

Board of Education Meeting
September 15, 2015

Call to Order

Board Chair Gee called the meeting to order at 6:44 p.m. in the Suffield High School Media Center. Present: Board members Susi Keane, Lori D'Ostuni, Natalie Semyanko, Jeanne Gee, Matthew Service, Michelle Zawawi, Superintendent Karen Berasi, Assistant Superintendent Brian Hendrickson and Business Manager Bill Hoff.

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment

Ben Rodriguez, 560 Thrall Ave, said he has reviewed SAT and SBAC scores and suggested the Board look at that data and how it translates into strategies in the future.

Communications

Superintendent Berasi said the Professional Development and Evaluation Committee held their first meeting of the year on September 11. She reported the meeting was very successful and the teachers on the committee will report out to the schools on next steps in professional development and teacher growth. Superintendent Berasi said she will be spending one full day each week in the schools. She will visit classrooms with building administrators and the purpose of these visits is to help the administration calibrate to provide productive feedback about instruction. Ms. Berasi emphasized the classroom visits are not teacher observations and that no records are being kept on the visits.

Superintendent Berasi informed the Board that Jane Panicucci from the Active Learning Group will be in district tomorrow conducting a workshop with the leadership team on organizational health.

Approval of Minutes

Semyanko moved, Keane seconded to approve the minutes of September 1, 2015. All members voted in favor except Zawawi, who abstained.

Consent Agenda

None

Discussion/Action Items

• Curriculum Update – Summer Work

Sara Baranauskas and Kris Pryce presented the curriculum work that was done K-5 over the summer in ELA and Math. In ELA, the focus was around developing and revising reading units of study. To date two units of study have been completely written K-5 and are vertically aligned. In Math, a committee chose two math programs to pilot K-5: Eureka and Investigations. Teachers worked on the first 20 days of the math workshop in Kindergarten over the summer. The committee has asked for and received teacher feedback to guide their work and revisions. The curriculum establishes student learning targets that are aligned with the Common Core State Standards. The Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, administrators in attendance, and the Board congratulated the committee for their purposeful work and thanked Ms. Baranauskas and Ms. Pryce for their presentation. Board member

D'Ostuni asked about resources available for curriculum work. Mr. Hoff said approximately 50% of the funds budgeted for curriculum have been used. Superintendent Berasi noted there is a lot of work to be done in curriculum and the administration will decide where to transfer money from in the budget to support the work that still needs to be accomplished. She noted curriculum work also includes professional development for teachers.

- August Financial Report

Mr. Hoff reviewed the financial report and noted the current end-of-year surplus of \$291,440. He noted administration is in the process of revising the Choice Academic Support Grant and Open Choice grant expenditures. Board member D'Ostuni questioned the significant change in the surplus over last month. Mr. Hoff said that is due to salary expenditures since teacher salaries are now being expended.

- Discussion of 2015-2016 Priorities

Superintendent Berasi distributed a draft copy of the district priorities to Board members. She said the priorities are based on the district's strategic plan. The measurable goals are based on two indicators on each of the four goals in the strategic plan. She has received feedback from building administrators and Board member Sepko. Establishing these priorities will help the district focus its resources, time and effort to achieve these eight indicators. Ms. Berasi said she will provide an outcomes report to the Board at the end of the school year. She noted she will be submitting to the Board district priorities for the 2016-2017 school year soon as well. Ms. Berasi added there is not a lot of data at this point and these goals are a starting point.

C.L.&P./Powerpoint Agreement

Board Chair Gee summarized a statement provided to her by Board member Beiter relative to the C.L.&P./Powerpoint agreement: The Budget subcommittee discussed a possible plan to engage our state legislatures and temporarily withhold our payments on this project. We would like to ask for State Representative Zawistowski and State Senator Kissell to conduct reviews into this manner before we make final payments. As a town, we invested about \$500,000 and as Connecticut taxpayers, we invested another \$500,000 for this project for savings that never came to fruition. CL&P and their recommended contractor Powerpoint, which was used to create the savings model, cannot give us clear answers. The subcommittee recommends getting the full board to vote on this plan. Board Chair Gee said she and Board member Beiter met with Board of Finance members, Justin Donnelly and Ryan Anderson, who are in full support of this plan and believe the full Board of Finance would support this approach. Mr. Hoff noted the district owes approximately \$23,000. Superintendent Berasi said in addition to not seeing the savings promised the software does not work properly.

