

Board of Education Meeting  
December 16, 2014

Call to Order

Acting Board Chair Gee called the meeting to order at 4:34 p.m. in the Suffield High School Media Center. Present: Board members Lori D'Ostuni, Natalie Semyanko, Jeanne Gee, and Board Attorney, Jessica Ritter

Executive Session

D'Ostuni moved, Semyanko seconded to go into executive session at 4:34 p.m. for the purpose of a discussion concerning the Superintendent's contract.

Semyanko moved, D'Ostuni seconded to come out of executive session at 5:00 p.m.

Regular Session

Acting Board Chair Gee called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m. in the Suffield High School Media Center. Present: Board members Lori D'Ostuni, Natalie Semyanko, Jeanne Gee, George Beiter (via telephone), Michelle Zawawi (arrived at 5:19 p.m.), Superintendent, Karen Baldwin, Assistant Superintendent, Jim Collin and Business Manager, Bill Hoff

The meeting opened with a moment of silence in memory of Kevin Vitale, a Suffield High School student who was killed last week in an accident. The Pledge of Allegiance followed the moment of silence.

Public Comment

None

Suffield High School Student Representative

Taylor Schwab updated the Board on the events at the high school:

- Agri-science held their holiday sale last week
- Best Buddies will have their holiday party and food drive with the Interact Club
- The Giraffe Club had their annual reading to students at Spaulding and made gift baskets
- The Earth and Outing Club are going fishing
- The SHS newspaper issued its 1st edition; it included interviews of new SHS administrators
- Ski Club is starting up
- Colton Grob and Jarvis Miller were named All Americans in soccer and football
- The girls' basketball team won their first game
- National Honor Society held the Toys for Tots and Teen drive; gifts are being delivered today or tomorrow
- World Language Society participated in French week
- HS students attended an assembly about social media and how to use appropriately, there was a lot of positive feedback from students
- Mr. Moccio is surveying students on how the high school can improve assemblies
- The school store has apparel on sale
- Taylor, on behalf of students, thanked the Suffield community for their support as the student body dealt with the death of Kevin Vitale.

### Communications

Acting Board Chair Gee said the district received a donation from CRIS Radio for audio magazine subscriptions and MP3 players for print challenged students at Suffield Middle School. A letter of recognition and gratitude was sent to the donor.

Acting Board Chair Gee said Board members received a communication from Dr. Steven Rascher, a Suffield High School teacher, relative to the UConn/ECE course. Board member D'Ostuni suggested laying on the table the UConn/ECE course from approval this evening's agenda. Superintendent Baldwin said the administration has been working with the prior Board Chair on this matter and there is more information the Board may want to consider.

**MOTION #14-59:** D'Ostuni moved to lay on the table the approval of the UConn/ECE course listed under Item D of the Discussion/Action Items portion of the agenda. Semyanko seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

### Approval of Minutes

Semyanko moved, D'Ostuni seconded to approve the minutes of the December 2, 2014 Board of Education meeting. The minutes were unanimously approved.

### Discussion/Action Items

- Acceptance of Resignations of Board of Education Members: Mary Lou Sanborn, Sue Porcello, Scott Schneider, and Mary Roy.  
**MOTION #14-60:** D'Ostuni moved to accept Mary Lou Sanborn's resignation from the Board of Education, effective immediately. Semyanko seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.  
**MOTION #14-61:** D'Ostuni moved to accept Sue Porcello's resignation from the Board of Education, effective immediately. Semyanko seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.  
**MOTION #14-62:** D'Ostuni moved to accept Scott Schneider's resignation from the Board of Education, effective immediately. Semyanko seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.  
**MOTION #14-63:** D'Ostuni moved to accept Mary Roy's resignation from the Board of Education, effective immediately. Semyanko seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

Board member D'Ostuni thanked the members for their years of service on the Board. Acting Board Chair Gee said she was grateful to each member and learned from each of them in their time on the Board. She regretted that they would not continue.

