

*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  
OCTOBER 26, 2023**

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

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mrs. Colleen Clark, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Board members present: Mrs. Dawn Anastasio, Mr. Joseph Baczewski, Mrs. Terri Carmody, Mr. Sean Carson, Mr. James Chrzanowski (*arrived 6:52 p.m.*), Mrs. Colleen Clark, Mr. David Derynoski, Mr. Jasper Williams

Absent: Mr. Zaya Oshana

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

**2. EXECUTIVE SESSION –TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT STAFF, STUDENT MATTERS**

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

**“Move to go into Executive Session, excluding the public and the press, for the purpose of discussing Unaffiliated Compensation - Technology Department Salaries and Student Matters, and upon conclusion reconvene to public session.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

*Mrs. Clark ended the Executive Session at 7:01 p.m.  
The Regular Board meeting was reconvened at 7:06 p.m.*

**3. RECONVENE MEETING – REGULAR SESSION**

Board members present: Mrs. Dawn Anastasio, Mr. Joseph Baczewski, Mrs. Terri Carmody, Mr. Sean Carson, Mr. James Chrzanowski, Mrs. Colleen Clark, Mr. David Derynoski, Mr. Zaya Oshana (*Virtual*), Mr. Jasper Williams

Cabinet administrators present: Mr. Steven Madancy, Superintendent of Schools; Mr. Frank Pepe, Assistant Superintendent; Mrs. Jennifer Mellitt, Director of Business & Finance; Ms. Rebecca Cavallaro, Director of Pupil Personnel Services

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

#### 4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE & MOMENT OF SILENCE

The Student Representatives led in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mrs. Clark called for a Moment of Silence in memory of:

John Fiondella passed away on October 16, 2023. He was hired as a teacher by the Southington Public Schools in 1960 and held positions of teacher, interim principal, and principal until his retirement in 1996.

Mary Hobson passed away on October 20, 2023. She was hired as a Paraeducator in 1971 and held positions in the elementary schools until her retirement in 2006.

Robert Wood passed away on October 17, 2023. He was hired as the principal of Plantsville Elementary School in 1972 and retired in 1998.

#### 5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – October 12, 2023

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

**“Move to approve the regular Board of Education Meeting Minutes of October 12, 2023, as submitted.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

#### 6. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

##### a. Communications from Student Board Representatives

Chelsey Arduini reported on the following high school events: Student Representatives were panelists at the Town Council Forum, 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Music of the Knight, FBLA & DECA Halloween Party for younger students, National Honor Society Blood Drive, SHS Fall Concert, college deadlines, International Field Trip to Italy November 3-11, 2023.

Akari Win reported on the SHS fall athletic events and scores to date: Softball field new lights installation, CIAC post-season play started on Saturday with Boys & Girls Cross Country, Girls Volleyball (17-1), Girls Soccer (9-4), Boys Soccer held their Senior Night Celebration.

Uptej Singh gave the district report for the other schools. Oshana Elementary School: Grade 5 students participated in the CT Kid Governor Program. Kennedy Middle School (JFK): Halloween Dress Up Day October 31st with students who dress up asked to bring in canned food items to be donated to the Southington Food Pantry. JFK Trivia Team named a “Cip of Sunshine” in honor of former JFK teacher Mr. Joseph Cipollini will represent JFK at the Southington Education Foundation annual Trivia Bee. JFK’s First Robotics Team “The Eagle Engineers” was preparing for the upcoming championship. Students in the CLC (Comprehensive Learning Center) program visited Lyman Orchards for pumpkin picking. JFK thanked Christopher Matusik, owner of the Southington Dairy Queen for his continued support of the Eagle Excellence Program. DePaolo Middle School (JAD): JAD fall sports teams had a successful season. First Advisory lesson held this week to build positive adult relationships in a caring environment. Unity Day was October 18; Annual Light a Pumpkin Event held; students participated in Red Ribbon Rally; JAD Paraeducator Dawn Dickau was named Connecticut 2024 Paraeducator of the Year with Governor Ned Lamont and other state and local dignitaries visiting JAD on October 13 to celebrate Ms. Dickau.

Mr. Williams stated that he and other Board members attended the Town Council Forum and thanked the student representatives for doing a great job representing the Board of Education and student body. Mr. Carson questioned what the SHS Robotics Team was working on. Uptej

Singh spoke in detail about the Robotics Team challenge with regular season starting in January, the team's current preparations, mentoring elementary students and sharing STEM knowledge. Mrs. Clark believed that January 6, 2024 was the date for the Robotics Team kick-off at the Municipal Center and loved that the upperclassmen were mentoring the younger students.

