

Board of Education Meeting
September 6, 2016

Call to Order

Board Chair Gee called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. in the Suffield Middle School Auditorium. Present: Board members Lori D'Ostuni, Natalie Semyanko, Jeanne Gee, Kendra Wiesel, Susi Keane, Matt Service, John Richter, Superintendent Karen Berasi, Assistant Superintendent Brian Hendrickson, and Business Manager Bill Hoff

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Recognition

None

Public Comment

None

Approval of Minutes

Semyanko moved, Keane seconded to approve the August 15, 2016 minutes. All voted in favor. The motion carried.

Consent Agenda

None

Discussion Items

• Discussion of District Improvement Plan Map

Superintendent Berasi said the development of the district improvement plan (DIP) began last November when administrators attended coherence workshops. In June, Jane Panicucci worked with Cabinet and suggested this map format to build alignment across the district. Many discussions occurred with all leadership, and this latest version includes feedback by teachers at convocation. All administrators and cabinet members facilitated groups with certified staff during convocation, where teachers asked questions, expressed concerns and discussed the plan. They gathered back together as one group and each group asked the Superintendent a question. The three areas identified by leadership as the most important long-term strategies were the same three identified by teachers. A survey was sent this afternoon on professional development offered the first few days of school, which also included teachers ranking the top ten strategies the district should focus on from the DIP. Ninety teachers have already responded to the survey.

Superintendent Berasi noted the DIP is linked to strategic plan, and school improvement plans will be developed from the DIP. School improvement plans will come to the Board in October. Ms. Berasi reviewed the district imperatives, long-term strategic goals (curriculum and instruction, teacher and administrator growth, and organizational health), and key measures and evidence for each goal. In response to Board members' questions relative to standardized testing and special education data, Ms. Berasi said state mandated assessments are the standard assessments but curriculum is looking at refining standard assessments and instituting performance-based assessments. The district looks at measurables for all students but data is separated into cohorts. Superintendent Berasi noted that key measures in improving student outcomes include measuring interventions and social emotional learning for students. Board member D'Ostuni suggested

sharing this information with the First Selectman and Board of Finance Chair. Board Chair Gee suggested a meeting with the First Selectman and the full Board of Finance as a proactive measure in the budget process.

- BOE Self-Evaluation

Board Chair Gee said BOE policy calls for the Board to conduct an annual self-evaluation. She stated she will ask CAFE for an evaluation rubric. She asked Board members to email her ideas for improvement, concerns, etc. in the next week. She would like the Lighthouse work to connect to the Board's work. Board member Wiesel asked if there was a specific timeline for the completion of the self-evaluation. Board Chair Gee stated she would like it to be completed before Thanksgiving.

Reports to the Board

Superintendent's Report

- Ms. Berasi said the first day of school was a great success. She, Mr. Hendrickson, Mr. Hoff and Ms. Donais along with Board member Semyanko were at the schools when students arrived. There were a few glitches with transportation and traffic congestion, but not atypical for the first day of school. She felt teachers were well prepared, and she thanked Mr. Hendrickson for his efforts in planning professional development for staff.
- Ms. Berasi reviewed the new hires and staff changes list presented to the Board. The Board discussed exit interviews, asked for the percentage of newer teachers on the list and how new teachers are supported. Mr. Hendrickson stated that he and Kathy Carney met with all new teachers in the spring and asked for their feedback on how the district could better support new teachers. The big take-away was that they needed more building-based support. This year's new teacher orientation included teachers spending the afternoon with their building administrators in their buildings. Each new teacher has a mentor through the TEAM program as well.

Chair's Report

- Board Chair Gee thanked everyone for the good opening of schools and noted traffic issues have greatly improved in just three days.
- Board Chair Gee stated CREC meetings begin this month and meet monthly. She asked if any Board member would be interested in serving as this year's liaison.
- She and Board member D'Ostuni are attending a workshop on how to run a better board meeting on September 20.

Business Manager's Report

- Mr. Hoff said food service got off to a fairly smooth start, with the exception of having to replace a freezer at McAlister.
- Mr. Hoff noted the facilities grounds person has done a great job in improving the outside appearance of all our buildings, and the entire custodial staff worked very hard and accomplished many projects over the summer.
- He said with the changes made in scheduling and the reduction of one school bus this year, transportation has been challenging, but he thanked M&J for their efforts in managing the changes. He noted there are no overcrowding concerns and the additional time between the elementary schools and the middle school has improved the timeliness of the buses.

Subcommittee Reports

Board member D'Ostuni said policy meetings will be held evenings due to subcommittee members' schedules. Meetings will be two times a month through December. She and Ms. Berasi are meeting Thursday to discuss meeting agendas to cover legislative changes, district changes, policy manual review and effectiveness of policies recently implemented.

Board member Semyanko noted a Teaching and Learning subcommittee meeting is being held this Thursday, September 8 at 7:00am. Board member Gee asked Board members to send her their availability for meetings.

Future Business

None

Executive Session

At 7:37 p.m., Semyanko moved to go into executive session for the purpose of discussing a personnel matter: Teamsters Union grievances. D'Ostuni seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. After a brief recess, the board reconvened in executive session at 7:45 p.m.

At 8:42 p.m., Keane moved to come out of executive session. Wiesel seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

MOTION #17-10: Service moved, that the Board of Education hereby deny all three grievances on the grounds that there were no contractual violations. Richter seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion carried.

Adjournment

D'Ostuni moved, Semyanko seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 p.m.

Minutes are subject to approval at the next meeting on September 19, 2016.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori D'Ostuni
Secretary