

Board of Education Meeting
April 4, 2017

Call to Order

Board Chair Gee called the meeting to order at 5:36 p.m. in the Suffield High School Media Center. Present: Board members Kendra Wiesel, Natalie Semyanko, Jeanne Gee, Lori D'Ostuni, John Richter and Superintendent Karen Berasi

Executive Session

Semyanko moved to go into executive session at 5:36 p.m. for the purpose of a discussing a personnel matter: non-renewal of staff. Richter seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

Richter moved to come out of executive session at 5:44 p.m. Semyanko seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

Regular Session

Board Chair Gee called the regular session to order at 6:00 p.m. Present: Board members Kendra Wiesel, Natalie Semyanko, Jeanne Gee, Lori D'Ostuni, John Richter, Susi Keane, 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 to approve the March 13, 2017 meeting minutes. Richter seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion carried 6-0.

MOTION # 17-43: D'Ostuni moved to move Discussion/Action Item VII B., Approval of Non-renewals, to the consent agenda. Semyanko seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion carried 6-0.

Consent Agenda

MOTION # 17-44: Semyanko moved to approve the following on the consent agenda:

- A. Approval of SHS Field Trip Request – Washington, D.C. – April 21-23, 2017
- B. Approval of Non-renewals for the 2016-2017 school year

Wiesel seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion carried 6-0.

Discussion/Action Items

- Establish 2017 Suffield High School Graduation Rate

Superintendent Berasi said she is recommending the Board forgive the four snow days for Suffield High School seniors only, which will allow them to graduate on June 10. The high school can accommodate the exam schedule. State statute has a provision for seniors to attend school for less than the minimum 180 school days due to emergency closings. The last day of school for all other students would be June 15.

MOTION # 17-45: D'Ostuni moved to forgive four snow days for seniors, making the last day of school for seniors June 9 and graduation on June 10, and June 15 as the last day of school for students in PreK – Grade 11. Keane seconded the motion and all members voted in favor. The motion carried 6-0.

- 2017-2018 Budget Discussion & Report on 2016-2017 District Staffing Report

Superintendent Berasi said she presented the Board of Education budget to the Board of Finance (BOF) on April 3. The main concern from the town is the governor's proposal for towns to fund a portion of the Teachers Retirement Fund, which is approximately \$1.8 million for Suffield. She added that Representative Zawistowski was present at the Board of Finance meeting to give a status report on where the state budget stands in the legislature. The BOF indicated reducing the BOE budget request by \$763,000 Superintendent Berasi said she was appreciative to her administration team for all the work they have done on the budget, which began back in August with work on strategic budgeting and has prepared the district for the current situation. The Superintendent reviewed a list of reductions totaling approximately \$550,000 which will have the least impact on students, including reducing four part-time cleaners, not filling teacher vacancies (2.6 FTEs), shifting a teacher from one school to another to fill another vacancy, instituting fees for sports, clubs and parking, eliminating three general education paraprofessionals, reducing some after school activities where there is low attendance, and eliminating the School Resource Officer position. Board members asked questions relative to reduction in teachers. Superintendent Berasi said the district is looking at reducing certified staff FTEs through attrition and shifting of teachers as opposed to lay-offs which do not result in significant savings because of unemployment costs. These reductions will result in increased class sizes and less offerings. The Board discussed offering half day kindergarten and a half day enrichment program for which parents would pay. In response to a Board member's question relative to the timeline, Mr. Hoff said the Board of Finance has to set their budget on April 17. It is unlikely to have any other information from the State by then and it may be late summer/early fall before the State budget is finalized. Mr. Hoff said the BOF discussed the concept of two budgets depending on what happens at the State level, however, that would be challenging for the district to receive money back in the summer because the budget will already be set. Ms Berasi added that in order to reduce the budget by the requested \$763,000 additional reductions would be made to instructional supplies, some sports programs, student programs, reducing a secretary position and reducing Kindergarten to a half day program. Ms. Berasi said she spoke with SEA president, Mr. Janick, and discussed reductions in stipends. In response to a board member's question relative to whether reducing consultants was considered, Superintendent Berasi noted some consultants were already reduced but there could be further reductions to professional development. Board Chair Gee noted that any reduction will be felt but the administration is working very diligently to prepare a budget that is fiscally responsible and results in positive outcomes for students. Ms. Berasi also noted her concern over the uncertainty of receiving federal grant funds. This is a challenging time, but the district is committed to putting students first and Suffield is a great community with dedicated teachers and administration. The Board discussed ways to communicate effectively with the community over the budget and a joint communication with the Board of Finance and Board of Selectmen. The Board also reviewed the enrollment and FTE report and requested a quarterly FTE report.

Reports to the Board

- Superintendent's Report
 - Superintendent Berasi shared that Mr. Hendrickson was quoted in UCONN Magazine about joint degrees in education. UCONN is the first dual 092 degree program in the

country which combines the Neag School's educational leadership program and UCONN's law school JD program.

- Ms. Berasi shared the Foundation for Exceptional Children has been formed by Suffield parents. April is Autism Awareness month. Blue ribbons have been displayed throughout our schools for Autism month and Friday, April 28 is Light Up Suffield Blue on the Town Green.
 - Superintendent Berasi said state assessment testing begins tomorrow including SAT, CAPT online, and SBAC. Winter benchmarks have been administered, and all these assessments and the results of the Panorama survey going out in May, will be used to measure the effectiveness of the district improvement plan and provide information for updating school improvement plans to further drive improvement.
 - Ms. Berasi said Steve Autieri is being awarded The Robert E. Yager Excellence in Teaching Award by the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA). This award recognizes excellence and innovation in the field of science. He will be recognized at the June BOE meeting.
 - Ms. Berasi said the district is working with Windsor Locks to provide a co-op program for our 18-21 special education population. Windsor Locks already has an excellent program and Ms. Donais, Mr. Hoff and parents have visited the program. The program is not housed in the high school but off campus and has associations with 22 local businesses.
- Board Chair's Report
 - None
 - Business Manager's Report
 - None

Subcommittee Reports

March 30, 2017 Policy Subcommittee meeting – Board member D'Ostuni said the committee discussed senior privileges, class rank, graduation requirements, and transferring of credits policies. Senior privileges will be on the May 1 Board agenda as a 30-day read. Mr. Moccio will come to the next meeting with revisions to the other above mentioned policies. Board member D'Ostuni will confirm the next meeting date with subcommittee members.

Future Business

Meetings being recorded
CABE-meeting
NEASC report
Reschedule special education workshop

Adjournment

Semyanko moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:26 p.m. Richter seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

Minutes are subject to approval at the next meeting on May 1, 2017.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori D'Ostuni
Secretary