

Board of Education Meeting  
May 20, 2014

Call to Order

Acting Board Chair Sanborn, called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. in the Suffield High School Media Center. Present: Board members Lori D'Ostuni, Scott Schneider, George Beiter, Natalie Semyanko, Mary Roy, Mary Lou Sanborn; Jeanne Gee, Michelle Zawawi, Superintendent, Karen Baldwin, Assistant Superintendent, Jim Collin, and Interim Business Manager, Phil Russell.

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance. Board member Sanborn said the recognition portion of the meeting would be moved to the first item on the agenda. She asked if members wanted to make any other changes to the agenda.

**MOTION # 14-23:** Beiter moved to add "Exit Interviews" to the agenda under "IX Discussion/Action Items" as item D. D'Ostuni seconded the motion, and all members voted in favor except for Board member Roy, who voted against. The motion passed 7 to 1.

Recognition

Superintendent Baldwin said two students have been recognized at Suffield Middle School for their leadership abilities. Mr. Warrington, Suffield Middle School Principal, presented the CABA Leadership Awards to Bridget Carey and John Nieroda. Mr. Warrington highlighted Bridget's and John's character traits such as strong work ethic, drive, positive attitudes, and maturity that led to them being chosen as worthy recipients of this award. The students introduced their family members in attendance.

Superintendent Baldwin introduced the Suffield High School Robotics Team. She said they came in third in the State championship, and thanked them all for coming and showing the Board their robot. Mr. Bob Lowell introduced Mr. Pease and Mr. Davis, advisors from Windsor Locks. Mr. Lowell said there are 100 teams in their division and over 5000 teams worldwide. The team finished 68th out of 400 in St. Louis. Team members explained the objective the robot had to perform and how the components of the robot were made and constructed. The team only had six weeks to build the robot, including the programming. Mr. Lowell noted about 40 students are involved in the robotics team. Mr. Lowell thanked the Board for their support. He said UTC, Aerospace, and Praxair all sponsored the team, as well as students doing a good deal of fundraising on their own.

Suffield High School Student Representative

Suffield High School student, Ben Gee introduced and congratulated this year's Valedictorian, Ryan Englander, and Salutatorian, Yonina Bykov. Ben said their academic achievements and character are good examples for all students and he wished them well on their future endeavors. He updated the Board of events coming up at the high school:

- The FFA banquet will be held on Wednesday, May 21, 2014
- Additional awards ceremonies taking place in the next few weeks are: the Scholars' breakfast, undergraduate awards and senior banquet.
- The Spring Art Show and Film Festival are coming up

- Spring sports are wrapping up successfully: track, lacrosse, baseball, softball, golf and tennis
- Upcoming seniors events: senior class outing to High Meadow on June 2, SBAC testing going on right now (smooth Chromebook transition), finals are approaching, and the prom occurred recently at Simsbury Riverview.
- The Academic Quiz Team will have an end of year event on June 5th where five faculty members face off with the Quiz Team.

Ms. Hayward said this was Ben's last report and she thanked him for being an outstanding reporter. She congratulated Ben on being accepted to Washington and Lee University. Ms. Hayward stated, "He is one of the best humans to come through the school system."

#### Public Comment

Acting Board Chair Sanborn said the Board is aware of issues that have recently come to light relative to the climate and culture in the schools, and the Board will be addressing them at future meetings, and discussing them with the Superintendent. She said anyone is welcome to comment, but that speakers need to abide by the participation guidelines, which she read and provided copies to anyone who wanted them.

Lisa Bonner, 37 Wainscott Lane, a parent of two sophomores in high school, said a community survey revealed by a margin of more than 2 to 1 that the most identified reason for moving/living in Suffield was the quality of the public schools. The community is proud of the school's reputation and will fight to maintain it. She said she sent an email on May 16, 2014 regarding her concerns about the resignations of the high school principal and assistant high school principal, and its impact on the continuity and quality of the school system. She said she was anxious about the integrity of the interview process and was willing to be a part of the solution to secure top leaders. She has received several phone calls from parents, teachers and staff all expressing their apprehensions and frustrations. She also said she was warned about retaliation for speaking out. She is volunteering to be part of the selection committee to ensure that the best candidate is selected and that the process is fair and unencumbered by bias or administrative politics.

