

**Somers Board of Education Meeting
Board of Ed Chambers
May 24, 2021
7:00 PM**

Attendance Taken at 6:59 PM:

Present Board Members: Anne Kirkpatrick, Jan Martin, Sarah Bollinger, Krista Cherry, Marissa Marks

Absent Board Members: Bruce Devlin, David Palmer, Jeremy Anderson, Kate McLellan

Others: Brian Czaplá, Bill Boutwell, Dina Senecal, Margot Martello, Cory Leiphart, Rhonda Davis, Liz Guerin, Tracy Formica, Jim Formica, Chris Thiesing, Erica Thiesing, Lindsay Jamgochian, Doreen Grout, Diane Childs, Cynthia DeRoma, Becky Joyal, Gerard Joyal, Aiden Leiphart, Donna Kibbe, Theresa Cochanek, Kim Radziewicz, Sam Robbiati, Paula Johnson, Steve Krasinski, Bob Schmidt, Tara Moody, Tom Chilicki, Bob Chester, Todd Mitchell, BJ Ferro, Doug Ferro, Tara Moody, Robert Thiesing, Robert Issa, Michael Hevey, Christina Hevey, John Sheehan, Dan Grout, Greg Strouth

1. CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Board of Education was called to order by Vice Chairman, Anne Kirkpatrick, at 7:00 p.m. in the Mabelle B. Avery Board of Education meeting room.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

3.1. MBA CABA Leadership Awards

Rationale: Mrs. Margot Martello, Principal of Mabelle B. Avery Middle School, will present the MBA CABA Award with the Board.

Discussion: Mrs. Margot Martello, MBA Principal, presented the CABA Student Leadership Award to Aiden Leiphart, 8th Grade student. He was nominated for his intrinsic motivation to do well, taking appropriate academic risk, participating in class and going the extra mile in school work, offering student support, and his genuine kindness. He is interested in all sports except for baseball and spends a great deal of time playing soccer and lacrosse. He also participates in Drama Club and Fitness Club.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

4.1. Draft Board of Education Minutes of May 10, 2021

Rationale: Board to review and approve the draft minutes of the Board Meeting of May 10, 2021.

Motion Passed: Motion to approve the May 10, 2021 Draft Minutes passed with a motion by Jan Martin and a second by Sarah Bollinger. **5 Yeas - 0 Nays.**

5. AUDIENCE TO CITIZENS/STAFF/STUDENTS

Motion Passed: Motion to extend the public comment section by 20 minutes with a limit of three minutes per person passed with a motion by Sarah Bollinger and a second by Krista Cherry. **5 Yeas - 0 Nays.**

Discussion: Several members of the community voiced their concerns to Superintendent Czapla and the BOE regarding Critical Race Theory in classrooms.

Members of the community commented on Critical Race Theory as dividing society based upon the color of one's skin rather than reinforcing the principle that "all men are created equal" (Declaration of Independence). Concern was raised regarding the Somers Diversity and Equity Council report of using the "Social Justice Standards Framework as the road map for anti-bias education at every stage of K-12 instruction." Members of the community want a quality education framework to be based upon hard work and excellence in the core subjects which will provide equal opportunities for all. Members commented on their concerns regarding the list of books read by the administrative staff. One member of the community commented that components of the Critical Race Theory make sense, but it is "political and not intellectual." Politics cannot drive curriculum. Another member of the community commented that parents should be "responsible for creating caring children." One member stated that a lot of things sound great in theory but that the BOE really needs to analyze what they are bringing into the school system. Students should not be missing school on social justice issues. Another member of the community stated that respectful conversations need to continue and the community consensus heard.

Two members of the community thanked the BOE for their work in trying to educate children of historically accurate issues of race and teaching children to become critical thinkers.

One member of the community asked when children can stop wearing masks to school.

Anne Kirkpatrick thanked the audience for their comments and invited them to stay for the rest of the meeting. She asked the superintendent to comment.

Superintendent Czapla stated that the Critical Race Theory is not something that he embraces and will not bring it to the students, teachers, or town. He addressed concerns for the list of books that were mentioned indicating that he didn't agree with many of the books. The books are part of professional development with staff and will not be included in the curriculum. The goal is to make sure that there is an acceptance at SPS of all cultures so that students can be successful beyond Somers. There is still work to be done that will take years. It is a multi-year process in which the first steps are to educate staff on equity, culture, and race issues so that meaningful and responsible discussion and planning can occur. Superintendent Czapla stated there will be a public forum in the future.

