

**Somers Board of Education Meeting  
Board of Education Meeting Room  
May 28, 2019  
7:00 PM**

**Attendance Taken at 7:00 PM:**

Present Board Members: Jan Martin, Sarah Bollinger, Barbara Capuano, Bruce Devlin, Rick Lees, Jeremy Anderson, Kate McLellan, Anne Kirkpatrick

Absent Board Members: David Palmer

Others: Brian Czapla, Bill Boutwell, Dr. Denise Messina, Margo Martello, Dina Senecal, Melissa Mucci, Marty Senecal, Jim MacFeat, Joyce Szewczynski, Jan Szewczynski, Colleen Meier, William Meier, Jill Hale, Edwin Genece, Giselle Genece, Faith Sarisley, Emma Felix, Sam Barille

## **1. CALL TO ORDER**

The regular meeting of the Board of Education was called to order by Chairman Devlin at 7:02 p.m. in the Mabelle B. Avery Middle School Board of Education meeting room.

## **2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

## **3. AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS**

### **3.1. The Board will recognize three Somers High School Seniors.**

**Rationale:** The Board will recognize three Somers High School Seniors for their work on the Superintendent's Council during the past two years: Ed Genece, Faith Sarisley, and Emma Felix.

**Discussion:** Superintendent Czapla and the BOE recognized and honored three SHS seniors for their work on the Superintendent's Council during the past two years: Edwin Genece, Faith Sarisley, and Emma Felix. Superintendent Czapla described Ed as an active member in Drama, the Unity team, National Honors Society, and Honors Choir and Band. He volunteers at the Somers Public Library and church. He also qualified for NCCC in discus and shot put. He has been Vice President of the 2019 class in 11th and 12th grades and is attending St. Michael's College for Computer Science. Faith is involved in Students Supporting Students, National Honors Society, Students Against Destructive Decisions, Beta Club, and Establishing Future Leaders Club. She assists her father in his roofing and siding business. She will attend Central CT State University to major in English. Superintendent Czapla stated that Emma is one of the driving factors and forces behind Drama Club, a member of the International Thespian Society as Vice President for two years, a member of Beta Club and National Honors Society, a member in Band, plays soccer and track and field, and

is a volunteer at the Small Fry Camp. She will attend Sacred Heart University and study Exercise Science. The BOE presented the students with gifts.

### **3.2. CAS will recognize Mrs. Dina Senecal as CAS First Year Principal of the Year.**

**Rationale:** CAS will recognize Mrs. Dina Senecal as CAS First Year Principal of the Year.

**Discussion:** Superintendent Czapla introduced Jill Hale, Assistant Executive Director of Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS), to the BOE. Ms. Hale presented Mrs. Dina Senecal, SES Principal, the CAS First Year Principal of the Year award. Ms. Hale stated that this prestigious award is an annual award; however, it is not given every year. Mrs. Senecal was nominated by Mrs. Melissa Mucci, SES Assistant Principal, who stated that Mrs. Senecal is an innovative educational leader with strong ethics; a dynamic personality; and, an unyielding commitment to students, staff, and families. Mrs. Hale stated that Mrs. Senecal has demonstrated exemplary leadership, organizational skills, and is a visionary who leads over 700 students from Pre-K to Grade 5. She demonstrates a deep understanding of data while interpreting data and sharing the findings with staff to help meet the needs of the students. Mrs. Senecal stated that she is very honored and loves working with Mrs. Mucci who she contributes a great part of her success. She is committed to the community and is thankful to Superintendent Czapla and the BOE for their support.

### **3.3. Student Representatives' Report**

**Rationale:** Students from SHS will update the BOE on events.

**Discussion:** SHS students, Faith Sarisley and Emma Felix, updated the BOE on SHS events:

- Seniors went on their annual trip to Boston to see a Red Sox game and tour the city.
- Prom occurred on 5/17/19.
- The third annual COTA (Celebration of the Arts) was on 5/22/19 consisting of performances by Band and Chorus members as well as Honors Art displays.
- The Memorial Day Concert occurred on Saturday, 5/25/19.
- Senior exams are scheduled for 6/5/19, and underclassmen exams will be held on 6/7/19.
- The Senior Banquet will be held at Ellington Ridge Country Club on 5/30/19 where a slideshow and yearbooks will be presented.
- The Senior Variety show will occur on 6/7/19.
- Graduation will be held on 6/12/19.