Kris Karam, 43 Apple Lane, said she met with the Superintendent, and Dr. Baldwin intends to take immediate action. Ms. Karam said Dr. Baldwin will need support from the school principals to remedy the situation. Ms. Karam said there are communication issues and wrong information being shared throughout community in which she has also taken a part. She said there needs to be a support and accountability structure in place. She did not think the change agenda has caused the stress, but the implementation of the change. There is a deficiency in communication and alignment between Central Office and building principals. There has been no effort to address the poor morale of teachers and principals. The consensus in the community is that no one knows what the supervisors do, and they do not value the teachers or work collaboratively with the teachers. Ms. Karam said in talking with the Superintendent she learned of how the changes in the district are being rolled out. Implementation and the work of the supervisors need to be a cooperative effort. There was also information in the community that Dr. Baldwin was hiring people she knew, but that information is untrue. Ms. Karam said there is a lack of leadership, poor communication, and little transparency. It is important for parents and teachers to discuss with the Superintendent, principals, and the Board to get the correct information. Ms. Karam said most people believe nothing will change, but she said we need to work together to create change. She said she has heard many teachers are looking to leave the

district because they do not feel valued. Confident leadership will improve the climate and culture, she said.

Superintendent Baldwin said she has been in conversations with Board members, parents, and Mark Janick, president of the SEA, and is taking the issue seriously. She is concerned at the level of unhappiness among teachers and the concept of feeling devalued. This level of unease is beyond the stressors of implementing the new State standards and change initiative in the district. Dr. Baldwin assured the Board and audience that the administration will work to improve the climate and culture in the schools and with faculty and staff. She noted that she had the opportunity to share the good work that is occurring in the district with Ms. Karam. She will update the Board and community at the June 3 Board meeting at the steps being taken to improve the situations. Board member Gee thanked the teachers and parents for coming to the meeting and sharing their concerns.

#### Communications

Board member Sanborn said she received emails from Lisa Bonner, Kris Karam, Adrienne Drinkwater and David Pines concerning the school climate issues.

Superintendent Baldwin said she received a thank you letter from Diane Raymo for the expression of sympathy from the Board on the passing of her husband Richard. She also enclosed information on a memorial service that will be held for Richard on June 21<sup>st</sup> in Wilmington, VT. Details of the service are available if any Board member wishes to attend.

Dr. Baldwin said she also received a letter this week from Mr. Darryl Madey regarding the noise on the Middle School fields during the Relay for Life event. She spoke with him last week as did Mr. Plano. The Town does not have a noise ordinance, but the administration can work with groups that rent our facilities to limit noise and disruption to reduce the impact to neighbors. Dr. Baldwin added revisions to the facility policy can also be reviewed.

#### Approval of Minutes

Roy moved, Semyanko seconded the motion to approve the minutes of the May 6, 2014 Board of Education meeting as presented. All members voted in favor. The motion carried.

#### Consent Agenda

Beiter moved to remove the two job descriptions from the consent agenda for the purpose of discussion, Gee seconded the motion. Board member Beiter asked for clarification on the impact of these two positions on the 2014-2015 budget. These positions will be 10 month, plus 20 day positions, but the implication in the budget shows a 64% and 42% increase. He was unsure why the percentage increase was so significant. Superintendent Baldwin said the two positions proposed are part of the Teamsters contract. There are assumptions being made relative to the bargaining process that is underway, and the consideration of where these two positions will be on the salary schedule has yet to be determined. Funding has been included for the additional days and assumptions in collective bargaining. Board member Beiter said he was concerned the percentage increase may affect negotiations. Dr. Baldwin indicated there was a negotiation session today and that the union asked about the salary schedule. Board member Beiter asked if the numbers are inaccurate. Superintendent Baldwin said they are projections based on the work being done. Board member Beiter said he still did not fully understand the projections. Board member Sanborn noted the newly proposed Technology Department organization structure should be included as part of the districts organizational chart. This should be reviewed at the June 3 Policy subcommittee meeting. Board member Zawawi asked if these two positions will

