

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**

NOVEMBER 9, 2023

The regular meeting of the Southington Board of Education (Committee of the Whole - Operations) was held on Thursday, November 9, 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.

1. CALL TO ORDER BY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Mr. Madancy, Superintendent of Schools, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

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

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

Student Representatives present: Uptej Singh and Akari Win. Absent: Chelsey Arduini

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The student representatives led in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. SWEARING IN OF BOARD MEMBERS BY THE TOWN CLERK

Ms. Kathy Larkin, Town Clerk, conducted the swearing in ceremony and administered the oath of affirmation to the newly elected Board of Education members.

4. ELECTION OF BOARD OFFICERS

Board Chairperson:

Mr. Madancy called for nominations for the Chairperson of the Board of Education.

Mr. Derynoski nominated Mr. Oshana as Board Chairperson.

Mr. Baczewski nominated Mrs. Clark as Board Chairperson.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

For Mr. Oshana: Mr. Brown, Mrs. Carmody, Mr. Derynoski, Mr. Oshana (4 Votes)

For Mrs. Clark: Mr. Baczewski, Mr. Carson, Mr. Whitehead, Mr. Williams, Mrs. Clark (5 Votes)

Mrs. Clark was elected Chairperson of the Board of Education.

Mrs. Clark acknowledged that it was a very contentious time between political parties and that she hoped it would stop and that the Board could work together. She promised to represent the Board and students of Southington to the best of her ability.

Vice-Chairperson:

Mrs. Clark took over the meeting and called for nominations for the Vice-Chairperson of the Board of Education.

Mrs. Carmody nominated Mr. Oshana as Vice-Chairperson of the Board of Education in the spirit of bipartisan leadership and receiving the second highest votes.

Mr. Carson nominated Mr. Williams as Vice-Chairperson of the Board of Education.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

For Mr. Oshana: Mr. Brown, Mrs. Carmody, Mr. Derynoski, Mr. Oshana (4 Votes)

For Mr. Williams: Mr. Baczewski, Mr. Carson, Mr. Whitehead, Mr. Williams, Mrs. Clark (5 Votes)

Mr. Williams was elected Vice-Chairperson of the Board of Education.

Mr. Williams was humbled and looked forward to working together. He understood the concern for bipartisanship and hoped that the full Board would be committed to working together for the betterment of the town.

Board Secretary:

Mrs. Clark called for nominations for the Secretary of the Board of Education.

Mr. Williams nominated Mr. Baczewski as Secretary of the Board of Education. There were no other nominations.

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

Mr. Baczewski was unanimously elected Secretary of the Board of Education.

Mr. Baczewski stated that he considered the Board members as family. Mrs. Clark congratulated everyone and asked the Board members to please copy her if they have any specific questions or concerns on something that they need to work through with the Superintendent and/or Assistant Superintendent of Schools. She would be assigning BOE members to committees and to contact her if a Board member would like to be on a specific committee.

Mrs. Clark called for a recess at 7:09 p.m.

Mrs. Clark reconvened the regular meeting at 7:15 p.m.

Moment of Silence:

Mrs. Clark called for a Moment of Silence in memory of Mr. William Boyles who passed away on November 4, 2023. He taught Social Studies and History at Southington High School from 1977 until his retirement in 2004.

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

“Motion to move Agenda Items 9.a.1 & 9.a.2 ‘Approval of Out of State / Overnight Field Trips’ to Agenda Items 6.e.1 & 6.e.2.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – October 26, 2023

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

“Move to approve the regular Board of Education meeting minutes of October 26, 2023, as submitted.”

Motion carried with seven in favor and Mr. Brown and Mr. Whitehead abstaining.

6. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

a. Communication from Student Representatives

Uptej Singh reported on the following: The student representatives sent out a survey to high school students about the school environment and block scheduling with 1,234 students responding. Approximately 97% felt welcomed at the school, 88% felt connected to the school community, 87% felt they had an adult to talk to, 97% felt a staff member cared about them, 70% liked the block scheduling. He hoped that work would be done to make every student feel welcomed and supported.

