

Board of Education Meeting

March 7, 2016

Call to Order

Board Chair Gee called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. in the Suffield Middle School Media Center. Present: Board members Lori D'Ostuni, Natalie Semyanko, Jeanne Gee, Kendra Wiesel, Matt Service, Susi Keane, John Richter, Michael Sepko, George Beiter, Superintendent Karen Berasi, Assistant Superintendent Brian Hendrickson, and Business Manager Bill Hoff

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment

None

Approval of Minutes

Semyanko moved, Richter seconded to approve the February 17, 2016 minutes. All members voted in favor. The motion carried.

Consent Agenda

MOTION #16-15: Beiter moved, Sepko seconded to approve the following items on the consent agenda:

1. SHS Robotics Club Field Trip Request – UMASS at Dartmouth, MA – March 18-20, 2016
2. SHS Robotics Club Field Trip Request –St. Louis, MO – April 20-24, 2016

All members voted in favor. The motion carried.

Discussion Items

- Discussion of New SHS Courses: Music Theater Workshop, Theater Production, Guitar and Music Technology II
Assistant Superintendent Hendrickson said the subcommittee met with Mr. Moccio and SHS faculty, and the committee is recommending several courses for approval. In response to Board members questions, Superintendent Berasi said class sizes will be looked at when offering these new classes; they may not be offered every semester or even every year. Mr. Hendrickson said new offerings will be communicated to students for selection for the 2016-2017 school year. It was noted these new courses do not require additional FTEs.
- Discussion of Proposed 2016-2017 Superintendent's Budget
Superintendent Berasi said the biggest changes to the budget since the last proposal are the decrease in health insurance rates and allotting \$50,000 to hire District Management Council (DMC) to conduct a district-wide educational efficiency study. Mr. Hoff added the cost of the \$2000/\$4000 deductible plans decreased significantly, and all employees will be on this plan except for food service workers. He said the other factors leading to the lower health insurance rates for the district were an increase in employee contributions and staffing numbers will be less than this year. Superintendent Berasi explained that the district currently has a surplus in the paraprofessional line item. She recommends reallocating those

funds to engage DMC to improve the district's practices in the most efficient manner. Her goal is the keep budget increases as low as possible, but continue to move the district forward by improving practice to improve student outcomes. Hiring DMC will enable the district to do that. Dr. Diane Ullman, former Superintendent of Simsbury, answered Board members questions about DMC as she used DMC in Simsbury for several years and now works for DMC. Dr. Ullman stated through working with DMC, Simsbury was able to increase reading support to every elementary student through cost savings by becoming more efficient by looking at their resources and reassigning them. She and other administrators were trained in how to conduct a deep analysis of the data and it changed the way she led her district. Dr. Ullman explained the phases of the work DMC will do, typically over a three year period. DMC will first diagnose the district by gathering quantitative and qualitative data, then work with administration and other stakeholders to develop processes and strategies to be implemented and sustained. In response to a board member's questions, Superintendent Berasi said CCSN and DMC are two different organizations. CCSN will work with the district's special needs population PreK-2; the DMC is looking at the district as a whole with a focus on identifying areas to increase efficiencies. The greatest focus will be on grades 6-12. The Board and Superintendent discussed when the process would begin, areas in which to measure the success and tangibles to deliver to the Board at different phases of the work. Dr. Ullman said Windsor Locks, New Fairfield, Hartford, New Milford and Weston plus 3 other school districts in Connecticut are using DMC, and DMC works with hundreds of districts across the country. In response to a board member's questions, Superintendent Berasi said the district could do this work internally but it would take much longer to do the work, and the district does not have the technological capabilities or expertise for analyzing the data that the DMC uses. The DMC has the expertise in how to strategically look at aligning resources and creating efficiencies. Board members discussed the proposal, the types of deliverables they want to see and alternatives.

Action Items

- Adoption of New SHS Courses: Music Theater Workshop, Theater Production, Guitar and Music Technology II
MOTION #16-16: D'Ostuni moved to approve the new high school courses, Beiter seconded. All members voted in favor. The motion carried.
- Adoption of Proposed 2016-2017 Superintendent's Budget
MOTION #16-17: D'Ostuni moved to approve the 2016-2017 budget of \$34,491,746 budget, a 2.34% budget increase, Semyanko seconded the motion. Board member Beiter expressed concern relative to this year's surplus due to the vacancy rate. He said this has been an issue every year since he's been on the Board. He also was hesitant to support the CCSN proposal fully; he would like to phase that in over time, thereby reducing the amount. He also noted he was not comfortable voting on the DMC proposal tonight.
MOTION #16-18: Beiter moved to amend the motion to reduce the budget by \$150,000: reduce the investment of CCSN by \$50,000, reduce \$50,000 to account for the vacancy rate, and reduce \$50,000 by using this year's surplus to pre-purchase instructional supplies for next year. Wiesel seconded the motion and noted the Board was given a short timespan to review the DMC proposal. Superintendent Berasi noted that reducing CCSN by \$50,000 would result in only PreK-1 students benefitting from CCSN's services. Beiter voted in favor, all other members voted against. The motion failed 1 in favor; 8 opposed.