be posted internally or externally. Dr. Baldwin said the positions will be posted internally first. Board member Zawawi asked if the Board has to approve them first before they are posted. Board member Beiter said if these are union positions shouldn't they be tied to a salary matrix. Dr. Baldwin said the Teamsters may ask for a new matrix for these positions. The current positions in the Teamsters are a technology assistant and computer technician. The new model will strengthen outcomes and increase the roles and responsibilities. The new model does not fit in the existing salary structure. Board member Beiter questioned whether the positions should be posted after negotiations are finalized with the Teamster so the salary can be identified in the postings. Superintendent Baldwin said administration can wait to post the positions or the posting could include language that the wage scale is pending the outcome of negotiations. Board member D'Ostuni suggested in the future the structure come to the full Board first, and then the job descriptions should go to the HR and Personnel subcommittee to ensure better understanding by all. Dr. Baldwin stated this process could be done. Board member Zawawi agreed and added it is difficult to make an educated and thoughtful decision when there is not a clear understanding of the positions. Board member Sanborn noted the new structure is replacing two current positions. Board member Beiter said he is not opposed to the new structure or the dollar figures, but his concern was these positions were presented as budget neutral and now he is seeing a significant increase which could be an issue in negotiations. Board member Sanborn suggested that after negotiations are finalized, the Board review these positions once again.

**MOTION #14-24:** Roy moved, Schneider seconded to approve the following items on the Consent Agenda:

1. Technology Support Specialist Job Description
2. Technology Application Support Specialist Job Description

Roy, Schneider, Gee, Semyanko, D'Ostuni, and Sanborn voted in favor. Beiter and Zawawi voted against. The motion passed 6 to 2.

#### Discussion/Action Items

- Update on three roof construction projects  
Mr. Ed Arum, Business Consultant, distributed the bid results for Phase IV and Phase V of the Suffield Middle School roof projects, and the McAlister Intermediate School roof project. All three projects went out to bid on April 1, 2014, and were opened on April 24, 2014. There were 10 bids for the Middle School Phase IV roof project and the contract was awarded to the lowest bidder, Quality Roofing. The bid was for \$223,155. There were six bids for the Middle School Phase IV roof project and the contract was awarded to Commercial Roofing. The bid was for \$264,000. Eagle Rivet bid lower but they were not awarded the contract because their bonding was not in place. There were eight bids for the McAlister roof project but a contract was not awarded because there were significant differences among the bids. That project will go back out to bid. Mr. Arum said contracts will be signed soon and work will begin on the Suffield Middle School roof projects on July 1, 2014. Board member Beiter noted that was an aggressive timeline, and inquired who set that start date. Mr. Arum said the Permanent Building Committee sent the July 1 date.

Mr. Arum also updated the Board on the large animal facility. A temporary Certificate of Occupancy has been issued and a majority of the equipment is in the facility.

- April 2014 Financial Report

Mr. Russell said the projected year end budget amount is a surplus of \$20,976, which is in contrast to the projected shortfall of \$12,604 reported last month. There are two major contributing factors to this change. The first one is the district received over \$200,000 this year from the excess cost grant due to a higher percentage cap awarded by the State. A 70% cap was budgeted, but the cap was raised to 79%, which translates to \$85,000 more than projected. The district also received additional excess cost funds as a result of identifying every special education cost to total over \$57,000, including those in district, which is reimbursable from the State. This resulted in over \$100,000. The other factor is the district froze all expenditure accounts to identify surpluses to move to shortfall accounts. Positive cash flow has reversed some of the early transfers that were made to the IDEA and CHOICE grants. The district is now able to free up planned expenditures that were previously frozen in the categories of equipment, maintenance supplies, repairs and professional learning. Mr. Russell recommended paying the \$31,000 for the districts third year computer lease out of this year's budget, which could be taken off of the \$100,000 reduction for the 2014-2015 budget. He also noted the health insurance account was down about \$10,000 a month. Mr. Russell said an audit of the food service operations is progressing. The regional director has met with the local director and is compiling the documents and invoices from the food suppliers. He expects a meeting with the regional director during the first week of June. A final payment less any adjustments will be made to Sodexo in June.

