

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**

DECEMBER 14, 2023

The regular meeting of the Southington Board of Education (Committee of the Whole - Operations) was held on Thursday, December 14, 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 Executive Session preceding at 6:30 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mrs. Clark, Board of Education Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 6:34 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. Absent: Mr. Jasper Williams

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

2. EXECUTIVE SESSION – Student Matters & Attorney Client Privileged Communications

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 Student Matters and Attorney Client Privileged Communications, 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 7:04 p.m.

3. RECONVENE MEETING – REGULAR SESSION

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. Absent: Mr. Jasper Williams

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

Salvatore Triano, who passed away on December 6, 2023. He was a social studies teacher at Southington High School for 35 years until his retirement in 1993.

Joseph Szabo, who passed away on December 8, 2023. He taught physical education in the Southington Public Schools for 32 years until his retirement in June 2003.

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

“Move to move Agenda Items 10.a.1 & 10.a.2 ‘Approval of Out of State / Overnight Field Trips’ to Agenda Items 5.b.1 & 5.b.2.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

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

“Move to add Agenda Item 10.k ‘Student Expulsions’ to the agenda.

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – November 9, 2023

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

“Move to approve the regular Board of Education meeting minutes of November 9 2023, as submitted.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

b. Approval of Out of State/Overnight Field Trips (*formerly Agenda Item 10.a*)

1. SHS CyberKnights Robotics Team – Houston, TX

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

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

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

2. SHS Winter Color Guard – Bethlehem, PA

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

“Move to approve the SHS Winter Color Guard Out-of-State/Overnight Field Trip request to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, as presented by administration.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

6. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

a. Communication from Student Representatives

Uptej Singh reported on the numerous current and upcoming activities at Southington High School.

Chelsey Arduini gave an update on the fall sports including Class LL State tournament results for Girls Volleyball and Blue Knights Football. The winter sports season started for Girls & Boys Basketball, Wrestling, and the Boys Hockey Co-Op Team. The middle school Basketball teams will begin in early January.

Akari Winn gave the district report that included Kelley Elementary School and JFK and JAD Middle Schools.

Mr. Carson questioned the results for JFK Robotics team at the State Championships. Mrs. Vitcavage, Principal of JFK, stated that they won the Judge's Award.

b. Communications from Board Members

Mr. Brown reported that he, Mr. Whitehead, and Mrs. Clark attended the CABA (Connecticut Association of Boards of Education) Workshop for new Board members, which included the BOE budget process. Mrs. Clark and Mr. Madancy attended a conference regarding Title 9 and Title 6 and discussed the challenges and compliance issues for the district. The federal government will be releasing revised Title 9 guidelines in March. Mr. Carson explained that as part of his continuing education legal requirements as a licensed attorney, he will be getting certified in Title 9.

Mrs. Clark reported that she was on the STEPS Sustainability Committee and would bring to each Board meeting the Asset of the Month. The December Asset of the Month is "A young person feels safe at home, in school, and in their neighborhood."

c. Communication from Administration

Mr. Madancy reported on the following:

1. Frontline: Frontline Central is a new Human Resources software tool funded by Anthem. He explained the efficiencies it offers for managing information of 1,200 employees and maintaining compliance.
2. Excess Cost: The district can submit Excess Cost claims for students that are outplaced and students who are in-district if their cost per pupil exceeds four and one-half times the amount that qualifies for reimbursement. He explained in detail that the Excess Cost of \$144,327 helps to offset the costs to maintain in-district programs. He noted that he is lobbying for districts that do a good job should be getting reimbursement after three times the per pupil allocation rate.
3. SHS Roof: The state approved the application for the high school roof project with the Town Council approving the awarded bid. He noted that \$5 million was approved at the referendum but the total current project cost with bids was coming in less at \$3.9 million.
4. IDEMIA: Employees were being sent to the police station on Thursday mornings for fingerprinting, which was the only day to do this. Human Resources now has software called "IDEMIA" that allows HR to do the fingerprinting with access to the database so employees can get the background checks done quickly at the Municipal Center and be onboard faster. The new employee still pays for the background checks.

d. Communications from Public (Agenda Items Only)

There was no public communication on agenda items.

7. COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Policy & Personnel Committee Meeting – December 5, 2023

Mr. Baczewski reported that the committee met and discussed edits to Policy 5141.5-Suicide Prevention and Intervention, new Policy 6161.1-Parental Access to Instructional Material and Intervention, and edits to Policy 9321-Time, Place Notification of Meetings. These will come before the Board for action on the agenda later. The committee reviewed a new job description for Extended School Year Coordinator and Assistant ESY Coordinator, which is budgeted through grant funds. The committee also reviewed numerous job descriptions refining who reports to whom on a daily basis. The revised job descriptions reflect the current job requirements. Also, per the request of a parent, the committee discussed a peanut allergy policy that would create a 100% peanut free ruling and compared the policy to other towns that provide “peanut free” spaces and tables in their buildings. The committee recommended that Southington continue current practices.

Mrs. Clark noted that Board member Mr. Williams was absent from the Board meeting to attend his daughter's concert.

Mr. Whitehead thanked Mr. Pepe for helping the Pupil & Policy Committee with the numerous job descriptions with a quick turnaround. Mr. Pepe in turn thanked Mrs. Passamano, Human Resources Manager.

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

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

“Move to approve the Capital Improvement Plan 2024-25 to 2028-29, as presented by the administration.

Mr. Carson noted that this was a five-year plan projecting out to 2028-29 with air conditioning in the elementary schools with \$16million dedicated to HVAC improvement and systems in five of the eight elementary schools. Three of the schools are slated for new builds or renovations.

Motion carried by unanimously by voice vote.

10. NEW BUSINESS

Mrs. Clark noted that the “New Business” agenda had a lot of items to cover and requested that if Board members had any questions of the presenters to send them to Mr. Madancy for a response.

- a. **Approval of Out-of-State/Overnight Field Trips** (*Moved to Agenda Item 5.b.1 and 5.b.2*)
 - 1. **SHS CyberKnights Robotics Team, Houston, TX**
 - 2. **SHS Winter Color Guard, Bethlehem, PA**

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

Mr. Madancy explained that this was a first read and would be brought before the Board at their next regular meeting in January. He would be sending the calendar to families and staff for their input that Mr. Madancy will compile and send to the Board members for consideration before adopting the calendar.

- c. **Policy 5141.5 – Suicide Prevention and Intervention – Revised – First Reading**
- d. **Policy 6161.1 – Parental Access to Instructional Material – New – First Reading**
- e. **Policy 9321 – Time, Place, Notification of Meetings – Revised – First Reading**

Mrs. Clark explained that these were first reads and would be brought before the Board for action at their next regular meeting. If Board members had any questions on these first reads, they can bring them to the committee chair, Mr. Pepe, or herself to discuss.

- f. **Job Descriptions**
 - 1. **Extended School Year (ESY) Coordinator – New**

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

“Move to approve the new job description for Extended School Year (ESY) Coordinator, as presented by administration.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

- 2. **Assistant Extended School Year (ESY) Coordinator – New**

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

“Move to approve the new job description for Assistant Extended School Year (ESY) Coordinator, as presented by administration.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

- 3. **Maintenance Working Foreman – Revised**

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

“Move to approve the revised job description for Maintenance Working Foreman, as presented by administration.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

- 4. **Head Custodian – Revised**

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

“Move to approve the revised job description for Head Custodian, as presented by administration.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

5. Assistant Head Custodian – Revised

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

“Move to approve the revised job description for Assistant Head Custodian, as presented by administration.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

6. Custodian – Revised

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

“Move to approve the revised job description for Custodian, as presented by administration.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

7. Registered Nurse – Revised

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

“Move to approve the revised job description for Registered Nurse, as presented by administration.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

8. Licensed Practical Nurse – Revised

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

“Move to approve the revised job description for Licensed Practical Nurse, as presented by administration.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

9. Speech/Language Pathologist – Revised

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

“Move to approve the revised job description for Speech/Language Pathologist, as presented by administration.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

g. Superintendent’s Annual Report 2022-2023

Mr. Madancy explained that the Annual Report was a team effort compiled with the help of the administrative team, teachers, coordinators, and maintenance per the annual Town Charter requirement and will be submitted into the records with the Town.

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

“Move that the Board of Education approves the Superintendent’s 2022-2023 Annual Report, as submitted.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

h. State Funding Presentation – Impact to Southington

Mr. Madancy explained that the next three agenda items pertained to the upcoming budget season. He thought these items would set the stage for what they were looking at regarding the federal, state, and local funding sources that have formula changes, which will

impact Southington for several years. He wanted to share this information to the Board members and community for the upcoming budget season. He noted that Lisa Hammersley was a tremendous resource used in developing the budget.

