

Board of Education Meeting  
October 20, 2015

Call to Order

Board Chair Gee called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. in the Suffield High School Media Center. Present: Board members Lori D'Ostuni, Natalie Semyanko, Jeanne Gee, Michael Sepko, Michelle Zawawi, John Richter, Matt Service, Superintendent Karen Berasi, Assistant Superintendent Brian Hendrickson and Business Manager Bill Hoff.

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Suffield High School Student Representative

Giancarlo Isotti gave an update on events at Suffield High School for the first two months of school:

- Incoming freshman attended orientation in August
- Sophomores, Juniors and Seniors held fundraisers at Suffield on the Green
- The boys' golf team held a putting contest at Suffield on the Green
- Class councils working on spirit night
- Best Buddies are currently planning events for this year
- National Honors Society inducted 50 new members on October 19
- Suffield High School is celebrating Hispanic heritage month
- On October 9, seven representatives from the writing center presented at UConn
- Mr. Canny has started a new club called the Unity Team which promotes a safe school environment
- A 5K Color Run race was held last Sunday by Class of 2017 which started at SHS and ended at Bruce Park; Best Buddies held a bake sale at the event
- The 4H Agriscience students showcased cows and goats at Big E as well as a turtle exhibit
- A college fair is being held on October 22 with over 140 colleges represented
- The Drama Club is rehearsing for their fall production of Little Women

Public Comment

Jon Metcalf, 49 Cedar Crest Lane, commented on changes to the visits to schools policy.

Idrees Faridi, 179 South Stone Street, commented on changes to the visits to schools policy.

Kendra Wiesel, 37 Willow Creek, commented on changes to the public comment portion of Board meetings.

Communications

Superintendent Berasi said she received a communication from the Commissioner of Education who stated starting this school year, the SAT will be the assessment used instead of the SBAC test for 11<sup>th</sup> graders.

Approval of Minutes

Semyanko moved, Richter seconded to approve the minutes of October 6, 2015. All members voted in favor except Zawawi and Service, who abstained.

## Consent Agenda

**MOTION #15-59:** D'Ostuni moved, Zawawi seconded to approve the following on the consent agenda:

1. Approval of policies #9325 – Meeting Conduct, #9325.2 – Order of Business, #5113 - Attendance, #5113.2 - Truancy; dissolution of Regulation #5113.2 - Truancy; Approval of policy/regulation #5144.1 – Restraint & Seclusion; Approval of policy/regulation #5141.3 – Health Assessments & Immunization; Approval of policy #5141.21 and dissolution of regulation #5141.21 – Administration of Student Medications
2. SMS Field Trip Request – Quebec, Canada – May 20-23, 2016
3. SHS Field Trip Request – Paris & Tours, France – April 14-23, 2016

All members voted in favor, except Sepko who voted against. The motion carried 6 to 1.

## Discussion/Action Items

- MOU between the Suffield Police Department and Suffield Public Schools  
Superintendent Berasi said a memorandum of understanding has been drafted and signed by the Interim Police Chief and the Police Commission Chairman. Ms. Berasi commended the entire Police Department for the assistance they have provided to the district, including the district's new School Resource Officer (SRO) Tom Kieselback. Superintendent Berasi said Officer Kieselback has been present in all the schools, communicates regularly with her, and has been a pleasure to work with. She thanked him for his support to the administration but also to students and families. Board Chair Gee recognized Officer Antrum's years of service in the district, and said Officer Kieselback has made the transition seamless for everyone. Officer Kieselback said he was honored to serve in this capacity. In response to Board members questions, Superintendent Berasi said Mr. Hendrickson, Mr. Moccio, Lt. Brown and Officer Kieselback met and reviewed the MOU. The Board's attorney and Interim Police Chief reviewed it as well. Board members had specific questions relative to the language in the MOU. Officer Kieselback and Superintendent Berasi responded to Board members' questions.
- High School Report on 2014-2015 SAT and ACT Results  
Mr. Moccio and Mr. Sullivan presented the 2014-2015 SAT/ACT/AP results. The new version of the SAT will be administered starting in March 2016, which will be directly aligned with the Common Core. They highlighted the gender gap in math and writing in Suffield, statewide and nationwide. Comparison data was shown for districts in DRG C. Mr. Moccio highlighted the ACT information and data, and he reviewed the AP courses and test results. Mr. Moccio reviewed next steps. In response to Board members' questions, Mr. Sullivan said there is some preliminary information that has been sent to guidance departments relative to the new SAT format. Board members discussed AP offerings and the CAPT science test.

