was reconvened at 7:03 p.m.*

**3. RECONVENE MEETING – REGULAR SESSION**

Board members present: Mr. Joseph Baczewski, Mrs. Terri Carmody, Mr. Sean Carson, Mrs. Colleen Clark, Mr. David Derynoski, Mr. Zaya Oshana, Mr. Cecil Whitehead, Mr. Jasper Williams. Absent: Mr. Robert Brown

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

Student Representatives present: Uptej Singh, Chelsey Arduini, Akari Win

**4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Student Representatives led in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

**“Move to add Agenda Item 10.i ‘Student Expulsion’ to the agenda.  
Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

## **5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – December 14, 2023**

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

**“Move to approve the regular Board of Education meeting minutes of December 14, 2023, as submitted.”  
Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

## **6. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS**

### **a. Communication from Student Representatives**

Uptej Singh reported on the current and upcoming activities at Southington High School that included a visit by SHS alumni to talk about life after high school and their college experiences, mid-terms, end of semester work, SHS Course Fair, and Robotics season kickoff.

Akari Winn gave the report on the winter sports season to date for Wrestling, Girls Gymnastics, Boys Swimming & Diving, Boys Basketball, Girls Basketball, Unified Sports, and Winter Cheerleading,

Chelsey Arduini gave the district report for Kennedy Middle School that included the 8<sup>th</sup> grade visit to SHS, 6<sup>th</sup> grade Annual Geography Bee, winter sports season, Martin Luther King Award to Leila Gilbert sponsored by the First Baptist Church of Southington, grant award of \$1,000 to JFK teacher Amy Perry from the Southington Education Foundation.  
South End School: Rehearsals started for the 19<sup>th</sup> drama production at South End with “The Little Mermaid” this year’s production.

DePaolo Middle School: JAD and JFK Middle School Drama Club rehearsals started for “Sister Act”, JAD Basketball started, Annual Taste of Culture Event to be held.

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

Mrs. Clark reported that she attended the kickoff for Robotics Team 195 and was impressed by the enthusiasm and excitement of the students. She attended the second STEPS meeting and expressed the interest within the community to help grow the STEPS program.

### **c. Communication from Administration**

Mr. Madancy reported on the following:

1. Kindergarten Screening Update: Mr. Madancy reported that the first session will take place on Saturday, January 13, from 9:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m. at the Calendar House. He will have an update for the Board in February.

2. April 2 Primary: Mr. Madancy explained that the state moved up the date for the Presidential Primary elections to the first week in April 2024 and that he was in discussions with the Town Manager on what buildings would be used for the primary and the plans for the operations of those school buildings because the schools will be in session on April 2. He will follow-up with more details relative to the operations of the schools.

3. Sloper Plunge: Mr. Madancy reported that the annual YMCA Sloper Plunge will be held on February 24, 2024 at 1:00 p.m. at Sloper's Pond. He invited Board members to join him in jumping for a good cause that would benefit the children of Southington.

4. STEPS Survey: Mr. Madancy reported that the Annual STEPS Survey would be administered again and that families would be notified ahead of time. A change this year is that the survey would be available online for parents to view. Families can opt out of the survey if they choose.

5. SHS Field Trip to Italy: Students Francesca, Ian, and Josh, participated in the trip to Italy and gave a PowerPoint presentation on their trip that took place November 5-12<sup>th</sup> with 30 students and four teacher chaperones. They landed in Rome and travelled to the small towns of Mondavio, Fano, the Grottos of Frasassi, Rocco, Gubbio and San Marino. They stayed with host families in Mondavio. They attended classes, explored, and honed their Italian language skills and dialect. The students shared their activities with the Board with photos included in the presentation. They noted that not many people in that region spoke English. Mr. Whitehead asked about the coffee and cultural experience differences (*small cars, mostly walking, differences in buildings*). Mrs. Carmody questioned the pasta (*delicious*). Mr. Oshana asked what they gained from the trip (*experiences*). Mr. Carson asked if they would do it again and what they would change about the trip (*would do it again, stay longer*).