Ms. Lisa Hammersley, Executive Director of the School and State Finance Project, which is a nonpartisan, nonprofit policy organization, focused on education funding and state finance issues, with a commitment to providing independent analysis, building public knowledge, improving transparency, and developing fair, sustainable solutions, gave a PowerPoint presentation (*Attachment #1*) on state funding support for the Southington Public Schools.

Ms. Hammersley stated that there were many legislative changes on how the state funds the public schools that impact Southington and creates a lot of unknowns for the Board on how much grant money will be received moving forward. She spoke in detail and highlighted some of the following:

- The funding sources for K-12 education in Connecticut with Southington's per pupil spending at \$17,251, which is \$3,000 less than the state average of \$20,165.
- State funding via the Education Cost spending formula, which is used to distribute state education aid to municipalities for their local or regional public school districts.
- Why Connecticut has an ECS formula. How the ECS funding flows.
- A town's ability to fund its public schools is determined by two factors: property wealth and income wealth.
- Factors impacting a town's ECS grant.
- How other public school students receive funding through 10 different funding formulas.
- Financial impact of Choice in Southington.
- 2023 Legislative Session – Regular Education funding changes.
- Impact of the 2023 Legislative Session efforts on Southington Public Schools (SPS);
- The Open Choice Impact. In 2022-23, Southington was projected to receive an Open Choice attendance grant of \$390,000 at \$5,000 per-student for 78 students. The additional funds for Open Choice from the budget could allow for an additional \$5,000 per-student for all Open Choice students. If the additional \$5,000 per Open Choice student is provided, Southington's attendance grant would double to \$780,000.
- Financial Impact to the Agriscience Program.
- Legislative change to Kindergarten Entry Age and the impact on Southington including changes to Excess Cost Grant.
- FY'25 funding requires a collaborative effort next legislative session (2024). There is a lot of uncertainty as the district prepares the budget for the upcoming school year.

Mr. Baczewski thought that it was a great presentation and asked if the PowerPoint presentation would be posted since it was not attached to the agenda. Mr. Madancy stated that it would be posted on the Budget page on the SPS website with all other presentations and a copy would be sent to the Board members and the community. Mr. Baczewski questioned the 125 students expected to be affected by the legislative change for entering Kindergarten and if the Board would be able to develop a Pre-K program that is Southington district sanctioned. Mr. Madancy stated that based on the new ECS funding, they would be losing money if they did not develop a program for them. Mr. Madancy added that when they look at \$500,000 as a potential fiscal year increase, it is .45% of the overall budget and less than one-half of a percent increase in state funding over the next seven years of funding.

Mrs. Clark stated that the Board had a lot of questions on the presentation and would get their questions to Mr. Madancy for a response.

i. Budget 2024-2025 Administrative Requests Review

Mr. Madancy explained that the administrators were present to answer any questions that the Board might have regarding their New Personnel budget requests for the 2024-2025 budget. He noted that the past couple of years the Superintendent's budget that was presented were for level services due to receiving less funding than previous years with budget requests for new positions cut before they even came to the Board for discussion. Tabling these needs could not continue; therefore, the full New Personnel budget requests by administrators were coming before the Board for discussion. There were 46 new staff members requested overall. After all the administrators reviewed the requests together, they revised the list of requests to priorities that were being presented tonight. Normally, the Superintendent's proposed budget would be presented to the Board without the full list of requests.

Mrs. Carmody questioned what school was requesting the Assistant Elementary Principal (Hatton). Mr. Garry, Principal of Hatton, replied in detail. Mr. Whitehead questioned the two Psychologists positions. Dr. Cavallaro replied in detail (SHS). Mr. Baczewski questioned why the school would be supplying a psychologist instead of the parent. Dr. Cavallaro replied it was due to the state Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act law called "Child Find" that the district is required by law to evaluate the student. She addressed this in detail. The only thing a School Psychologist would do is provide services that would allow a student to access his/her education and if it was something that required counseling that did not relate to education, like clinical services, then families would be referred to their own private therapist. Mr. Brown stated that the time spent testing had doubled and that the numbers of students in need of services were going up, the time to service students was going down.