Board member Sepko left at 7:34 pm but attend the meeting via telephone until 8:15 pm

MOTION #16-19: Beiter moved to amend the original motion by reducing the budget by \$50,000 to purchase instructional supplies with this year's surplus. D'Ostuni seconded the motion. The Board discussed the motion. Beiter withdrew the motion.

MOTION #16-20: Beiter moved to amend the original motion by reducing the budget by \$100,000 to purchase instructional supplies with this year's surplus. Keane seconded the motion. Wiesel asked how the year-end surplus is handled. Beiter voted in favor, all other members voted against. The motion failed 1 in favor; 8 opposed.

MOTION #16-21: Beiter moved to amend the original motion by reducing the budget by \$50,000 to purchase instructional supplies with this year's surplus. Richter seconded the motion. Beiter voted in favor, all other members voted against. The motion failed 1 in favor; 8 opposed.

Board Chair Gee called for a vote on the original motion to approve the 2016-2017 budget of \$34,491,746 made by D'Ostuni and seconded by Semyanko. All members voted in favor. The motion carried.

- Approval of Budget Transfers

MOTION #16-22: Semyanko moved that the Board of Education approve a budget transfer of \$50,000 from Paraprofessional Salaries to Administrative Services for consulting services from the District Management Council. Richter seconded the motion. Keane asked for clarification that additional resources would not be removed due to this transfer. Superintendent Berasi said the surplus in the paraprofessional account was due to attrition. Beiter supported the DMC concept but not now; his preference would be to delay this decision for further vetting. Wiesel agreed with Board member Beiter and said while Dr. Ullman's input was very helpful and many of her questions were answered this evening, it would be beneficial to further vet the proposal but she supports the ideas. All members voted in favor except Beiter, who abstained. The motion carried 8-0.

Reports to the Board

Superintendent's Report

- Superintendent Berasi said the administration has worked very hard this year on improving coherence in the district. She, Mr. Hendrickson, Mr. Moccio, Mr. Pearce and Ms. Carpenter-Snow are attending a statewide coherence conference tomorrow. She will share her presentation with the Board.
- In referring to the media report this week, Superintendent Berasi said the police are still conducting the investigation and the district will continue to educate students and families on internet and social media safety. The behavior occurred with private devices, off of school grounds and not on school time. Scott Driscoll will be presenting on April 5 to parents about internet/social media safety.
- Superintendent Berasi met with the Community Advisory Board this week and their focus is on social media and social-emotional wellness. She will share the board's ideas with Board of Education members.
- She attended the volleyball marathon at the high school last Friday night.

Chair's Report

- Board Chair Gee thanked all those who attended the first Lighthouse workshop.

Business Manager's Report

- Mr. Hoff said a contractor has been selected for the vestibule work. Work is expected to begin in April with the bulk of the work done over April break at Spaulding and McAlister. The entire project is expected to be completed by late May. There is a bill before the State to extend the construction deadline of June 30, 2016. An Eversource engineer visited the high school last week to review the energy cost savings project.

Subcommittee Reports

- February 19 & March 3, 2016 Teaching & Learning Subcommittee meetings – Board member Semyanko said the committee discussed the scope and sequence of math. Ms. Boakye-Datthey conducted a needs assessment for SMS and SHS. Ms. Boakye-Datthey explained the three-tier math option in 8th grade needed to be improved to improve student learning. The academic algebra class is unable to complete the curriculum before the end of the year, leaving students unprepared for geometry in 9th grade. The team is proposing a two tier math model in 8th grade. She discussed criteria for placement in 7th and 8th grade math, how students were assessed, override options and communication with families. Ms. Berasi thanked Ms. Boakye-Datthey for her work. Board member Semyanko said at the March 3 meeting, the committee discussed dissolving the 12th grade math applications course and will move students on to a statistics course.
- February 23, 2016 HR/Personnel (Negotiations) Subcommittee meeting – Board member Service said the committee conducted an initial review of the nurses' contract. The next meeting is this Thursday at 4:30pm.
- Communications – None

Future Business

None

Adjournment

Beiter moved, Richter seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:18 p.m.

Minutes are subject to approval at the next meeting on March 21, 2016.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori D'Ostuni
Secretary

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