

Board of Education Meeting
April 5, 2016

Executive Session

Present: Board members Lori D'Ostuni, Natalie Semyanko, Jeanne Gee, Kendra Wiesel, Susi Keane, John Richter, Michael Sepko, and Superintendent Karen Berasi

Semyanko moved, Richter seconded to go into executive session at 6:08 p.m. for the purpose of discussing a personnel matter: non-renewal of staff

Richter moved, Semyanko seconded to come out of executive session at 6:16 p.m.

Call to Order

Board Chair Gee called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m. in the Suffield High School Media Center. Present: Board members Lori D'Ostuni, Natalie Semyanko, Jeanne Gee, Kendra Wiesel, Susi Keane, John Richter, Michael Sepko, Superintendent Karen Berasi, Assistant Superintendent Brian Hendrickson, and Business Manager Bill Hoff

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment

Debra Dudack, 315 Prospect Street, addressed the Board over her concerns with the proposed cuts to the preschool program and preschoolers not being retained for an additional year if needed.

Sean Townsend, 32 Quail Run Road, expressed his disappointment in decisions made at PPTs for his child without parental consent. He urged the Board to look at the special education process and not exclude parents.

Jonathan Metcalf, 49 Cedar Crest Lane, spoke on the importance of parent engagement. He said a cultural change needs to occur to bridge the gap between parents and professionals.

Approval of Minutes

Semyanko moved, Richter seconded to approve the March 21, 2016 minutes. All members voted in favor. The motion carried.

Consent Agenda

None

MOTION #16-24: Semyanko moved, Richter seconded to add "C Policy #1330" to the discussion items on the agenda. All members voted in favor. The motion carried.

Discussion Items

• 2015-2016 District Enrollment and Staffing Report

Superintendent Berasi reviewed the administrator comparison chart and enrollment and full time equivalency (FTE) information. She noted there are currently 13 FTEs for administrators, last year there were 16 FTEs, and next year there will be 14 FTEs with the addition of an assistant principal at Spaulding. Superintendent Berasi also reviewed the projected enrollment and FTEs for the 2016-2017 school year. Board members had questions around classroom teachers and open choice students for next year.

- 2016-2017 Teacher Evaluation Plan

Mr. Hendrickson gave an overview of the results of the work done by the Professional Development and Evaluation Committee (PDEC). Members in attendance were Mark Janick, Jason Efland, Denise Rigby, Kris Pryce, Scott Dunn, and Karen Carpenter-Snow.

Superintendent Berasi thanked the PDEC members for their work and time they have put into serving on this committee. Mr. Hendrickson reviewed changes to the plan which includes the observation cycles, the change in verbiage from proficient to accomplished, and the emphasis on the teacher practice component over student outcomes. Mr. Janick noted the committee has worked very hard and it is a big time commitment. He reviewed the timeline of the work that has been done by PDEC. He said all stakeholders had input to the evaluation plan. Mr. Dunn stated the process and product is consistent and collaborative. The plan encourages teachers to observe one another to encourage teacher growth. Ms. Carpenter-Snow added the teacher growth initiatives allow for great flexibility and choice. Mr. Hendrickson added this plan is a result of deep, rich and healthy dialog among the members. The members voted on the plan and all voted in favor except for two abstentions. Board members had questions relative to teacher ratings, communication to teachers regarding feedback and improvement plans, defined action plans, and measures of student outcomes. Mr. Hendrickson said there is a goal setting meeting, mid-year review and year-end review which fosters continuous and clear communication and clearly defined action plans for improvement. He explained the components to the teacher practice rating based on the rubric. Mr. Hendrickson said student learning objective goals are set, and measurables are tied to an objective assessment. Teachers also set an individual growth area to improve their practice to assess student progress.

MOTION #16-25: D'Ostuni moved, Sepko seconded to approve the 2016-2017 Teacher Evaluation Plan. All members voted in favor. The motion carried.

- Policy #1330 - Use of School Facilities

Superintendent Berasi said she received a request from members of the Kent Memorial Library Foundation (Foundation) to use the Suffield Middle School Auditorium on April 21 for an event that was originally planned to be held at the library. Due to the library not being open, they needed to find another venue. Their event includes a cocktail hour, however the board policy/regulation prohibits alcohol. Legal counsel confirmed this is not a state law.

Superintendent Berasi said the Board would have to waive the policy to allow the Foundation to hold their event in the middle school auditorium. Legal counsel also advised obtaining proof of insurance from the Foundation to reduce the district's liability risk.

MOTION #16-26: D'Ostuni moved, Richter seconded to approve the building use for the Kent Memorial Library Foundation event on April 21, 2016 with the proper insurance rider. Board member Keane expressed concern that approving this use may set a precedent. Board members discussed that it is for a specific date during school vacation and if other similar requests come to the Board, they will have to review them on an individual basis. The Foundation will have to pay the custodial fees. Board member Sepko did not think it was an appropriate use of the schools' facilities and he was not comfortable with it. Board Chair Gee acknowledged and understood Board member Sepko's view but said she was happy to offer other community organization the use of the school buildings as they are town buildings. Board member Wiesel stated her trepidation as this has not occurred before and the Board has had little time to review the policy or implications of this decision.

