

Approved by the Board of Ed:

Suffield, Connecticut

Board of Education Meeting
February 15, 2011

Call to Order

Board Chair, Mary Roy, called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. in the Suffield Middle School Media Center. Present: Board of Education members Mary Roy, Bob Eccles, Sue Porcello, Jeanne Gee and Lori D'Ostuni; Interim Superintendent of Schools Mary Greenlaw-Dixon; Director of Fiscal Administration, Ed Basile and observers.

The meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Communications

- A letter has been received from Eduardo Genao, Director of Hartford Magnet Schools asking that the community be notified about Hartford's Nationally Recognized Award Winning Magnet Schools. Enclosed was a schedule of open houses for the 2010/11 school year and contact information for anyone interested in more information.
- The Chair stated that several more letters have been received in support of Mary Greenlaw-Dixon for Superintendent of Schools.
- Asnuntuck Community College has established a series of technology programs for high school juniors and seniors through their College Connections Program. Students can earn credits towards a Manufacturing Technology certificate and degree programs at Asnuntuck.
- The Chair received a letter from Spaulding teacher, Cindy Nicholson, praising the efforts of lead teacher Kris Pryce during the Spaulding evacuation due to a propane leak on Friday, January 28 as well as dealing with a sick child who had to be taken by ambulance to an area hospital
- The Interim Superintendent has written letters to First Selectman, Tom Frenaye; Director of Public Works, Jack Muska; and Mark Cervione, Suffield Highway Department, thanking the town for their assistance in clearing snow from the roofs of the schools.

Board Member Smith arrived at 6:42 p.m.

Public Comment

Dave Beltramello, coach of the Gr. 7 girls' basketball team, stated that a wrestling match was taking place at the time his team was scheduled to practice, so practice could not be held. He requested that the existing school use policy be amended in regards to "bumping" procedure. Board member D'Ostuni stated that the Policy Subcommittee was, in fact, in the process of making some revisions to the Use of School Facilities policy. The next public meeting of the Policy Subcommittee will be held on Friday, March 11, 8:30 a.m. in the Central Office. Mr. Beltramello was invited to attend.

Discussion/Action Items

- BlumShapiro Update – Jeff Ziplow updated the Board on the progress of the re-engineering study to date and what is left to be done. Most of the interviews have been completed. Teachers were given the opportunity to participate in one-to-one interviews if desired. Six teachers responded to that invitation. A draft report should be available by the end of February. A follow-up meeting with the Project Committee to be scheduled in the next week.

Board member Life arrived at 7:05 p.m.

- Superintendent Search – Executive Search Consultant, James Ritchie, presented a summary report on the recent focus group meetings. The research phase of this three-part search included focus groups and an on-line survey to gather a profile of what Suffield is looking for in a Superintendent. The results of Phase 1 will be available on-line within the next day or so.

Mr. Ritchie shared five main attributes of the next superintendent as derived from the focus groups and survey results.

- 1) Visionary
- 2) Experienced educator familiar with curriculum and with extensive classroom experience
- 3) Work with the Board of Education to establish a spirit of teamwork, positive working climate and professional accountability throughout the district
- 4) Positive track record of cutting-edge leadership, utilization of best practices and effective governance and management
- 5) Possess a sound understanding of budget development and administration

Phase II will be recruitment.

Board members expressed concern that they were not considered as one of the focus groups cited in the report. Mr. Ritchie stated that the document could be revised to include the Board's reflections. The Chair stated that notes from the first meeting between the Board and CES could be made available so that the public could see Board input.

- Field Trip Request – Luis Lee, advisor and former coach of the high school boys' Lacrosse Team, presented a field trip request to Irving, NY, March 25-27. In order to reduce cost, this trip will be from Friday to Sunday instead of Thursday to Sunday and the team will share a bus with another town.
MOTION #11-006: Eccles moved, D'Ostuni seconded to **approve the field trip request for the High School Lacrosse Team, March 25-27, 2011.** The motion passed 7 to 1 (Gee voting against).
- Spaulding School Roof Completion – **MOTION #11-007:** Porcello moved, Gee seconded to **approve the Spaulding School Roof Replacement Project.** The motion passed unanimously.

- ACCE Five-Year Plan – Board member Porcello shared the updated ACCE request for 11/12 that will be presented to ACCE on Wednesday, February 16.
MOTION #11-008: Porcello moved, Smith seconded **that the Board of Education approves the 11/12 list going forward to the Advisory Committee on Capitol Expenditures.** The motion passed unanimously.
- Snow Days – The Interim Superintendent stated that we have had six snow days for Suffield High School and Suffield Middle School. Due to roof concerns, Spaulding and McAlister have had seven snow days. According to state statutes, no school can be held on Saturdays or Sundays to make up days and no additional hours can be added to existing school days in order to make up for the snow days. In addition there are no remaining teacher professional development days in the calendar. Suffield has 183 student days in the calendar for 2010/11 and students, by law, must attend a minimum of 180 days. If no days are excused, the last day of school as of today would be June 23 for high school and middle school and June 24 for Spaulding and McAlister. Graduation would then be scheduled for Saturday, June 25 or possibly for an evening during the last week in June.

Citing past practice of the Board of Education being willing to forgive snow days that do not impact the 180 required days, Dr. Greenlaw-Dixon gave two possible options for making up days:

- 1) Board forgives 3 days, 3 days are taken from April vacation – graduation on June 18
- 2) Board forgives 3 days, add 4 days to the end of the school year, making the last day of school on Monday, June 20.

Discussion followed on options available.