MOTION #15-57: Zawawi moved that the full Board moves to temporarily withhold payments on the CL&P Light Replacement Project until further review from our local State legislatures. Further, Zawawi moved to give the Board Chair the authority to draft and sign letters to CL&P advising them of our plan and to our local State legislatures requesting their review of this project. Keane seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

Reports to the Board

Superintendent's Report

- Superintendent Berasi said the Budget subcommittee discussed conducting a security audit. She stated principals and other administrators are concerned about security in our schools. Ms. Berasi distributed a memo from Mr. Plano and results of a security audit conducted in January 2014. She reviewed the security projects that were completed and those that were not completed. The Superintendent said because the audit was conducted almost two years ago, it would be in the district's best interest to conduct another audit. She suggested an audit be done by another company. Board members discussed the previous audit and security grant. They also discussed holding meetings with the Board of Finance and Board of Selectmen on the issue.

Chair Report

- Board Chair Gee said she and Board member Beiter met with Justin Donnelly and Ryan Anderson on Monday morning to begin discussions around the budget. She noted that the Board of Finance was very appreciative of the information that was provided to them last year from the administration. Mr. Anderson will once again serve as the Board of Finance liaison. She asked Board members to check their availability on Monday, November 30 and Monday, December 7 to attend a Tri-board meeting.
- Board Chair Gee thanked Ms. Taylor and Mr. Hendrickson for their work and input at the Policy meeting and she thanked Dr. Segool, the district's medical advisor, for the guidance he gives the district.

Subcommittee Reports

The Budget/Finance/Facilities subcommittee met on September 4, 2015. Board member Gee summarized the meeting on behalf of Board member Beiter. The committee continued its discussion and understanding of ACCE items. Bill Hoff and Larry Plano shared the current ACCE request list. This is a working document, which has not been recommended by the budget subcommittee or the full board. The full board is in receipt of this working document as well as the priorities from each building principal to help Board members understand of many of the items on the list. The subcommittee also discussed school security and clearly puts a priority on security to ensure safety for our kids. The committee had a discussion about bringing in school safety experts annually to help us review our buildings. Mr. Plano will provide more information on what expertise is available. Past reviews and consensus of the subcommittee was that our high school entrance is of great concern. The committee discussed the board's requested efficiency study. Superintendent Berasi has a potential person to help with this project. A presentation will be given to the subcommittee of their experience and capabilities at an upcoming meeting. The committee also discussed the CL&P project and the poor results from that investment.

The Negotiation Committee met with SEA on September 3, 2015 to set ground rules and meeting dates.

The Policy Subcommittee met on September 10, 2015. Board member D'Ostuni reviewed the proposed changes for the policies on a 30-day read. She noted most of these policy changes are due to legislative changes, with the exception of the Meeting Conduct and Order of Business policies. Board member D'Ostuni said the Board used to have public comment guidelines that were available at meetings. Those guidelines are now in the proposed changes to the policy. She highlighted other changes in the public comment section of the policy. The Order of Business policy is being revised to improve the effectiveness board meetings. The Board

discussed the proposed changes to the Board agenda. Board members agreed to move communications under subcommittee reports, keep the business manager's report, and remove the second public comment.

Future Business

None

Public Comment

Mr. Rodriguez said there is strong utility for having public comment at the end of meetings. He congratulated the Board for their work and decisions relative to the CL&P/Powerpoint agreement. He was pleased to see measurable indicators relative to assessments.

Adjournment

Service moved, D'Ostuni seconded to adjourn the regular meeting at 8:39 p.m.

Minutes are subject to approval at the next meeting on October 6, 2015.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori D'Ostuni
Secretary

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