The students thanked the BOE.

## **4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

### **4.1. Draft Minutes of Board of Education Meeting on May 13, 2019.**

**Rationale:** The Board will review and approve the draft minutes of the Board of Education Meeting on May 13, 2019.

**Motion Passed:** Motion to approve minutes from the 5/13/19 Board of Education meeting passed with a motion by Kate McLellan and a second by Jan Martin.  
**8 Yeas - 0 Nays.**

## 5. AUDIENCE TO CITIZENS/STAFF/STUDENTS

## 6. OPPORTUNITY TO ADD/DELETE AGENDA ITEMS

**Motion Passed:** Motion to add agenda item 3.3 -- Student Representatives' Report passed with a motion by Sarah Bollinger and a second by Jan Martin. **8 Yeas - 0 Nays.**

## 7. CONSENT AGENDA

**Motion Passed:** Motion to approve Consent Agenda passed with a motion by Jeremy Anderson and a second by Barbara Capuano. **8 Yeas - 0 Nays.**

### 7.1. Warrant of May 28, 2019

**Rationale:** Board to review and consent to Warrant of May 28, 2019 in the amount of \$120,931.21.

## 8. NEW BUSINESS

### 8.1. Approval of Appointment of New Mabelle B. Avery Principal

**Rationale:** The Superintendent will introduce the final candidate for the MBA Principal position for Board approval.

**Discussion:** Superintendent Czapla recommended that the BOE appoint Mrs. Margot Martello as the new MBA Principal effective 7/1/19. He stated over the past nine years, Mrs. Martello led 820 students as the Assistant Principal at Tolland High School. She was also an English teacher at Newington High School. Her colleagues described her as an exceptional leader who is team-oriented with high integrity and listens to concerns from all. She understands what is needed academically, emotionally, and socially to drive student growth.

Mrs. Martello thanked Superintendent Czapla, the BOE members, and the interview committee. She stated that she is excited to join the Somers community and hopes to further the capacity to do good, influence kindness, provide opportunities, and open minds. She shared a precept, or rule of life, from the book, "Wonder," as quoted from John Wesley: "Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as you ever can."

**Motion Passed:** Motion to approve the final candidate for MBA Principal, Mrs. Margot Martello, passed with a motion by Sarah Bollinger and a second by Barbara Capuano. **8 Yeas - 0 Nays.**

### 8.2. Approval Project Choice Open Slots for 2019-2020

**Rationale:** The Board will review and vote on the Project Choice Open Slots for the 2019-2020 school year.

**Discussion:** Superintendent Czapl reported that the current enrollment is 19 out of 22. There are three seats available.

**Motion Passed:** Motion to approve Project Choice Open Slots for the 2019-20 school year passed with a motion by Kate McLellan and a second by Jeremy Anderson. **8 Yeas - 0 Nays.**

### **8.3. First Warning of Somers High School Textbook**

**Rationale:** First warning of Somers High School textbook, "Dopesick."

### **8.4. First Warning of Somers High School Textbook**

**Rationale:** First warning of Somers High School textbook, "Educated: A Memoir."

## **9. OLD BUSINESS**

### **9.1. 2nd Warning on Strategic Plan**

**Rationale:** 2nd Warning on Strategic Plan. The Board has reviewed the Strategic Plan and will vote on it.

**Discussion:** The Strategic Plan will be revealed to staff on Convocation Day. The community will receive the smaller document some time in September.

**Motion Passed:** Motion to approve the Strategic Plan passed with a motion by Anne Kirkpatrick and a second by Kate McLellan. **8 Yeas - 0 Nays.**

### **9.2. Approval of 2019-20 Final Budget Report**

**Rationale:** The Board will review and approve the final 2019-20 Budget for Somers Public Schools.

**Discussion:** Superintendent Czapl reported that fuel counts were able to be reduced by approximately \$30,000 because it was budgeted at a higher number but locked in at a lower rate. This is the new budget summary reflecting the only change in utilities.

**Motion Passed:** Motion to approve the final 2019-2020 budget report for SPS passed with a motion by Jan Martin and a second by Jeremy Anderson. **8 Yeas - 0 Nays.**

### **9.3. Approval of Somers Elementary School Oil Tank Project**

**Rationale:** The Board will review and approve the Somers Elementary School Oil Tank Project.

**Discussion:** Mr. Bill Boutwell, Director of Business Services, reported that the project going out to bid has been in a holding pattern for three months. The State has to approve the paperwork in order for the project to go out to bid. Mr. Boutwell, Jim MacFeat, and one of the architects will resubmit paperwork on 5/30/19. The project will most likely begin once school starts.