D'Ostuni, Richter, Wiesel, Gee, and Keane voted in favor of the motion. Sepko voted against and Semyanko abstained. The motion carried 5-1-1.

Action Items

- Establish 2016 SHS Graduation Date

MOTION #16-27: D'Ostuni moved to set the 2016 Suffield High School graduation date as Saturday, June 18, 2016. Semyanko seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion carried.

- Approval of Non-Renewals

MOTION #16-28: Wiesel moved to approve the non-renewals as presented during executive session. Semyanko seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion carried.

- SHS Course Approvals: Life Skills Education, Numeracy Skills, Literacy Skills, Social Skills – Pragmatics, and Social Skills

Mr. Hendrickson said these courses were reviewed by the Teaching and Learning subcommittee. Ms. Taylor reviewed the five new courses proposed and what they will offer to students who need additional supports. In response to a Board member's question, Ms. Taylor said Aimsweb, an online tool, will be one way students are assessed. Mr. Canny added that several school districts are moving to this model as it embeds resource instruction within the class setting and targets the areas in which students are struggling. The model allows students to earn credits that are accepted by colleges as electives. This model prepares the special education students for post-secondary education and the workforce.

MOTION #16-29: D'Ostuni moved, Semyanko seconded to approve the SHS courses: Life Skills Education, Numeracy Skills, Literacy Skills, Social Skills – Pragmatics, and Social Skills. All members voted in favor. The motion carried. Board Chair Gee said she would like administration, teachers and even students to report next year on the progress of the program.

Reports to the Board

Superintendent's Report

- Ms. Berasi said she received a communication from a parent relative to the change in the preschool model as well as retention in preschool. Superintendent Berasi said after evaluating the program it was discovered there were three preschool classrooms and four preschool teachers. One of those teachers will move to a K-2 position. She noted the district is in fact significantly increasing the special education budget next year. In regards to preschool retention, that decision is based on best practice and is individualized. The preschool is for the development of special education students, and allows peer models to support this endeavor; it is not a private preschool.
- Superintendent Berasi said she was contacted by Mr. Ernie Petkovich to join a community substance abuse prevention task force. The first meeting was held last week and Art Groux, Captain Rick Brown, and Leslie Offenbach were in attendance. A presentation is being planned for May for parents and the community.
- The Internet Safety presentation was this evening. Lisa Bonner, a representative from the Superintendent's Community Advisory Board, spoke at the beginning about the benefits of social media.
- Ms. Berasi received notice today that Leah Gawlak-Leach, a teacher in the Agriscience department, has been chosen for a year-long marine technology professional development through the University of Rhode Island.

Chair's Report

- Board Chair Gee thanked the Superintendent, Mr. Hendrickson, and Mr. Hoff for the budget presentation to the Board of Finance last night. Mr. Sepko echoed his gratitude.
- She thanked the PTAC for putting on the Jordan Engler Foundation fundraiser.

- Board Chair Gee said last year the Board sponsored an SFES mini-grant for the Teacher of the Year. She asked if Board members would be interested in doing that again this year. All were in agreement.

Business Manager’s Report

- Mr. Hoff said the security vestibule project is on track. Construction will begin over April break. The doors will be installed during the last week of May or beginning of June.
- Mr. Hoff will have an analysis of the CREC stop-loss insurance plan before the next board meeting.

Subcommittee Reports

- March 31, 2016 Policy Subcommittee Meeting –Board member D’Ostuni said Policy/Regulation #5145.5 – Sex Discrimination & Sexual Harassment (Students); Policy #1316 – Conduct on School Property; Bylaw #9325.2 – Order of Business - is being placed on a 30-day read. The committee discussed the best way to draft policies. The committee determined the Superintendent will work with staff to make additions/changes to policies, with the exception of the 9000 series, and bring them to the subcommittee for review. The committee also discussed the cumbersomeness of our policy manual. The superintendent will look into alternatives and report back to the subcommittee.
- March 31, 2016 Teaching & Learning Subcommittee meeting – Board member Semyanko said the subcommittee discussed the courses approved tonight. They also reviewed SHS math resources as current textbooks are outdated. Two math resources will be piloted. Mr. Pearce presented the new middle school schedule for next year, and administration and teachers reviewed the teacher evaluation plan that was approved this evening. Board member Semyanko also updated the Board of the curriculum cabinet meeting she attended earlier in the day. Board Chair Gee was in attendance and noted it was nice to have students attend the meeting to get there perspectives. Teachers shared information on the Rubicon platform.
- Communications – Board member Semyanko said the naming of the high school track after Joe Sinicrope will be on Friday, May 13.

Future Business

Goal setting for high school students

Adjournment

Keane moved, Semyanko seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:24 p.m.

Minutes are subject to approval at the next meeting on May 2, 2016.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori D’Ostuni
Secretary