**d. Communications from Public (Agenda Items Only)**

There was no public communication on the agenda items.

**7. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**a. Curriculum & Instruction Committee Meeting – December 15, 2023**

Mr. Williams reported that the committee met and received a presentation on the elective course "Human Rights" that was designed for grades 10-12 as an option for students who may or may not take World History. They received a presentation on an "Industry Internship" proposal for SHS. The proposal was for a DECA Store Shift Manager and is a .25 credit bearing one-semester class with the Business Department. The committee received a presentation on the SHS course proposal – "Color Guard," which is an extracurricular activity. Aligning the Color Guard class with the current Marching Band class will allow time for rehearsals during the school day. Also presented was the SHS course proposal for "School of Rock" for students who had success in Intro to Piano, Guitar, and Ukulele and gives the opportunity to further their skills with a more rigorous curriculum.

Mrs. Carmody added that the teachers were doing wonderful things with different courses being offered to students, which makes for a comprehensive high school. It was important to have the teachers to be able to teach and offer these innovative courses.

**b. DW Facilities Committee Meeting – December 18, 2023**

Mr. Madancy reported that the Districtwide Facilities Committee met on Monday, December 18, 2023 at 4:00 p.m. via Zoom and included the newly elected various town Board members and members from SLAM who reviewed the Master Facilities Plan process and timelines to be included within the plan. The consensus was it was important to have a Master Plan because other work besides the three elementary school projects need to be addressed including the Karen Smith Academy, roofs at a few of the schools, and the HVAC systems at some elementary schools. Included in the conversation was an analysis of debt service and the order of the projects and impact. The committee agreed that more in person time was needed, townwide communication on the committee meetings and outcomes, the importance of members of the committee attending the meetings to share with the members of their elected Boards for feedback and being part of the conversation with no surprises. Mr. Madancy will be gathering follow-up information for SLAM for the planning process.

**c. Finance Committee Meeting – January 5, 2024**

Mr. Carson reported that the committee met and discussed awarding RFP-2024-10 (Request for Proposal) for the design and construction administration of the athletic track to SLR International Corporation in the amount of \$29,500 for both Phase I & II using STEAP (Small-Town Economic Assistance Program) grant funding. The committee also discussed the projected Special Education Excess Cost grant revenue reimbursement percentage at 73%, which is a conservative rate. The actual percentage will be known by the end of February. The committee reviewed the FY'24 Food Service finances through November including a comparison of meal counts to the prior year and discussed the STABLE funds. When the meals were free, the students served count was up and this year it is down 50,000 meals. Mr. Carson noted that there was a new Food Service Director and that the Food Service operations would be having a scheduled on-site review with the state of Connecticut on March 25-28, 2024.

Mr. Carson noted that there were changes to the postage regulations that would affect two pieces of postage meter equipment at the Municipal Center and the high school with an upgrade needed for these mailing machines. The USPS is switching their postage formatting from IBI to the IMI compliance standard.

Mrs. Mellitt added that at the Self Insurance Committee Meeting held on December 5, 2023, the committee voted for the 2024-2025 budget to have an 8% increase over the current year budget. She explained that the Southington Water Department has left the Self Insurance fund. This increase will be worked into next year's budget.

**1. RFP 2024-10 Athletic Track Replacement (STEAP Grant)**

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

**“Move to award RFP 2024-10 to SLR International Corp. in the amount of \$29,500 for the administrative services related to Phase I & II of the design and construction of the athletic track at Southington High School.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

**2. Postage Meter Lease Renewal**

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

**“Move to approve a new lease with Pitney Bowes for mailing machines at both the Municipal Center and high school for a 60-month term in the amount of \$1,741.17 per fiscal quarter.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

**8. SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT**

**a. Personnel Report**

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

**“Move that the Board of Education approve the Personnel Report, as submitted by the Human Resource Department.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

**9. OLD BUSINESS**

**a. Town Government Communications**

There was no communication.