6. OPPORTUNITY TO ADD/DELETE AGENDA ITEMS

7. CONSENT AGENDA

Motion Passed: Motion to approve Consent Agenda as presented passed with a motion by Jan Martin and a second by Krista Cherry. **5 Yeas - 0 Nays.**

7.1. Warrant of May 24, 2021

Rationale: The Board will review and consent to warrant of May 24, 2021 in the amount of \$361,184.46.

7.2. Retirement/Resignations of SPS Staff

Rationale: Greg Genlot - Maintenance - resigning as of June 11, 2021
Jessica Higgins - SES Para - resigning as of June 16, 2021
Christine Hillebrecht - SES Grade 4 teacher - resigning as of June 30, 2021
LeeAnne Mailhot - SES Kindergarten teacher - retiring after 20 years as of June 30, 2021
Heather Fabian - SES Grade 5 - resigning as of June 30, 2021
Jackie Shea - SES Early Start PreSchool - resigning 5/20/21 (has been on ChildRearing Leave this school year)

7.3. 2nd Warning of DBS 4118.5 - Equipment - Staff Telecommunications Acceptable Use Policy

Rationale: The Board will review the 2nd Warning of DBS 4118.5 – Equipment - Staff Telecommunications Acceptable Use Policy.

7.4. 2nd Warning of DBS 4118.51 - Employees Responsibility for Social Networking Websites

Rationale: The Board will review the 2nd Warning of DBS 4118.51 - Employees Responsibility for Social Networking Websites.

7.5. 2nd Warning of DBS 5125.3 - Student Health/Medical Records.

Rationale: The Board will review the 2nd Warning of DBS 5125.3 - Student Health/Medical Records.

7.6. 2nd Warning of DBS - 6141.32 Appendix A - Standards for District and Schools - www sites hosted on School property

Rationale: The Board will review the 2nd Warning of DBS 6141.32 Appendix A - Standards for District and Schools - www sites hosted on School property.

7.7. 2nd Warning of DBS 6141.321- Instruction - Student Telecommunications Acceptable Use Policy

Rationale: The Board will review the 2nd Warning of DBS 6141.321- Instruction - Student Telecommunications Acceptable Use Policy.

7.8. 2nd Warning of DBS 6141.322 - Instruction - Computers: Web Sites/Pages/Social Media

Rationale: The Board will review the 2nd Warning of DBS 6141.322 – Instruction - Computers: Web Sites/Pages/Social Media.

7.9. 2nd Warning DBS - 9132 - BYLAWS of the Board - Standing Committees

Rationale: The Board will review the 2nd Warning of DBS 9132 - BYLAWS of the Board - Standing Committees.

7.10. 2nd Warning of DBS 9326.1 - BYLAWS of the Board - Minutes

Rationale: The Board will review the 2nd Warning of DBS 9326.1 - BYLAWS of the Board - Minutes.

8. NEW BUSINESS**8.1. 1st Warning of Novels for Mabelle B. Avery Middle School and Somers High School and New ELA Course at Mabelle B. Avery Middle School**

Rationale: The Board will review the 1st Warning of Novels for Mabelle B. Avery Middle School and Somers High School and also the new ELA course at Mabelle B. Avery Middle School.

9. OLD BUSINESS**9.1. Approval of Daily Sub Rate up to \$125 effective September 7, 2021**

Rationale: The Superintendent will be there for any discussion.

Motion Passed: Motion to approve the daily substitute rate up to \$125 effective September 7, 2021 passed with a motion by Krista Cherry and a second by Sarah Bollinger. **5 Years - 0 Nays.**

10. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS**10.1. Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Update**

Rationale: Mrs. Senecal will be there for any questions on Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Update.

