

Board of Education Regular Meeting
August 21, 2017

Call to Order

Board Chair Gee called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Suffield Middle School Auditorium. Present: Board members Kendra Wiesel, George Beiter, Susi Keane, Michael Sepko, Jeanne Gee, Lori D'Ostuni, John Richter, Natalie Semyanko, Superintendent Karen Berasi, Assistant Superintendent Brian Hendrickson, and Business Manager Bill Hoff

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Recognition

None

Public Comment

None

Approval of Minutes

D'Ostuni moved to approve the July 31, 2017 meeting minutes. Semyanko seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion carried 8-0.

Consent Agenda

None

Discussion/Action Items

- 2016-2017 Educator Retention Report
Superintendent Berasi said this report shows the district's certified staff retention rates over five years and compares the district's rates to the national rates. The national retention rate is 84% percent whereas Suffield's retention rate is 91.7%. Retention rates have remained steady in the district since the 2012 school year. Ms. Berasi noted the standard is a 10% turnover rate. Ms. Berasi stated the administration, a supervisor, or the human resources specialist, Kathy Carney, speak to employees in an informal setting who are leaving the district in order to receive feedback to improve practice and support the staff. Superintendent Berasi supports the Board's interest in hiring a human resources administrator. Board Chair Gee shared the efficiency study done a few years ago that evaluated the possibility of sharing services with the Town, specifically, human resources, the business office, and technology. The results were technology and human resources were viable but combining the business departments was not recommended. Board Chair Gee said the Town has a full time human resources director with far less employees than the district and the district does not have an administrator. Superintendent Berasi said Kathy Carney does a terrific job but has a tremendous workload as she is the only human resource person for the whole school district. Board members discussed exit interviews and there was interest in looking at developing a policy to ensure consistency and integrity in the process. The Board discussed looking at what other districts do and about having a third party conduct exit interviews. Ms. Berasi shared the feedback she received from staff who were leaving the district and it was asked of her to include this narrative in her retention report in the future.

- July 2017 Financial Report

Mr. Hoff said the projected year end surplus of \$3,809 is very preliminary because there are few actual expenses or encumbrances at the beginning of the fiscal year. The current overall salary savings from turnover are projected to be \$11,518 over the \$150,000 that was budgeted. Mr. Hoff distributed a comparison of state funding based on the Governor's latest executive order issued last Friday. There are additional, significant cuts to the Education Cost Share and Excess Cost funds. Mr. Hoff emphasized that the longer the state operates without a budget the more detrimental it will be to municipalities, however, it is unknown how large of an impact it will be as there is little information on the potential funding levels from the State. Mr. Hoff stated the Town has done a great job managing the budget and the district will begin the year without a problem, but it will be more difficult to make changes to the budget in the middle of the year as expenses are set. The Board discussed the current open positions: the assistant principal at Spaulding and the technology integrationist and some members questioned if the administration has considered holding off on hiring a technology integrationist. Mr. Hoff noted it will take about a month to fill both of the open positions and he was optimistic that they would have more information from the State at that point. Ms. Berasi attended the annual back to school meeting with the Commissioner of Education and she urged the community to contact their legislators. The Board discussed scheduling a budget subcommittee meeting.

- Adoption of Free and Reduced Price Meals Policy Statement

Mr. Hoff said the Board must approve this program annually in order to participate.

MOTION #18-04: Beiter moved, Wiesel seconded the motion to adopt the free and reduced price meals policy statement as presented. All members voted in favor. The motion carried 8-0.

Reports to the Board

- Superintendent's Report

- Superintendent Berasi said administrators and curriculum leaders attended a workshop last week with Dr. Villanova – the topic was leadership for systematic improvement.
- Thursday is New Teacher Orientation, Convocation is on Friday, and the focus of the upcoming professional development days is “know your kids”.
- Ms. Berasi shared the number of 8th graders attending private and magnet schools for this school year and last school year.
- Officer Tom Kieselback will not be serving as SRO until October as he is needed in the Police Department until then.
- The CT Commission for Educational Technology just released its five year goals and plan. Ms. Berasi will send this information to the Board in her update.
- An open house for the community to meet Dr. Pangallo is scheduled for September 7 at Spaulding school.

- Board Chair's Report

- Board Chair Gee reminded Board members of the CAFE conference.
- Board Chair Gee congratulated Lori D'Ostuni who has earned CAFE's Certificated Board of Education designation.

- Business Manager's Report
 - Mr. Hoff said the bus schedule is on the district's website. He has received a number of changes. He has also received a few requests to change bus stops. Mr. Hoff is going to each location to determine whether the request is warranted. A bus stop will be changed if it is determined it is a safety issue. The district's goal is to consolidate stops for efficiency and reduce the length of time students are on the bus. Mr. Hoff will attend M&J's kick-off meeting with bus drivers tomorrow.
 - Mr. Ben Gashi, the new food service director, will hold his kick off meeting with food service staff this Thursday.
 - A contractor will be installing the smoke detectors in the Spaulding gym and the ceiling should be completed by the start of school.
 - The license scanning kiosks will be operational in all schools for the start of the school year. A communication will be sent to parents this week.

Subcommittee Reports

August 2 & 8, 2017 HR/Personnel (Negotiations) Subcommittee meetings - Board Chair Gee said a tentative agreement has been reached with the Teamsters union. She said the level of cooperation during the process was exceptional. She thanked Mr. Lepore and the Teamsters representatives as well as the administration and legal counsel. Superintendent Berasi reiterated Ms. Gee's sentiments and added it was a very amicable, collaborative and respectful process.

Board member Semyanko said there is a Teaching and Learning subcommittee meeting on September 7. She would like the committee to review data on full day kindergarten and the return on moving from half day to full day kindergarten.

Future Business

Policy meeting to review exit interviews process
BOE workshop/community discussion on public education

Board Chair Gee thanked Ms. Lisa Walters who set up and taped tonight's meeting.

Adjournment

Beiter moved, Richter seconded to adjourn the meeting at 7:16 p.m.

Minutes are subject to approval at the next meeting on September 5, 2017.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori D'Ostuni
Secretary