**b. Communications from Board Members**

Mr. Derynoski commented on the BOE student representatives' representation as panelists at the Town Council Forum and that he heard positive comments from those in attendance about the great job that they did.

**c. Communications from Administration**

1. School Swatting Webinar: Mr. Madancy stated that he and Mr. Pepe attended a timely webinar on Tuesday that helped navigate Thursday morning with a swatting situation at the high school. The police department is working to track down the perpetrator of the swatting phone call to the high school. There is a national uptick in the new trend of "swatting", which is disruptive to law enforcement and education causing unnecessary stress to students and staff. Mr. Madancy noted that Michael Crocco, SHS Principal, sent a letter to families about the patience the families demonstrated, which was instrumental in how well things unfolded at the high school. Mr. Madancy praised the police, staff, students, and families on how well they all handled the situation.

2. Kindergarten Guidance from Connecticut State Department of Education: Mr. Madancy stated that he recently received communication from the State Department of Education that they would not be providing specific assessments for students who must be 5 years old on September 1 to enter kindergarten starting the 2024-2025 school year. The previous cut-off was January 1<sup>st</sup>. He plans to share with other superintendents what assessments they are considering because the state indicated they must utilize an assessment that is standardized and less subjective. He was also looking at enrollment of students turning age 5 to potentially plan for alternate Early Childhood programming for families that are told that it was not a good time for their child to start kindergarten, which may cause a burden to some families. He was meeting with a community group regarding grant funding sources for subsidies to help families.

3. Athletic Facilities Update: Mr. Madancy acknowledged that the SHS Girls' Softball field lights were received and scheduled to be installed next week. He thanked Mr. Romano, Director of Operations, Mrs. Mellitt, Director of Business & Finance, Mr. Fickle, Accounting Manager, and Mrs. Pocock, Assistant to Mr. Romano, for completing the volume of paperwork that it takes for the state to give a formal approval for funding for the partial roof replacement at the high school, which was approved at the referendum in November 2022. It will be going out to bid and is expected to be completed in the summer of 2024.

4. Threat Assessments and (UCC's): Mr. Pepe reported that he recently organized professional development sessions for inline administration, school social workers, school psychologists, and school counselors at all grade levels. The professional development topics were 1) threat assessment and, 2) training for urgent response for students in mental health crisis. He explained these topics in more detail including a presentation given by a director of one of the Urgent Care Crisis Centers (UCC) in Connecticut (out of four centers), that included the options for when they have a child in crisis.

**d. Communication from Public – Agenda Items Only**

There was no communication from the public on agenda items.

## 7. COMMITTEE REPORTS

### a. Policy & Personnel Committee Meeting – October 11, 2023

Mr. Williams reported that the committee met and reviewed Policy 3542.1-Purposes and Facilities (Food Services) revisions due to recent legislative changes; Policy 6141.4-Curriculum Exemptions to be further reviewed; Regulations language for Policy 6172-Curriculum Exemptions Extensions-Gifted and Talented Program; and revisions to Policy 9160-Student Representatives on Board of Education to include additional edits and refining the procedures for the Selection Committee.

### b. Curriculum & Instruction Committee Meeting – October 20, 2023

Mrs. Anastasio reported that the committee met and received presentations on the following: Comprehensive Learning Center (formerly ACHIEVE) ArtShop Curriculum to teach art and photography to students with varying disabilities; revisions to Computer Science Principles that is currently taught only at the AP level and to be offered at the accelerated level; and SHS-Accelerated Biology-Unit 3: Cellular Energetics. The dates for Curriculum & Instruction meetings for the 2023-2024 school year were reviewed.

Committee members were impressed with the CLC ArtShop Curriculum presentation and asked if the students could be invited to a future Board meeting to show their work. Mr. Williams thought the Computer Science Principles Accelerated and AP courses would give students more technology experience and competitive when applying to college.