District Report: DePaolo Middle School (JAD) participated in a variety of activities for Veterans Day; JAD finished their fall sports with the Boys Soccer team undefeated and Boys Cross Country Team placing third in the state meet. Students in the Animal Helpers Program traveled to LEAF and learned how to care for farm animals. Library Leaders from DePaolo and Kennedy Middle Schools traveled to the Southington Public Library for Leadership training. Thalberg School: Courtyard restoration took place to transform the space for use by all students with outdoor seating and umbrellas donated along with help by community partners. Kennedy Middle School (JFK) thanked local veterans’ who visited and shared their stories with the students; JFK invited family members of students who were veterans to a special presentation and concert with patriotic songs on Monday, November 14 at 9:15 a.m. followed by refreshments. JAD and JFK Math Night to be held at JAD on November 15 from 6:00-7:00 p.m. for families to become familiar with the math curriculum; JFK Grade 8 students participated in physical and mental challenges working in teams to complete the courses. Kelley School held their annual Veterans Day program hosting 50 family members of Kelley students and local Southington Veterans including breakfast with students and staff lining the school driveway for a Veterans Car Parade.

Akari Winn reported on the following: SHS World Language students traveled to Italy on November 3; CyberKnights FTC scrimmage and FLL qualifying event to be hosted on November 18 at DePaolo Middle School; Homecoming Dance and Pep Rally will be held next Friday with Spirit Week activities planned leading up to these events; Marching Band performed at Nationals and placed second in the nation; SHS Veterans Concert held November 8; Culture Night scheduled for November 30. Sports Reports: SHS Girls Volleyball won the CCC Conference Championship and advanced to CIAC Class LL State tournament; Girls Swimming & Dive Team won the CCC Conference Championship meet and advanced to the CIAC Class LL Diving Championship.

b. Communications from Board Members

Mrs. Carmody reported on the Business Advisory Luncheon held at the high school and thanked the businesses in town that work with the students. As a veteran, Mr. Williams recognized and praised the numerous Veteran's Day events at the schools.

Mr. Brown read a lengthy letter congratulating his fellow Board members and expressed his goals and priorities including providing quality education to every student, collaboration, and problem solving amongst Board members (without political infighting and dysfunction) to benefit the town and students, school visits, recognition of James Chrzanowski (former Board member) as a class act and good person.

Mr. Oshana noted that anyone willing to run for election and campaign during the toxic political environment these days should be respected for their public service to the community. He hoped that the Board of Education, other boards, and commissions in Southington could move forward and do what is right for the town and students. He noted that serving on the Board of Education was not politics but public service to the town.

c. Communication from Administration

Administration reported on the following:

1. SHS Marching Band: Mr. Madancy reported that between the Music of the Knight and the SHS Marching Band State Championship (second out of 16 teams) and then advancing to the Meadowlands competition and ranking fifth out of 55 bands at the National level, the band capped off their successes with a beautiful Veterans Day concert. He gave each Board member a band patch from the American Legion Veterans that the band members wear on their band jackets.
2. Inaugural Southington FIRST LEGO League: Mr. Madancy announced that the event is November 18 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
3. Channel 8, What's Right in Schools: Mr. Madancy reported that Channel 8 visited the Agricultural Science Program at the high school to do a segment on "What is Right in Schools" that will air on Tuesday, November 21, 2023 at 6:00 a.m. and all day on Channel 8.
4. Record Journal, Teacher Profiles: Mr. Madancy announced that the Record Journal will be highlighting Southington teachers all school year. Southington High School Teacher of the Year, Meghan Scam, Special Education Teacher in the TLC program, was the first to be highlighted. A teacher from every school will be highlighted with the next ones on November 28, December 6, and January 23. He will continue to update the Board on other dates.
5. SHS Softball Lights: Mr. Madancy announced that the SHS Softball Light poles were installed and thanked the Town Council, Town Manager (Mr. Sciota), Mr. Risser (Athletic Director) and Mr. Romano (Director of Operations) for their collective effort to secure the funding after being voted down in the referendum. He thought it fitting for the Girls Softball team, who holds the national record for winning the most State Championships, finally get to play under the lights.
6. K-Age Change Entry Work: Mr. Madancy stated that over the next couple of months the Board will become involved with the kindergarten age change legislation. Out of an average enrollment of 420 students there will be 125 families impacted by the legislation in Southington from families surveyed. He spoke at length about the effect on Pre-K programs and offering Pre-K5 half-day programming. He spoke with five community partners about offering subsidies through the Early Childhood Collaborative for the other half of the day, five-days a week with preschool, childcare, and transportation for families to set students up for success. Mr. Madancy planned to hold an informational meeting for families on December 7, 2023 at DePaolo Middle School. He noted that Connecticut was the last state in the nation to make this change in

kindergarten entry age. Mr. Brown questioned if state money was available. Mr. Carson questioned the screening process left up to municipalities and developing a standardized measuring procedure that would vary across school districts.