Board member Roy asked about the status of the payments being held back on the electricity account. Superintendent Baldwin said she sent a clarifying memorandum to the Town, what the expenditures had been and how we ran out of money in January, and that the district was not going to make any further payments on the Town's portion of the obligation. Mr. Russell said he transferred those encumbrances to the CHOICE grant because funds in that account can be carried over into the next fiscal year. Board member Roy asked if the Superintendent heard back from Town. Dr. Baldwin said no, but she did not specifically ask for a response. Board member Beiter asked if any additional payments had been made by the district after the January payment. Mr. Russell said the district paid a couple more monthly payments, but have not paid any since then. Board member Beiter said the Board needs to make a final decision on this, and the Board should not be paying the Town's portion of the bill. He asked if it is a problem transferring those funds in the CHOICE grant. Mr. Russell said the Board does not have ability to put money in reserve, so CHOICE is best option to preserve those funds. The Superintendent said the administration will work with the Town to get some clarity around that payment and put it on the June 5 Budget subcommittee agenda. Board member Beiter said he was concerned about putting that money into the CHOICE grant. Board member Sanborn asked if funds can be carried over in the ASTE grant (an Agri-science Grant). Superintendent Baldwin said yes, and \$57,000 will be carried over to next year's budget. Dr. Baldwin said she has had conversations with Laura LaFlamme in developing the Cannon property. There may be opportunities to expend some of those funds there. Board member Sanborn asked if the iPads that were purchased under that grant are being used. The Superintendent clarified that the iPads were purchased under the construction grant. Board member Gee said it was her understanding that the iPads are not being used in Agri-science. Rebecca Osleger said the technology department has to set them up. Board member Gee asked how long have they been in the district.

Ms. Osleger said approximately a month and a half. Dr. Baldwin added that the Chromebooks are being rolled out, and the Agri-science equipment needs have changed many times. Since the iPads were included on the equipment list in 2012, we have learned that iPads are not the best technology tool for the Agri-science program. The students will be assigned Chromebooks next year at the high school. The iPads are in the Technology Department and are getting imaged. Students will be able to use them in the classroom setting. Board member Gee said the director purchased the iPads through the Agri-science grant, so why isn't that technology where it is supposed to be. Ms. Osleger said the technology department is in the process of doing that now. Board member Sanborn noted that if that grant gets audited and those iPads are not getting used in that program, there could be a problem. Board member D'Ostuni asked if there were any other pieces of equipment that are not being used. Ms. Osleger said there is a projector. Ms. Osleger said when ordering the iPads there was no consideration for cases, app purchases, etc. and those items have budget implications. Board member D'Ostuni was surprised the time to set up the iPads and the process to order technology items would not have included these items, in addition to asking who had processed the purchase order. Ms. Osleger said Ed Arum processed the purchase orders after getting requisition from Laura LaFlamme. Board members D'Ostuni and Gee said the process should be reviewed, expressing concern about the disconnect with these iPads.

Board member Zawawi said she has budgetary concerns over the interim principal proposed at the high school this summer during the transition. She asked if this is a per diem or salary position. Superintendent Baldwin said it is per diem position based on step five in the SAG contract (the step the current principal is on). Dr. Baldwin noted that Mr. Jakubowski is not able to work every single day, so there will be a slight surplus in that account. Board member Zawawi asked what Mr. Jakubowski's job duties will be as Interim Principal. Dr. Baldwin said Mr. Jakubowski will work with Dr. Wlodarczyk, Dr. Collin and she, and there is significant work preparing for digital learning, communicating with parents, preparing for freshman orientation, etc. Board member Zawawi asked if Mr. Jakubowski will be there when Dr. Wlodarczyk is not. Dr. Baldwin said they will work together except for when Dr. Wlodarczyk is on vacation. Board member Zawawi asked if Mr. Jakubowski will stay on after the new high school principal begins. Dr. Baldwin said no, and she will have the new principal start as soon as possible. Dr. Baldwin said based on a tentative timeline, she expects the new principal to begin between August 1 and August 15. The first round interviews are scheduled for the first week in June, and then performance task the following week. She said an aggressive schedule would be to have an interview with the Board at the June 17 Board meeting. The Board may need to schedule a special meeting. Board member D'Ostuni asked if the district has received many applications for the high school principal position. The Superintendent said there are not many applicants but there are well qualified candidates in the pool. The Assistant Principal positions were just posted on May 16. Board member Zawawi asked if all new positions get approved by the Board. She noted the PBIS position is posted on the website. Board member D'Ostuni said past practice has been once the budget is approved and finalized, then new positions can be posted. Board member Gee said the Board had conversations that voting on the budget was strictly a numerical equation, and we would look at specific positions after the budget vote. She added that some Board members were uncomfortable voting on some things in the budget, and they were told the Board was voting on monies only. Board member Beiter