### c. Finance Committee Meeting – October 19, 2023

#### 1. New Maintenance Vehicle Purchase – Four-year Financing (*formerly Agenda Item 7.c.3*)

Mr. Chrzanowski reported that the committee met and discussed in detail purchasing a new Maintenance Transit Cargo Van at a cost of \$53,000 including funding options. Received was a Ford Financial lease quote at a 9% interest rate and Municipal Leasing Credit Corporation at 8.25%. The committee discussed the condition of the current fleet of maintenance vehicles. Mrs. Mellitt added that by utilizing budgeted Rental of Equipment funds and a transfer of \$35,544 from the Connecticut Municipal Retirement (MERS) account financing would not be needed and the vehicle would be cash funded.

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

**“Move to approve the purchase of the Maintenance Vehicle using the budgeted rental of equipment funds and a transfer of \$35,544 from the CT Municipal Retirement Account.**

Mr. Chrzanowski supported buying the vehicle outright versus financing it. Mr. Madancy summarized that the motion on the floor was to purchase the vehicle with \$18,000 in rental funds from the operating budget and \$35,544 of unencumbered MERS funds. Mr. Baczewski questioned the amount of interest payment at 8.25% over the course of the four-year loan (\$10,000). Mr. Derynoski cautioned that they still did not know the unexpected Special Education costs and needed a cushion. Mr. Williams pointed out that vehicle loan interest rates would continue to increase.

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

**2. Transfer of Funds – STEAP Athletic Project** *(formerly Agenda Item 7.c.1)*

Mr. Chrzanowski reported that the committee reviewed the Transfer of Funds request to move funds from the Connecticut Municipal Retirement Account (MERS) into a Major Project and Equipment Account to fund the STEAP Athletic Projects that were approved by the Board of Education at their October 12 meeting.

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

**“Move to approve Transfer of Funds from the CT Municipal Retirement Account into a Major Project and Equipment Account to fund the STEAP Athletic Project, as presented.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

**3. Transfer of Funds – Computer Lab Update** *(formerly Agenda Item 7.c.2)*

Mr. Chrzanowski reported that the committee reviewed the Transfer of Funds request made by Mr. Tyler Savage and Mrs. Rebecca Savelkoul from the Technology Department to transfer funds from the Computer Software Account to Computer Hardware Account to update the computers in three labs at the high school.

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

**“Move to approve the Transfer of Funds from the Computer Software Account to Computer Hardware Account to update the computers in three labs at the high school, as presented.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

Mr. Chrzanowski explained that the committee also received a School Lunch update on the \$300,000 loan made to the School Lunch Program in October of 2020 during COVID that has yet to be paid back and that administration requested the loan be released from being repaid. Auditors will be onsite the week of October 30<sup>th</sup> and Mrs. Mellit will meet with them.

**8. OLD BUSINESS**

**a. Town Government Communications**

There was no Town Government Communication.

**b. ConEd Battery Storage Project**

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

**“Move that the Board of Education approve moving forward with the concept of the RWE property lease for the battery storage system at Joseph A. DePaolo and John F. Kennedy Middle Schools to be considered by the Town Council.”**

Mr. Derynoski addressed the Solar Panels installed a few years ago at multiple school sites and that he had yet to hear anything regarding how well they were doing and if the town was generating any revenue. He would like feedback. Mr. Madancy stated that he would follow-up. He reminded the Board that the RWE battery storage lease was for five years with an

optional five additional years at no cost to the district in terms of being locked in because they were not investing in anything. Mr. Derynoski was interested in the revenue stream for the battery packs and questioned who pays for the power source that charges the batteries. Mr. Oshana requested Mr. Madancy to repeat the motion. Mr. Oshana stated that he was in favor of moving forward with receiving the \$50,000 lease payment from the beginning and questioned the placement of an Electric Vehicle (EV) battery charging station. Mr. Madancy explained the RWE Proposal offered the option to install for free one (1) EV battery charging station at the high school, which could be discussed at a future time. Mr. Baczewski questioned the assessment value on the battery packs and was satisfied with the answers and transparency. His concern was over any unforeseen problems with the battery packs. Mr. Carson, having been the person who tabled the motion at the last BOE meeting, was in favor with moving forward with the project after receiving additional information. He discussed in detail the benefit and tax revenue to the town, which he stated was significant beyond the lease payment. He wanted the taxpayers and residents to know that.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YES – Mrs. Anastasio, Mr. Baczewski, Mrs. Carmody, Mr. Carson, Mr. Chrzanowski, Mr. Derynoski, Mr. Oshana, Mr. Williams, Mrs. Clark.