- November 2014 Financial Report  
Mr. Hoff said the current budget projection shows a year end surplus of \$102,649. He said the biggest difference in the budget over last month is the energy cost, which is approximately \$50,000 above the budget projection and is assuming an average winter. The district saved money in health benefits. Professional Services are approximately \$64,000 over budget because that is a special education expense which is very volatile. We realized savings in transportation because some expenses are being charged to special education. Mr. Hoff reviewed the November food service statement. Year to date food service shows a loss of approximately \$41,000, but there was a gain of approximately \$12,000 in the month of November. Mr. Hoff noted that the participation rates are much improved over past years and if they continue we would break even for the year. The last

couple of months have helped in reducing the deficit. Mr. Hoff said the surveys are out. A reminder will go out to parents to complete the surveys, and administration will be compiling data by the end of year. He noted special education and energy are the volatile expenses in the budget. Superintendent Baldwin said this is a tight budget.

- Report on Proposed Transportation Policies

Dr. Baldwin said the Policy subcommittee has begun taking a look at transportation policies. Mr. Hoff has been reviewing the transportation policies and has determined that policy and practice do not always align relative to transportation. These policy revisions would be implemented for 2015-2016 school year and future Board meetings would be used to communicate the changes with parents and get their feedback. Mr. Hoff said safety is the main reason the administration is proposing these changes. Mr. Hoff said the revisions include addressing realistic distances for students to walk to bus stops and the number of stops buses make. Stops less than 100 feet of one another are not safe. The current policy states that students can only ride one bus, which is not realistic, and the policy is not being consistently applied. Mr. Hoff said the goal is to get parents involved and get their feedback. Getting children safely to and from their bus stops is the responsibility of the parents. Acting Board Chair Gee asked if it is possible to have conversations with the affected families. Mr. Hoff stated these families were called to notify them of the transportation policy review and would be notified again for their feedback. Board member D'Ostuni asked if the changes affected main roads or mostly cul-de-sac streets. Mr. Hoff said the changes would affect cul-de-sac street stops, not main road stops.

- Approval of new SHS courses: AP Macro Economics, Introduction to Media Literacy and Production, Media Communications, Teen Leadership, Advanced Sports concepts, Personal Fitness, Unified PE, and UConn/ECE English(*tabled*).

Board member Semyanko recognized the hard work of the teachers and applauded their efforts noting Mr. Dudek teaching an AP course, Mr. Casinghino bringing forward media courses to provide more opportunities for students and provide a through line in grades 6 - 12, and Mrs. Lombard, Mr. Senger and the entire P.E. department for thinking out of the box in their courses being approved. She noted these courses are contingent on what the budget will allow. Board member D'Ostuni said the total course figures have not come to subcommittee, and asked if it will be included in the budget. Dr. Baldwin said the budget will reflect these courses, and it may be FTE neutral, however, there is curriculum writing costs. Board member D'Ostuni said the initial figures showed a cost of approximately \$17,000 not including an FTE. Acting Board Chair Gee asked if not acting on the UConn/ECE course would have impact on the Program of Studies. Dr. Baldwin said the course could be put on the January 6 Board meeting. The Program of Studies does not get printed until mid-January. Board member D'Ostuni said it should be notated in the Programs of Studies that it is pending Board approval. Dr. Collin noted the course is currently being offered and has been de-coupled and will continue to reflect that. Board member D'Ostuni said it will be a new course and does not have Board approval.