noted that the PBIS position is funded in the CHOICE grant. Board member Sanborn said job descriptions should be approved by the full Board before getting posted. Board member D'Ostuni suggested the HR & Personnel subcommittee decide on a process. Board member Gee said it needs to be determined if posting jobs without Board approval is a precedent of practice or an official practice. She emphasized that is not what the Board talked about at meeting to approve the budget. Superintendent Baldwin said new job descriptions should be approved through the HR & Personnel subcommittee and then go to the full Board for approval. Board member Sanborn said \$100,000 has yet to be reduced from budget. Board member Zawawi asked if those positions will be taken off the website until they are approved by the Board. The Superintendent said those job postings will be taken off the website.

Board member Beiter asked if any vacation buyout for the departing high school principal and assistant principal will impact the current budget forecast for this year or next year. Mr. Russell said any buyout will be paid in July and will not affect the budget since there will be a savings with not having a principal or assistant principal employed at the beginning of fiscal year. The Superintendent added the buyout will not impact the 2013-2014 budget year end close out. Those positions will not start for approximately six weeks.

- Healthy Food Certification

Superintendent Baldwin said in Board member's packet is a memorandum from Mr. Russell communicating the historical position the Board has taken on the Healthy Food Certification annually and typically has not participated due to the loss of revenue it creates. The reimbursement would amount to \$12,200.

**MOTION #14-25:** D'Ostuni moved to decline participation in the Healthy Food Certification program, Roy seconded the motion. All members voted in favor.

- Exit Interviews

Board member Beiter said he would like the Board to conduct exit interviews with administrators since we hire those positions. The Board needs to hear feedback directly from those leaving the district. Board member D'Ostuni said she is not opposed to the idea, but the Board only hires one person and that is the Superintendent. Board member Gee said the Board does interview administrators and there is a level of responsibility because the Board has input in the hiring of administrators. Board member D'Ostuni agreed. Board member Beiter said the Board needs to make a decision on this issue and act because three administrators are leaving shortly. Board member Gee asked if it is legal or ethical for the Board to conduct exit interviews. Board member Roy said that needs to be confirmed before any decision can be made. Board member Zawawi said there is a need to build relationships with all stakeholders, and having open and honest communication is important in building those relationships. This should be the practice moving forward. She thought having exit interviews would be helpful. Board member Sanborn said the district does conduct exit interviews, but they are done with the employee's immediate supervisors. She said this needs to be checked with the unions as well as legal counsel. Board member D'Ostuni said the district conducts exit interviews with children going to magnet or private schools. She said it would be a good idea to conduct exit interviews with graduating students and with any employees who are leaving the district to learn from their experiences. Board member Schneider stated those exit

interviews are a different topic, which board member D'Ostuni agreed but stated the board should have them. Board member Beiter wanted to specifically look at holding exit interviews with administrators. He suggested holding an executive session to conduct the exit interviews. He suggested scheduling an executive session for the next Board meeting. Superintendent Baldwin said she will check with legal counsel and report the information back to the Board.

### Reports to the Board

- Superintendent's Report

- Update on Large Animal Facility and temporary Certificate of Occupancy, and dedication ceremony

Superintendent Baldwin said the large animal facility is open and occupied, and the majority of the equipment is in place. There are also animals in the facility, and the district continues to engage with the consulting committee and with local farms to procure animals. There is still a punch list to be done and, the district is working with Haynes Construction to accomplish those items. Dr. Baldwin said planning should begin for a dedication ceremony. Board member Gee said the ceremony should be held before the end of this school year so the seniors who have waited so long to use the facility and were diligent in expressing their concerns on the issues to the Board can be a part of the ceremony. The Board and audience nodded their approval at this suggestion. Dr. Baldwin said she will look into a day prior to graduation when the ceremony could be held.