**Motion carried unanimously 9-0.**

**c. SHS Accelerated Physics Unit #3 Momentum & Impulse - Second Reading**

**MOTION:** by Mrs. Anastasio, seconded by Mr. Williams:

**“Move that the Board of Education approve the SHS Accelerated Physics Unit #3 - Momentum & Impulse, as presented by the Curriculum & Instruction Committee.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

**d. SHS Accelerated Physics Unit #4 - Work & Energy - Second Reading**

**MOTION:** by Mrs. Anastasio, seconded by Mr. Williams:

**“Move that the Board of Education approve the SHS Accelerated Physics Unit #4 - Work & Energy, as presented by the Curriculum & Instruction Committee.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

**e. SHS Accelerated Physics Unit #5 - Simple Harmonic Motion - Second Reading**

**MOTION:** by Mrs. Anastasio, seconded by Mr. Williams:

**“Move that the Board of Education approve the SHS Accelerated Physics Unit #5 – Simple Harmonic Motion, as presented by the Curriculum & Instruction Committee.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

**f. SHS Accelerated Physics Unit #6 - Electrostatics & Circuits - Second Reading**

**MOTION:** by Mrs. Anastasio, seconded by Mr. Williams:

**“Move that the Board of Education approve the SHS Accelerated Physics Unit #6 – Electrostatics & Circuits, as presented by the Curriculum & Instruction Committee.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

- g. SHS Accelerated General Chemistry Unit #3 - Matter & Energy Changes - Second Reading**

**MOTION:** by Mrs. Anastasio, seconded by Mr. Williams:

**“Move that the Board of Education approve the SHS Accelerated General Chemistry Unit #3 – Matter & Energy Changes, as presented by the Curriculum & Instruction Committee.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

- h. SHS Accelerated General Chemistry Unit #4 - Gas Law & Kinetics - Second Reading**

**MOTION:** by Mrs. Anastasio, seconded by Mr. Williams:

**“Move that the Board of Education approve the SHS Accelerated General Chemistry Unit #4 – Gas Law & Kinetics, as presented by the Curriculum & Instruction Committee.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

- i. SHS Accelerated General Chemistry Unit #5 - Flint Water Crisis - Second Reading**

**MOTION:** by Mrs. Anastasio, seconded by Mr. Williams:

**“Move that the Board of Education approve the SHS Accelerated General Chemistry Unit #5 – Flint Water Crisis, as presented by the Curriculum & Instruction Committee.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

- j. Middle School Needs Assessment - Second Reading**

**MOTION:** by Mrs. Anastasio, seconded by Mr. Williams:

**“Move that the Board of Education approve the Middle School Needs Assessment, as presented by the Curriculum & Instruction Committee.”**

Mr. Derynoski questioned if this would be reviewed by the parents. Mr. Pepe explained that once it was approved, a letter would be sent to the families with the actual survey attached.

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

## **9. NEW BUSINESS**

- a. Student Data Presentation – 2022-2023**

Amy Zappone, Director of Teaching & Learning for Second Education, Stephanie Lawlor, District Curriculum Coordinator ELA (English Language Arts) & Social Studies; and Alicia Naleway, Math & K-5 Science Coordinator, gave a detailed PowerPoint presentation on the data for the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments, NGSS (Next Generation Science Standards), and SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) results in Reading, Writing, and Math given in the 2022-2023 school year for the Southington Public Schools. They spoke at length on the Smarter Balanced District Performance Indicators given to all students in grades 3-8 to measure performance in ELA and Math; NGSS is given to students in grades 5, 8, and 11 to measure

performance in science; and the SAT is given to all grade 11 students. Reviewed was Connecticut's Next Generation Accountability System, which is a broad set of 12 indicators that demonstrates how well a school and district prepares students for success in college, career, and life and the indicators that were connected to those data points. Addressed in detail was the percentage of students demonstrating mastery in grade level standards in ELA, Math and Science and the percentage of students exceeding those standards. The achievement levels fall in a scale from Level 4 (exceeding the standard), Level 3 (meeting the standard), Level 2 (approaching), and Level 1 (does not meet). Addressed were the data comparisons to other districts in Southington's DRG "D" (District Reference Group) and the state average, achievement data, meeting goals, growth data, historical data, and performance of high needs students.

