

SOMERS BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
Board of Education Meeting Room
September 23, 2019
6:00 PM

Attendance Taken at 6:00 PM:

Present Board Members: Jeremy Anderson, Bruce Devlin, Anne Kirkpatrick, Jan Martin
Kate McLellan

Absent Board Members: David Palmer, Rick Lees, Sarah Bollinger, Barbara Capauno

Others: Brian Czapla, Dr. Denise Messina, Dr. Irene Zytka, Nick Caruso, Margot Martello,
Marissa Marks, Bill Meier, Gary Cotzin, Sylvia Sanchez, Krista Cherry, Joseph Tolisano, Fiona
Cheyney, Dina Senecal

1. CALL TO ORDER

The regular Board of Education meeting was called to order by Chairman Devlin at 6:01 p.m. in the Mabelle B. Avery Board of Education meeting room.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Rationale: For the candidates who are on the ballot this November for the Board of Education, the Board will give them informational material in this workshop.

Discussion: Chairman Devlin welcomed the new Board of Education candidates and outlined the various topics to be presented by Mr. Nick Caruso from CAFE, BOE members, and Superintendent Czapla:

- **Roles and Responsibilities:** Mr. Nick Caruso from CAFE presented the roles and responsibilities of the BOE. School Boards establish vision, Board goals, district goals, set and monitor policy, hire and evaluate the superintendent, establish a budget, act as a hearing panel, and work in negotiations. The purpose of the BOE is to improve student achievement and make decisions that is in the best interest of the school system. School Boards have an obligation to be out in the community and be well informed. He encouraged BOE members to contact him with any questions.
- **Student Perspective:** Fiona Cheyney, Somers High School Senior, presented the student perspective at SHS. Miss Cheyney is a member of the Superintendent Advisory Group at SHS. She reported that the BOE, Superintendent Czapla, and administrators have been direct and want to make changes to better the school. She stated that Students to Solve Student Issues has been highly effective. Mental

health continues to be an issue, and she hopes the BOE embraces and educates students regarding mental health. She stated that she has had amazing experiences at SPS and has developed good character traits. She attended a summer program where she learned about government and the BOE. Miss Cheyney thanked the BOE.

- **Policy:** Anne Kirkpatrick presented the role of policy to the BOE candidates. The 382 policies are divided into eight categories and are listed on the district website. Every policy has the same structured format. Most policies come from the State Legislature. The Policy Committee receives quarterly packets provided by a policy update service. The superintendent will go through the policies in the packets, CABE will include what is required/recommended, and the Policy Committee will discuss changes with the superintendent. The BOE has to approve new or revised policies which will be initially warned at a regular BOE meeting and will return on the agenda at the following BOE meeting to be approved.
- **Curriculum & Instruction:** Jan Martin stated that the BOE strives to provide a solid foundation for student achievement through curriculum and instruction. SPS continues to use Atlas, an online curriculum management system, implemented by teachers for vertical and horizontal alignment. Atlas will be completed by the end of 2020. SES initiated the Fountas & Pinnell reading program. SPS is working to improve math scores. Grades K-5 are piloting three math programs, one of which will be chosen in the spring. A social-emotional curriculum is a goal to address the national mental health issue in children. The new Sixth Grade Success Seminar is a program for students transitioning from fifth grade to sixth grade which focuses on executive functions, study skills, etc. Fifth grade students now change classes for each of the five disciplines to help transition them for the 6th grade schedule.
- **Budget:** Superintendent Czapla reported the current budget as \$23.8 million and is very appreciative of the BOF and Town of Somers. He discussed a historical budget timeline when the State was in a budget crisis in 2017-18 which impacted technology and instructional resources. 2018-19 had a budget increase of only 1.17%. 2019-20 has a 4.65% increase. This year's budget focuses on social-emotional needs, increasing academic achievement, improving facilities' needs, and restoration. Future budget concerns include health care premiums, special education, instructional resources, and increased enrollment (SES increased by 4.3% since last year).
- **Long-Range Planning:** Superintendent Czapla stated that three years ago Tehton was hired to create a long-range facilities analysis for improvements and compliance. The BOE developed a long-range facilities plan based on this report. The plan is updated annually to evaluate what has been completed, what is in process, and what needs to be done. The BOE received \$6 million from the town bond this year to deal with a number of high-level projects, such as the SHS