MOTION #11-009: D'Ostuni moved, Life seconded **that the Board forgive three student snow days, add June 16 and 17 to the end of the school year, and hold school on Monday, April 18 for all schools and on Tuesday, April 19 for McAlister and Spaulding with the understanding that some families have already made vacation plans for April.** Discussion continued. Board members concurred that graduation should be held on June 18 and also that they are committed to 183 student days, if possible.

MOTION #11-010: D'Ostuni moved, Life seconded to amend the motion on the table to state: **that the Board forgive three student snow days, add June 16 and 17 to the end of the school year and hold school April 18, 19 and 20 for all grades with the understanding that some families have already made vacation plans for April.** Discussion continued with several other options brought forward. The Chair surveyed the Board about making up snow days during April vacation. Dr. Greenlaw-Dixon encouraged the Board to make a recommendation for April vacation at this time. Any decisions pertaining to the end of the school year could be made at a later date as we may still have more snow days in the next few months.

Board members D'Ostuni and Life withdrew their previous motion and second.

MOTION #11-011: D'Ostuni moved, Life seconded to **hold school on April 18, 19 and 20 and June 16 and 17.** The motion passed unanimously.

- Acceptance of Gift – **MOTION #11-012**: Life moved, D’Ostuni seconded **to accept a “Mind Reading Software” donation to McAlister from Mrs. Karen Works**. The motion passed unanimously.

Superintendent’s Report

- A Bullying Forum was held on February 8th with approximately 35 people in attendance. Dr. Joanne Freiburg presented the forum held at Suffield Middle School and will be invited back to provide a teacher in-service day. Dr. Greenlaw-Dixon shared the 5 measurable items that reveal if students feel there is a safe school climate. Board member D’Ostuni asked, and the Board agreed, for a future topic that the Board receives evidence on the student body being asked the 5 measurable items. John Warrington, Principal of Suffield Middle School, stated that the middle school had conducted a school climate survey for the last three years. Board member D’Ostuni asked if the 5 questions presented by Dr. Freiberg were covered in this survey. She asked that Mr. Warrington share the results of the middle school survey with the Board at a future meeting.

The Board Chair adjourned the meeting at 8:35 p.m. to the cafeteria due to a smell of smoke in the library.

The meeting reconvened at 8:40 p.m.

- A Teen Safety Initiative has begun. It is a collaborative joint effort between the school system and the community and town officials. This Initiative will work to instill healthy decision-making in teens. This community/school-based Initiative will focus on such things as safe driving, drug and alcohol education, and address the issue of illegal teen parties. Education and enforcement will be the two prongs by which these areas will be addressed. The Police Department will be more active in the educational programs in the high school and all Board of Education policies will be enforced, including canine searches. A panel discussion for the public regarding teen safety issues will be held at the end of March. An article has been placed in the March Suffield Observer with more details.
- Dr. Greenlaw-Dixon updated the Board on the status of the 11/12 budget process to date. The working budget presented to the budget subcommittee represents a 2.36% increase over this year. There are approximately 2.8 FTE staff reductions which are based on decreased student enrollment. It is anticipated that retirements will absorb the reduced staff positions. The 2.36% increase is based on the additional cost of the ACT at the high school level, purchase of STEM supplies, reinstatement of the Director of Curriculum position, contracted teacher salary increases, outplacements, magnet schools and a proposal for a Data Specialist/Communications Liaison. There are also approximately .5% additional increases still under consideration.

Board member Eccles added a brief overview of the budget process to date as a member of the Budget Subcommittee. The proposed budget must be presented to the Board of Finance by the last Monday in March. Eccles complimented Dr. Greenlaw-Dixon and the administration on all of the background work for developing the budget which will make it possible for the Subcommittee to submit a timely budget to the Board of Finance.

Chair's Report

- The Chair asked the Board of Education to review the proposed Memorandum of Understanding being drafted by the Board of Finance. They are looking for a multi-year commitment from town departments to keep spending within a reasonable level. Board member Eccles will be the representative for the Board of Education during the drafting of the Memorandum of Understanding.

Business Manager's Report

- A check of the middle school library and surrounding area by the fire department showed no problems and the Board is cleared to return to the library if they so desire.

Subcommittee Reports

- Policy – The Policy Subcommittee met on February 11. Building use regulations are being revised as to priority use of the facilities. The following policies are placed on the table for 30 day read:

- 0600.1 – Monitoring Report
- 6140/6142/6145/6160/6170 – Program, Services and Curriculum

These two items will also be added to the March 1 Board of Education agenda for discussion.

- Facilities and Transportation – Subcommittee Chair Porcello stated that monthly meetings will be held last Tuesday of each month, including February.
- Communications Task Force – Chair Gee stated that two summary meetings were held on February 14. It is hopeful that a list of the recommendations from these meetings will be ready for presentation to the Board on March 15.

Future Business

- World Language (SHS) – March 1, 2011
- Alternative High School – March 1, 2011
- Safety Assessment of District Facilities
- Sound Field Systems
- Vulnerability of Technology Systems
- Disaster Action & Recovery of Technology Systems
- Integrity of Technology Systems
- CAPT/CMT Gender Data
- Communications Task Force Report
- School Climate Survey Results (SMS)

Executive Session

Eccles moved, Gee seconded to enter executive session at 9:45 p.m.

The Board moved to the Central Office Conference Room and reconvened executive session at 9:50 p.m. Contract matters were discussed.

Gee moved, Eccles seconded to adjourn from Executive Session at 10:06 p.m.

The Board then met as a Search Committee.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Ellen Tunsky
Secretary

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