Discussion: Mrs. Dina Senecal, Director of Curriculum, updated the BOE on Social Emotional Learning (SEL) at SPS. A mission statement was created, and the information is on the school website. She worked with teachers and administration and bases SEL at SPS on five CASEL criteria. SPS has also adopted flexibilities for educator evaluations. There has been SEL professional development involving "The Covid Experience" and an online course from Yale, "Managing Emotions in Times of Stress and Uncertainty." Second Step program materials have been implemented in grades K-8. School-Connect will be piloted at SHS. The future of SEL at SPS involves continuing Second Step in grades K-8, continued alignment district-wide to the five CASEL criteria, and creating Second Step for Adults. Discussion ensued among BOE members.

10.2. School Wellness Committee Report

Rationale: Mrs. Fry, our Head Nurse, will be there to present this report.

Discussion: Mrs. Cheryl Fry, Head School Nurse, updated the BOE on the School Wellness report. There was a reduction in the number of nurse office visits this year due to the pandemic and the decreased number of students in schools. SES health office visits increased faster because students returned to full in-person learning faster. Health office visits are increasing now as students are back in full. Staff visits were increased this year due to stress and information seeking regarding Covid. There is the same percentage of students receiving medication.

Mitigation strategies worked very well this year. PPE was given to staff as needed.

There has been a change in Religious Exemptions as of 4/28/21, and they are no longer accepted. There is a total of 47 students with medical or religious exemptions. Most of the exemptions are at SES for the flu vaccine. An immunization report goes to the State annually.

Professional development was new for nurses this year and held virtually on the Wednesday PD days.

The number of Covid cases as of the end of April include:

- SES: 38 confirmed, 455 quarantined
- MBA: 26 confirmed, 284 quarantined
- SHS: 33 confirmed, 158 quarantined

Superintendent Czaplá stated he is waiting for guidelines from the State on next school year re-opening requirements. Also, DPH has indicated that the mask mandate will stay in effect for the rest of the school year.

10.3. Superintendent's Update

Discussion: Superintendent Czaplá updated the BOE on recent events at SPS. He reported that he held interviews last week for the position of Director of Business Services and is hopeful to offer one of the candidates a contract in the near future. He will report back to the BOE upon acceptance of the contract.

Due to the number of end-of-year events, SHS will be sending out communications regarding seniors who would like to switch to remote learning for the last two weeks of school in order to avoid potential Covid contact and quarantine.

There were not traditional final exams this year. Teachers opted for small assessments or projects. Discussion ensued among BOE members.

11. COMMITTEE REPORTS

11.1. CURRICULUM

Discussion: Marissa Marks reported that the committee met on 5/24/21 prior to the BOE meeting. The summer reading list will go live tomorrow. The list of approved books was on the 5/24/21 BOE agenda.

11.2. POLICY

Discussion: Anne Kirkpatrick reported that the committee met on 5/24/21 prior to the BOE meeting. The next meeting will be held on 6/14/21 at 6:30 p.m.

11.3. SALARY & NEGOTIATION

Discussion: Superintendent Czapla stated that the committee is up-to-date. There will be one item discussed in Executive Session at the end of the 5/24/21 BOE meeting.

11.4. PLANNING

Discussion: No update. Superintendent Czapla stated that the next meeting will be in the fall.

12. CREC UPDATE

Discussion: Krista Cherry stated that the annual meeting was held on 5/19/21. The election of officers was held. Student scholarship winners were recognized.

13. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Rationale: The Board will go into Executive Session to discuss the Non-Union staff wage adjustments and stipends for the 21-22 school year. The Board will invite the Superintendent and the Director of Business Services into Executive Session.

Motion Passed: Motion to enter into Executive Session at 8:14 p.m. for the purpose of discussing the non-union staff wage adjustments and stipends for the 2021-22 school year and invite Superintendent Czapla and Bill Boutwell, Director of Business Services, into Executive Session passed with a motion by Krista Cherry and a second by Jan Martin.

5 Yeas - 0 Nays.

The BOE exited Executive Session at 8:24 p.m.

Motion Passed: Motion to approve the wage adjustments and stipends for the non-union staff for the 2021-22 school year as presented passed with a motion by Sarah Bollinger and a second by Marissa Marks. **5 Yeas - 0 Nays.**

14. ADJOURNMENT

Motion Passed: Motion to adjourn the BOE meeting at 8:25 p.m. passed with a motion by Krista Cherry and a second by Jan Martin. **5 Yeas - 0 Nays.**