- Chair's Report

- None

### Subcommittees Reports

- HR & Personnel Subcommittee: Subcommittee Chair Roy said a meeting was held on May 14, 2014, and the two technology job descriptions moved forward to tonight's consent agenda. The College and Career School Counselor job description has been sent back to Dr. Collin and the Guidance Department to be recast, and the PBIS job description will come back to the subcommittee to discuss the data, the infrastructure, and the need.
- 2014 Legislative Update: Board member Roy said she and Dr. Baldwin attended the Legislative Wrap-Up Session last week. There were over 16 pages of information given out at that meeting. The information that was emailed to Board members is the legislation that is applicable to Suffield. The one policy issues that she thought should be looked at soon is the recent court decision relative to Title IV now covering transgender students. Board member Sanborn said typically new policy issues are sent to the district from Shipman and Goodwin with the changes to be made. The Board typically waits for those updates and then addresses them in Policy subcommittee. Board member Roy said if any Board members have questions, she has the complete document. Board member Sanborn said she has a CREC meeting tomorrow and will receive an update on the changes. She said she will ask at that meeting when the district should receive that information. Superintendent Baldwin said the district usually receives that guidance by the end of June or the beginning of July.

- Student Programs & Services Subcommittee: Subcommittee Chair D'Ostuni said the committee met on May 19, 2014. She stated at the meeting subcommittee materials for all subcommittees be sent to the full Board electronically so Board members will have all information distributed, which will help to fill in gaps for those not attending the subcommittee meeting for when an issue comes to the full Board. They discussed that agendas and minutes be sent to the full Board as well. The materials selection process was shared. The administration is going to look at the material selection and curriculum policy to make some suggested changes and then bring them back to subcommittee. The subcommittee will review and send forward to the Policy subcommittee. Committee members reviewed the curriculum audit done last year. They did not look at the newest curriculum writing but discussed priorities. The next steps are to start curriculum work with as many subjects as possible instead of total completion of one subject before starting another subject. Social Studies was the subject that all agreed needed more focused attention. The Superintendent said this topic can move to the full board for discussion. Dr. Baldwin said the materials from this meeting will be emailed to the full board, and be placed on the future agenda list. Board member D'Ostuni highlighted some of the data from the Middle School Accelerated Placements. Board member Gee asked for the difference between the class sizes and she wished last year placements were determined for the current sixth grade for comparison. Board member D'Ostuni replied there were 208 two years ago and 180 projected for 2014-2015.
- Board member Sanborn said Policy #6146 and Policy #6146.2 are being placed on a 30 day read. She gave an update on these revisions at last Board meeting. There are verbiage revisions to #6146, and 6146.2 is proposed to be dissolved. The subcommittee will review #6146 at the June 3 meeting for different reasons.

#### Future Business

- Substitute Service Budget Study and Kelly Services Data – placed on Budget Subcommittee future agenda
- PALS Program – 2013/2014 student data and parent survey results – June 2014
- LEO Club Field Trip Report – June
- Program Updates – June
- Material Selection and Curriculum Review
- Agri-science update – courses, number of students, etc.
- Increased communication with faculty and staff

#### Public Comment

Kim Worthington, 21 Clay Creek Drive, asked if there is an opportunity to have an open meeting as a community without the Superintendent present. She said there were many teachers present tonight that did not speak; they need to have a venue to speak freely. She said she thought the idea of exit interviews was a good one and asked if those could be shared with the community. She would also like the teacher survey to be available to the community for a better understanding of the issues. She also stated that the school climate surveys should have space for open ended comments.

Jeff Bernabe, 34 Poole Road, said he was anxious about his kids going to the high school next year with no leaders in place. He thanked the Superintendent for presenting a hiring timeline for the principal and assistant principal positions. He said filling one administrative position would be a daunting task, but three is mind-boggling. He said communicating to parents as the process

moves forward would be helpful and appreciated. He said his comments are not meant with any disrespect to the administration in place, but is concerned the kids will be shortchanged during this process. He thanked the Board for their efforts.

Adjournment

Roy moved, Zawawi seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori D'Ostuni  
Secretary

Z:\Laura\BOE\2014\05 - May 20\Minutes - 20 MAY 2014.docx

DRAFT