The Board members had many questions. Mr. Chrzanowski questioned if the school district had any internal goals in these areas. He wanted to know what the Board could do to reverse any negative trends. Mrs. Zappone, Mr. Pepe, and Mr. Madancy answered in detail. Mrs. Carmody pointed out that school districts nationally were still being affected by the years of COVID compared to the data from years before the pandemic. She thought that Southington was doing an excellent job with curriculum and professional development. Mr. Williams addressed an article in the Wall Street Journal that he read about the learning loss through COVID and what it equated to in dollars, which was alarming. He appreciated that Southington did not wait and made changes to curriculum to make up for COVID learning loss.

Mr. Carson had many questions. He asked the teachers what they needed from the Board moving forward. Mrs. Zappone and Mrs. Lawlor answered in detail. Mr. Carson questioned what the community could do to better support the parents in preparing their child(ren) to be successful students in K-grade 2. He addressed the Connecticut Next Generation Accountability System and noted that metrics and data were important and that he wanted to place the high school back to an award-winning Blue-Ribbon school and thought the accountability systems were what would get them there. He challenged the administration to make sure that the state of Connecticut knew of Southington Public Schools successes. Mr. Carson did not agree with the 12 indicators that the State Department of Education had listed. He wanted to know what the district was doing to make sure that Southington was achieving in all areas such as the arts, physical fitness, etc., and not just one snapshot in time, which does not show the full picture. He wanted to know what was being done to identify and improve other areas outside of language, math, and science. Mr. Carson questioned the chronic absenteeism percentage in the district. Mrs. Zappone answered Mr. Carson's questions at length. Mr. Carson addressed the state's LEAP Program that is federally funded and fully funded at the state level through 2026 and specifically designed to identify the chronic absenteeism and learning loss that has occurred because of the pandemic. He wanted to know Southington's connection to that program, how the school district was using it, and if the state is a partner or not. Mr. Pepe praised Mr. Madancy for revitalizing the District Data Team as they were coming out of COVID and addressed Mr. Carson's concerns at length. Mr. Carson questioned the measured learning loss from the pandemic and was given the statistics and data by the superintendent. Mr. Carson thought that Southington was doing a phenomenal job compared to other school districts and asked the superintendent to address at another Board meeting how the district was using the LEAP Program. Mr. Madancy acknowledged that Southington had a 12% chronic absenteeism in truancy, which was far lower than other school districts in the state. He noted that Southington's chronic absenteeism was not the percentage of students, it was the same students.

Mrs. Carmody summarized that the pandemic affected the school district, and they need more staff for mental health issues, emotional and social issues of the children, which would help



to alleviate a lot of the district's problems. She thought that the curriculum offered prepared the students with 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and to be competitive. She believed it would improve with additional staff.

Mr. Baczewski questioned the definition of a high need's student (multi-language learner, free and reduced lunch, or special needs). He thought that the person in the home of the student was the most important teacher in a child's life. He addressed creating community and public partnerships.

- b. **Policy 3542.1 – Purposes and Facilities: Food Service – Revision – First Reading**
- c. **SHS – Comprehensive Learning Center (formerly ACHIEVE) Art shop Curriculum – First Reading**
- d. **SHS – Computer Science Course Proposal – First Reading**
- e. **SHS – Accelerated Biology Unit #3 – Cell Energetics – First Reading**

The above are First Readings and will come before the Board members for action at the next Board of Education meeting.

- f. **Approve of Special Education Positions**

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

**“Move that the Board of Education approves the Special Education positions, as recommended by administration.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

- g. **Unaffiliated Compensation – Technology Department**

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

**“Move that the Board of Education approves compensation for Technology Department Unaffiliated Staff, as proposed by the administration.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

- h. **Superintendent's Proposed Goals 2023-2024**

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

**“Move to approve the Superintendent's Proposed Goals for 2023-2024.”**

Mr. Derynoski was concerned that Superintendent Madancy's goals were very ambitious and hoped that he could achieve all the many goals that he set forth. He was concerned with other issues that come up during the school year that would take away the effectiveness of achieving some of the goals. He wanted to make sure that the superintendent succeeded when the Board reviews whether he met or completed the goals.

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

## **10. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS**

- a. **Public**

There was no public communication.

Mrs. Clark noted that this was the last meeting of the Board members before the elections in November and thanked Mrs. Anastasio, who was not seeking re-election, for her service to the town and school district. She wished the Board members the best of luck.

## **11. ADJOURNMENT**

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

**“Move to adjourn.”**

**Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Linda Blanchard*

Recording Secretary