**Zawawi stepped out at 7:29 pm; returned at 7:38 pm**

**Gee stepped out at 7:31 pm; returned at 7:33 pm**

- September 2015 Financial Report  
Mr. Hoff reviewed the September financial report. Central Office is finalizing the grants. Board member Sepko asked for the comparison at this time last year. Mr. Hoff said he did not have the specific dollar amount but can get that for Board members.

- 2015-2016 Class Size Report

Superintendent Berasi said the class size report is an October 1 accounting of class size and staffing. Administration has looked carefully at all positions to account for all FTEs. This is a valuable tool for budget and other operational processes. Superintendent Berasi explained how FTEs are calculated. The report shows how many students are in each class in each school. The information demonstrates how resources are spread throughout the district.

### Reports to the Board

#### Superintendent's Report

- Ms. Berasi attended the National Honors Society induction ceremony on October 19, where 50 students were inducted.
- Ms. Berasi was in attendance at the High School this morning for a safety inspection conducted by the Fire Marshal's office. She said the Fire Marshal was impressed with the improvements made since the last inspection.

#### Chair's Report

- Board Chair Gee said Fran Aniello passed away this week. She read Superintendent Berasi's announcement to all staff which highlighted his life and involvement in Suffield Public Schools and the community. She extended her best to his family.

#### Business Manager's Report

- Mr. Hoff said CREC is scheduling a meeting relative to the stop-loss insurance protection. He will attend the meeting this week along with the MDG insurance agent.
- Mr. Hoff said the food service contract is still being worked out with Aramark and the State. Board member Service asked about the status of the electricity account. Mr. Hoff said he will write a letter as discussed by Board members.

### Subcommittee Reports

**MOTION #15-60:** D'Ostuni moved, Semyanko seconded to put the following policies on a 30-day read:

1. Policy #1250 – Visits to the Schools
2. Policy & Regulation #5145.12 – Search and Seizure
3. Policy #5145.121 – Vehicle Searches on School Grounds
4. Policy #5145.122 – Use of Dogs to Search School Property

All members voted in favor.

Board member D'Ostuni reviewed the policies and noted that parents and community members have many different avenues to get involved in the schools. D'Ostuni asked if all policies on 30-day read are posted for the public to see which administration affirmed. Board Chair Gee said the reasons for changing the visits to school policy were to address the new sign-in procedures and information on those who are observing to ensure safety in the schools, and to reduce the disruption to the educational process. Ms. Nancy Taylor, Director of Special Services, added that the change in policy on visitations will not reduce the communication between parents and educators as was indicated during public comment. She added parents have the opportunity to communicate with teachers, case managers, administrators and other providers. Board member Service stated many of the policies the Board revises is due to legislative changes, which are mandatory. Ms. Berasi encouraged Board members and the public to ask questions as to why policies are being revised.

Board member D'Ostuni attended a CAFE workshop last week. Topics included information relative to amendments and the newest legislation on teacher evaluations and concussions.

#### Future Business

None

#### Public Comment

Kim Worthington, 21 Clay Creek, made comments on the changes to the Board meeting agenda.

Mr. Faridi made comments on the visits to school policy and the need for students to be career ready.

Sue Davis, 42 Wisteria Lane, spoke on what other parents shared relative to policy changes.

Lauren O'Hara, 617 North Street, asked for clarification on the visits to school policy and the policy process.

Superintendent Berasi said the reason to change the visit to school policy is because the security procedure has changed, which is stated in the policy and she read it aloud. The other reason is because of the disruption to the learning environment around student observations which has been communicated to her office through building administrators and teachers. Ms. Berasi said the letter Mr. Faridi referred to is not the policy but is operational procedure. The policy ensures when there are outside observers we know who the person is and purpose of their visit to ensure it is appropriate.

Board Chair Gee added the Board has three reasons to review policy: 1) legislation changes, 2) need within the district and 3) regular series review. The Board is charged with reviewing and revising policies in the best interest of all children. The process is driven by the Board's responsibility to create policy for all 2400 students and 800 families, not individual students or families. The Board recognizes and regrets some individuals may disagree with policy decisions but the Board's role is to research, question and discuss policy with the advice and counsel of the educational experts who serve our children. The Chair thanked parents for being involved and encouraged them to remain part of the ongoing policy dialogue which is the work of the Board.

#### **Zawawi left at 8:20 pm**

Mr. Metcalf commented on parent and teacher relationships.

#### Adjournment

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

*Minutes are subject to approval at the next meeting on November 4, 2015.*

Respectfully submitted,

Lori D'Ostuni  
Secretary