**Motion Passed:** Motion to approve the final plans and project manual(s), both dated 5/20/19, for the Somers Elementary School Oil Tank Project passed with a motion by Anne Kirkpatrick and a second by Barbara Capuano. **8 Yeas - 0 Nays.**

## 10. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

### 10.1. 2018-2019 Attendance and Chronic Absenteeism Report

**Rationale:** Dr. Messina will be there to answer questions on the 2018-2019 Attendance and Chronic Absenteeism Report.

**Discussion:** Dr. Denise Messina, Director of Pupil Services, updated the BOE on the 2018-19 Attendance and Chronic Absenteeism Report. The school and district's accountability is based on CT's Next Generations Accountability System. This is based on a set of 12 indicators. SPS scored 11.5% (162 students in 2017-2018). The State scored 10.7%. Truancy counts unexcused absences whereas chronic absenteeism counts all absences (excused, unexcused, out-of-school suspensions, and in-school suspensions lasting more than one-half of the school day). Attendance is essential to students' achievement and graduation. Chronic absenteeism could potentially lead to school dropout, academic failure, and juvenile delinquency. Two days per month leads to chronic absence.

Chronic absenteeism and/or truancy fall into three broad categories:

- Students who cannot attend school due to illness, family responsibilities, housing instability, etc.
- Students who will not attend school due to a negative school experience (bullying, feeling unsafe)
- Families who don't believe in the value of attending school

Chronic absenteeism and attendance misconceptions include:

- Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused.
- Sporadic absences aren't a problem.
- Attendance only matters in older grades.

Factors resulting in attendance and chronic absenteeism include:

- Technicalities (importance of appropriate attendance codes and recording accuracy)
- Absentee rate on half days
- Absentee rate on delayed openings
- Coding of in-house suspensions
- Public Act 16-147--a provision removing referrals to juvenile court based on truancy and defiance of school rules

SPS has taken a data-driven systemic approach to improve chronic absenteeism including utilizing positive engagement; regularly reporting accurate and accessible data; and, sharing accountability. This year, there have been monthly attendance reviews at Principals' meetings and establishing an Attendance Team; clerk training in attendance; a change in SHS absence criteria; a change in PowerSchool attendance coding; implementing a checklist at each school; and, beginning each student meeting (SST/MTSS, 504, and PPT) with attendance review.

Somers Elementary School includes the attendance policy in their newsletter. They share protocols among the other schools as well as meet with the other school administrators. Mabelle B. Avery Middle School sends letters to parents or calls the parents depending on the situation. Home visits may be implemented. Parent meetings are initiated. Each student meeting includes the student attendance. Somers High School has an attendance secretary. There are meetings for student issues, attendance advisory pertaining to credit loss, and attendance monitoring.

Dr. Messina expects to see improvement in attendance due to the interventions that have been established thus improving the chronic absenteeism score on the Connecticut Report Card.

#### **10.2. Superintendent Update**

**Rationale:** Superintendent Czapla will update the Board on current and upcoming events.

**Discussion:** No update.

### **11. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

#### **11.1. CURRICULUM**

**Discussion:** Kate McLellan reported that the committee met last week and looked at three new 12th grade textbooks. Two of them were approved and warned.

#### **11.2. POLICY**

**Discussion:** Anne Kirkpatrick reported that the committee is on hold.

#### **11.3. SALARY & NEGOTIATION**

**Discussion:** Chairman Devlin reported that there has been progression with the custodians. There will be ratification of the contract at the next meeting.

#### **11.4. PLANNING**

**Discussion:** No report.

### **12. CREC UPDATE**

**Discussion:** Anne Kirkpatrick reported that several policies were approved. She also reported that this is the time when amendments may be added at the last minute.

Chairman Devlin asked the BOE members who would be available for a meeting on 7/25/19 at 6 p.m. for a brief overview of contracts to go out to bid for the track contract.

**13. ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion Passed:** Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:29 p.m. passed with a motion by Jan Martin and a second by Sarah Bollinger. **8 Yeas - 0 Nays.**

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Rick Lees, Board of Education Secretary                      Date

Shannin Burns, BOE Recording Secretary