**MOTION #14-64:** D'Ostuni moved to approve: AP Macro Economics, Introduction to Media Literacy and Production, Media Communications, Teen Leadership, Advanced Sports concepts, Personal Fitness, and Unified PE as new courses at Suffield High School

for the 2015-2016 school year. Zawawi seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

- Possible Action Regarding the Superintendent's Contract  
**MOTION #14-65:** D'Ostuni moved to accept the proposed agreement between the Suffield Board of Education and the Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Karen Baldwin. The Board further moves to authorize the Acting Chair of the Board of Education to execute the proposed agreement on behalf of the Board. Semyanko seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.
- Appointment of the Board of Education as the Personnel Search Committee for an Interim Superintendent and a Superintendent  
**MOTION #14-66:** D'Ostuni moved to appoint all current Board members: Natalie Semyanko, Jeanne Gee, George Beiter, Michelle Zawawi and Lori D'Ostuni as the personnel search committee in connection with appointing an Interim Superintendent. Semyanko seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.  
**MOTION #14-67:** D'Ostuni moved to appoint all current Board members: Natalie Semyanko, Jeanne Gee, George Beiter, Michelle Zawawi and Lori D'Ostuni as the personnel search committee in connection with appointing a new Superintendent. Semyanko seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

Acting Board Chair Gee read a statement:

*As many of you know, our Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Karen Baldwin, has notified the Suffield Board of Education of her resignation to commence employment with the Ridgefield Public Schools. Dr. Baldwin's resignation will take effect December 31, 2014. We are grateful for Dr. Baldwin's service to the Suffield community and wish her continued success in her new endeavor.*

*In order to plan for a smooth transition between now and December 31, 2014, we will be recruiting an interim candidate for the position of Superintendent of Schools to assure that the quality of education and quality of life at our schools remains strong. We will also begin a formal search process for Dr. Baldwin's successor with a goal of making a decision by the start of the 2015-2016 school year.*

*The welfare of our students remains of paramount concern and we as Board members take our obligations seriously. Thank you for your patience and understanding during our transition time.*

#### Reports to the Board

- Superintendent's Report
  - Proposed 2015-2016 Budget Development Process and Reports – Dr. Baldwin said she provided for the Board a suggested budget development process for the next three Board meetings to work collectively as a whole since there are numerous vacancies on the Board at this time. She highlighted the budget reports and timeline.
- Chair's Report
  - Acting Board Chair Gee said the Board will be involved in two processes: (1) the Board will be working quickly to have for an interim superintendent in place to make for a smooth transition, and (2) the Board will start the search process for a new superintendent and will include community input. Dr. Baldwin noted the Board will

need an RFP per policy since search firm costs tend to run upwards of \$15,000. Acting Board Chair Gee stated the Board will investigate firms and issue an RFP for a search firm. Dr. Baldwin said the administration will begin the RFP process for the Board. Acting Board Chair Gee said Board member Semyanko will be the chair of the search committee. Acting Board Chair Gee also said the Board hopes to appoint new Board members at the January 6 Board meeting. The Republican Town Committee has 14 candidates interested in serving on the Board. The Board will interview all candidates and hopes to complete interviewing all interested candidates before the January 6 meeting. If that is not possible, the Board will hold a special meeting to elect new Board members.

### Subcommittees Reports

Programs & Services 12/3 - Board member D'Ostuni said the subcommittee met to discuss the courses that were approved tonight. Committee members also discussed curriculum approval. Curriculum work will continue and the Board will see curriculum coming to them for approval in the coming year.

### Future Business

- Material Selection and Curriculum Audit
- Curriculum Writing Process and Engagement of Teachers
- Policy Process – Curriculum Review and Adoption
- Appeals Process for Material Selection in Classrooms
- Middle School Schedule Update
- Update of 1:1 digital environment at SHS
- List of Monitoring Reports
- Report on Summer Reading Program
- Curriculum for approval
- Update on LAF/School Construction close-out process
- Report on Kelly Services

### Public Comment

Jeff Kew, 46 Cedar Crest Lane, was concerned with all the recent resignations. He expressed his support for Melissa Finnigan as a Board member.

Mary Roy, 40 Deep Brook Harbor, thanked the administrators for supporting the mental well-being of our students by putting in place the PBIS model at Spaulding and McAlister. She urged the Board to ensure money be put in the budget for effective mental health programs for all of our students.

### Adjournment

Semyanko moved, Zawawi seconded to adjourn the meeting at 5:41 p.m.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Lori D'Ostuni  
Secretary