d. Communications from Public (Agenda Items Only)

Seth Korn, 8 Yorktown Road, liked the idea of highlighting teachers and hoped that the support teams would be highlighted as well. He congratulated the Board members who were elected to the Board of Education and noted that he was a parent of a current and future Kelley School student. He hoped to form a partnership with the Board and administrators. He addressed the Capital Improvement Plan first reading on the agenda and focused on the elementary school facilities project delayed to the 2025-2026 school year. He requested that the Board address this project sooner rather than later and make it a priority. He addressed the current condition of Kelley School and Policy 6161.3 “Comparability of Services.” He asked that the Town leaders and state representatives tour Kelley, Flanders, and Derynoski Elementary Schools and to visit the classrooms. He asked that the Districtwide Facilities Committee send the grant application to the state by June 2024. He would like to work with the Board members to see this project through because Kelley School was long past its lifespan.

e. Approval of Out of State / Overnight Field Trip (formerly Agenda Item 9.a.1 & 9.e.2)

1. SHS Wrestling Team – Lowell, MA

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

“Move to approve the SHS Wrestling Team Out of State / Overnight Field Trip to Lowell, Massachusetts, as presented by administration.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

2. SHS Wrestling Team – Plaistow, NH

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

“Move to approve the SHS Wrestling Team Out of State / Overnight Field Trip to Plaistow, NH, as presented by administration.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

7. SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

a. Personnel Report

MOTION: by Mr. 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.

8. OLD BUSINESS

a. Town Government Communications

There was no communication.

b. Policy 3542.1-Purposes and Facilities: Food Service – Revision – Second Reading

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

“Move to approve Policy 3542.1-Purposes and Facilities: Food Service – Revision, as presented by the Policy & Personnel Committee.”

Motion carried by voice vote with Mr. Brown abstaining.

c. SHS – Comprehensive Learning Center (formerly ACHIEVE) Artshop Curriculum – Second Reading

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

“Move that the Board of Education approves the SHS – Comprehensive Learning Center (formerly ACHIEVE) Artshop Curriculum, as presented by the Curriculum & Instruction Committee.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

d. SHS – Computer Science Course Proposal – Second Reading

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

“Move that the Board of Education approves the SHS – Computer Science Course Proposal, as presented by the Curriculum & Instruction Committee.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

e. SHS – Accelerated Biology Unit #3 – Cell Energetics - Second Reading

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

“Move that the Board of Education approves the SHS – Accelerated Biology Unit #3 Cell Energetics, as presented by the Curriculum & Instruction Committee.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

9. NEW BUSINESS

a. Approval of Out-of-State/Overnight Field Trips (*Moved to Agenda Item 6.a.1 and 6.a.2*)

- 1. SHS Wrestling Team, Lowell MA**
- 2. SHS Wrestling Team, Plaistow, NH**

b. Capital Improvement Plan 2024-25 to 2028-29 – First Reading

Mr. Madancy explained that this was a first read and would be brought before the Board at their next regular meeting in December. He instructed the Board members to call him or Mrs. Mellitt, Director of Business & Finance, or Mr. Kyle Fickel, Accounting Manager, if they had any questions regarding the process or regarding items within the plan.

10. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

a. Public

Jenny Drozd, 558 Churchill Street, stated that as a 2012 graduate of Southington High School she read the controversial book Native Son (Unabridged version) when she was in 10th grade. The book was an important part of her growth and instruction in English class. Although the book has challenging themes it was significant for the variety of topics that were discussed in the book. She noted that the controversial passage in question did not have a lasting impact on her. Recently, after reviewing it again, she found that the content would not have been shocking when she was 15 years old because she remembered hearing more explicit conversations and jokes from her peers when she was in middle school. She thought that the controversy was over just a small passage in the book that otherwise would have been forgotten. She did not have an issue with the book Native Son because it was an important American novel.

11. ADJOURNMENT

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

“Move to adjourn.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Blanchard

Recording Secretary