**b. Proposed 2024-2025 School Calendar – Second Reading**

Mr. Madancy explained that he received a lot of feedback on the calendar from the community and staff. The resounding request was to move the April vacation from the second week in April to the third week. The third week encompasses Good Friday and aligns with surrounding towns. The change was reflected on the proposed calendar. The other change for consideration was for February 19, which was a Professional Development Day and would mean a two-day school week for students next year. He spoke to the teachers’ union about a floating workday to occur after July 1, but prior to the start of school, for staff to complete all the mandated trainings by the state of Connecticut. He noted that there were mechanisms in place to track their completion. He explained that the Southington Education Association (SEA) teachers’ union was in agreement. If the Board approves that amendment, he will have the calendar reflect February 19 as a school day and do a Memorandum of Understanding with the SEA for the floating workday to occur after July 1.

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

**“Move that the Board of Education approves the revised School Calendar for the 2024-2025 school year, as amended.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

**c. Policy 5141.5 – Suicide Prevention and Intervention – Revised – Second Reading**

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

**“Move to approve Policy 5141.5 – Suicide Prevention and Intervention, a revised policy, as presented by the Policy & Personnel Committee.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

**d. Policy 6161.1 – Parental Access to Instructional Material – New – Second Reading**

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

**“Move to approve Policy 6161.1 – Parental Access to Instructional Material, a new policy, as presented by the Policy & Personnel Committee.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

**e. Policy 9321 – Time, Place, Notification of Meetings – Revised – Second Reading**

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

**“Move to approve Policy 9321 – Time, Place, Notification of Meetings, a revised policy, as presented by the Policy & Personnel Committee.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

**f. Budget Assumptions and Priorities for 2024-2025**

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

**“Move that the Board of Education adopt the Budget Assumptions and Priorities for 2024-2025.”**

Mr. Williams thought that several of the priorities should be expectations and really were assumptions on how they operate as a Board. He thought that when there were nine priorities, nothing was a priority, and that they look to form a strategy around where they would like to invest in the future. The priorities cannot change every year especially in tough budget cycles. He thought it was important that they look at where they make investments year over year. Mr. Williams read aloud some of the priorities that he thought were expectations and noted that some of the priorities were standard operating procedures. He asked that as they move forward, they look at what their mission was and the overall strategy and road map.

Mr. Carson thought that the district had a clear vision and that everyone knew the Board’s vision that they use to ensure students are college and career ready. Even though the vision is established, they do not have a clear mission on how they achieve it. He thought each Board member had their own thoughts and should come together to discuss their individual reasons on why they serve the community. He pointed out that some of the individual Board members missions were student mental health, Junior ROTC, professional development and teacher salaries, school safety and security, educational opportunities and programming, diverse development and experiences, raising the profile of the school district through higher student scoring on state standardized tests. He noted that they all have something that they believe in and champion and that each Board member had something to contribute.

Mr. Oshana noted that the district already had a Mission Statement and Vision of a Graduate. He thought that if there were too many Assumptions & Priorities then they start to get nothing done. Once set, the priorities do not change until they are completed. He agreed

that every Board member was there to advance the education of students in the town. He stated that when the budget is developed and they put the Assumptions and Priorities out to the community and town officials and they start getting questions, the Assumptions and Priorities explain what the Board was trying to accomplish. Once the budget is out, all the Board members need to get behind it and support it. He thought the priorities were critical to the success of the budget and the education of the students.

Mrs. Clark thought that they had to look to the future and need to be on the same page on their vision. She and Mr. Madancy talked about holding a Board of Education Retreat where the Board could codify what they were doing.