Mrs. Carmody questioned the 1.7 Social Workers. She thought that number should be increased due to students with emotional and social crisis. Mr. Madancy stated that the original request was higher. Dr. Cavallaro and Mr. Madancy replied in detail. Mrs. Marilyn Kahl, Principal of Kelley Elementary and Mr. Jess Levin, Director of the Karen Smith Academy, replied on how the Social Worker positions are utilized and the need at the building level.

Mrs. Clark questioned the seven elementary teachers for class size. Mr. Pepe replied in detail about the Board guidelines for class sizes.

Mr. Oshana thanked the administration for putting together the Summary of New Personnel Requests for the 2024-2025 school year and thought that the list was a great tool. He requested to see the rationale documentation behind each of the requests to help the Board make decisions on priorities along with the requests that were already removed. Mr. Madancy stated that he would bring that detailed information to the January Board meeting. Mrs. Clark added all the requests were valid.

Mr. Baczewski stated that he puts his faith in the administrators and superintendent to fulfill the current needs of the district and wanted to know which personnel requests were for new programming at the high school and not just level services. Ms. Crouch and Ms. Zappone from the high school addressed what staff requests would give more opportunities for courses and career pathways. Mr. Baczewski stated that he wanted to grow the course offerings and

add new ones and not be stagnant. Mr. Pepe pointed out that many of the students could not get into their chosen class request due to classes being full. Mr. Brown stated that the Board's responsibility was to move forward a budget that meets the needs of the students.

Mr. Madancy explained that Mrs. Mellitt provided a coversheet with the New Personnel requests including the dollar amounts with a minimum and maximum salary range.

j. Budget Assumptions and Priorities for 2024-2025

Mr. Madancy noted that in budget preseason he thought it would be good to include the 2024-2025 Budget Assumptions and Priorities that drive the budget including mandates that came out of the legislative session that will drive costs of the budget development in addition to new staff. He addressed the funding sources no longer available. He proposed that typically for the first meeting in January he presents the Superintendent's Proposed Budget but there was currently a lot of uncertainty in the state budget and usually the Board approves their budget before the Governor adopts his budget. Mr. Madancy spoke to the Town Manager and was told that the latest they could present the Board of Education budget was February 9. The Governor's budget comes out February 7 or 8 statutorily that would result in the BOE having the numbers before the BOE adopts a budget. A Special Meeting could be called to adopt the Board of Education budget because they would not be presenting the BOE budget to the town until February 15, 2024 with the town budget being finalized on February 18, 2024. This would mean pushing back the budget process to provide more time to get more information and collaborate and would know what the grand list revenue would be that comes out on January 30. All this would create a fiscal picture on their decisions. Mr. Madancy asked to push back discussing the draft Budget Assumptions & Priorities based on this information and presenting the Superintendent's budget at the first workshop date.

Mr. Whitehead questioned if the Superintendent would have all the state mandate costs prior to the budget. Mr. Madancy replied that they would not have all of them and spoke at length on the mandates. Mr. Carson added that another mandate was special education services offered to students through the age of 22 that could be unfunded to finish the school year after aging out.

Mrs. Clark clarified that the Budget Assumptions and Priorities would be coming before the Board at their next meeting in January for discussion.

k. Student Expulsions

1. Student 2023-24-06

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

"Move to expel Student 2023-24-06, as stipulated by the administration."

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

2. Student 2023-24-07

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

"Move to expel Student 2023-24-06, as stipulated by the administration."

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

11. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

a. Public

Amanda Schlitten, 6 Aspen Way, addressed safety of children with life-threatening allergies in Southington Public Schools. She explained that her four-year-old daughter would be attending Thalberg Elementary School next year as a Kindergarten student and was highly allergic to peanuts that puts her at risk. She spoke to administration about this request, which was taken to the Policy and Personnel Committee and her request to make the Southington Public Schools a nut and peanut butter free school district for the safety of students with nut allergies was denied. She was requesting that the Board allow her child to attend school with a minimal risk of having a life-threatening consequence from the food choices of others due to the current Board policy. She stated that many Connecticut schools have already made the change to a nut and peanut butter free district to keep children safe in their schools.

12. ADJOURNMENT

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

“Move to adjourn.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Blanchard

Recording Secretary

Southington Public Schools
BOE Meeting December 14, 2023

Attachment #1
STATE FUNDING PRESENTATION – IMPACT TO SOUTHINGTON
PowerPoint Presentation by Lisa Hammersley



12-14-23 Hammersley PP Presentation.pdf