Mr. Madancy stated that part of his budget presentation on Tuesday evening would incorporate requests for personnel that speak to some of the priorities, and he gave an example addressing the Vision of a Graduate and the innovative course offerings. He addressed the Southington High School Program of Studies handbook that would be released shortly with comprehensive class offerings and that they now must deliver on with enough teachers, which align with priorities for the proposed budget. One of his goals was to engage in a strategic planning process where they could dedicate time together to identify the priorities and memorialize them so that they stay, and they work together executing adopted and approved priorities within the Strategic Plan and engage the community in that conversation to raise awareness.

Mr. Derynoski liked the idea of a retreat. In the past, the Board had an annual retreat until seven years ago. The retreats were offsite, very informal, and included breakfast. He noted that the outcomes of the retreats were very positive. They were able to focus and put together an outline. Mr. Madancy noted that this Board tries to run very efficient business meetings and the Board meetings are not the forum to spend large amounts of time on strategic planning level work. The retreat would be three hours possibly from 9am-noon. Mrs. Clark recommended that they get through the budget season first and then look at a retreat.

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

**g. BOE Review and Discussion of Administrative Requests to Superintendent as part of the 2024-2025 Budget Development Process**

Mr. Madancy explained that there was no action on this agenda item. It was a follow-up opportunity for Board members if they had any questions or thoughts regarding the request for personnel. He had previously presented the rationale that was requested at the last Board meeting to the Board members to review the personnel requests. Mr. Baczewski commented that in the past, Board members did not get to see that aspect of the personnel requests and rationale behind the requests in putting together the Superintendent's proposed budget. He thought that this transparency was important.

**10. NEW BUSINESS**

- a. SHS – Human Rights Course Curriculum – First Reading**
- b. SHS – Industry Internship Proposal – First Reading**
- c. SHS – Course Proposal – Color Guard – First Reading**
- d. SHS – Course Proposal – School of Rock - First Reading**

Mrs. Clark stated that these were first reads and would come before the Board at their next meeting for action. Mr. Williams, Chair of the Curriculum Committee, or administration would be happy to answer any questions.

**e. Resolution for Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) and the Town of Southington – Board of Education**

Mr. Madancy explained that this grant was between DMHAS and the STEPS Coalition with Mrs. Megan Albanese listed as the Project Director and Ms. Kristin Sandler named the full-time Project Coordinator and is just a formality of the contract that the Southington Board of Education be listed as the fiscal agent. There is no cost to the Board of Education.

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

**“Move to approve the DMHAS Resolution, as presented.”**  
**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

**f. Appointment of NIPSEU Negotiating Committee**

Mrs. Clark asked for Board members who wish to volunteer to serve on this committee to contact her; otherwise, she would be appointing members. This negotiating committee was for the Food Service and Secretarial union contracts. The ground rules would be established starting in late February with the meetings to be held in the late afternoon.

**g. Approval of Sabbatical Leave – Betty Blackwell**

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

**“Move that the Board approve the Sabbatical Leave of Absence for Betty Blackwell, as recommended by the administration.”**  
**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

**h. Approval of Sabbatical Leave – Kara Sievel**

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

**“Move that the Board approve the Sabbatical Leave of Absence for Kara Sievel, as recommended by the administration.”**  
**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

**i. Student Expulsion**

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

**“Move that the Board of Education expel Student 2022-2023-19, as identified by the administration.”**  
**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

**11. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS**



**a. Public**

Ryan Ogren, 599 Mount Vernon Road, former Student Representative, stated that he was on winter break from college and gave an update on his successes and college experiences. He felt that the education he received in Southington prepared him for his courses and extracurricular activities. He is currently Class President for the Class of 2027 and has a 4.0 GPA. Board members were happy to hear of his accomplishments and were proud of his achievements.

Mr. Madancy clarified that the NIPSEU Negotiations would start on February 21, 2024 at 1:00 p.m.

**12. ADJOURNMENT**

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

**“Move to adjourn.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

***Linda Blanchard***

Recording Secretary