

Somers Board of Education Meeting
Somers High School Media Center
September 28, 2020
7:00 PM

Attendance Taken at 7:00 PM:

Present Board Members: Bruce Devlin, Anne Kirkpatrick, Jan Martin, David Palmer, Jeremy Anderson, Sarah Bollinger, Krista Cherry, Marissa Marks, Kate McLellan

Others: Brian Czapla, Bill Boutwell, Dina Senecal, Melissa Mucci, Cynthia DeRoma, Chris Kibbe, Donna Kibbe, Emily Shimansky

1. CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Board of Education was called to order by Superintendent Czapla at 7:03 p.m. in the SHS Media Center.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

3.1. Election of Officers

Rationale: Superintendent Czapla will open the floor for Board of Education Chairman election.

Motion Passed: Superintendent Czapla opened the floor for nominations for Chairman of the Board of Education. Motion to nominate Bruce Devlin for Chairman of the Board of Education passed with a motion by David Palmer and a second by Jan Martin. **9 Yeas - 0 Nays.**

Motion Passed: Chairman Devlin opened the floor to nominations for Vice Chairman of the Board of Education. Motion to nominate Anne Kirkpatrick for Vice Chairman of the Board of Education passed with a motion by David Palmer and a second by Jan Martin. **9 Yeas - 0 Nays.**

Motion Passed: Chairman Devlin opened the floor for nominations for Secretary of the Board of Education. Motion to nominate Jan Martin for Secretary of the Board of Education passed with a motion by Anne Kirkpatrick and a second by David Palmer. **9 Yeas - 0 Nays.**

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

4.1. Draft of Board of Education Minutes of September 14, 2020

Rationale: Board is to review, amend and approve the draft of the September 14, 2020 Minutes.

Motion Passed: Motion to approve the Draft Minutes from the September 14, 2020 BOE meeting passed with a motion by David Palmer and a second by Jan Martin. **9 Yeas - 0 Nays.**

5. AUDIENCE TO CITIZENS/STAFF/STUDENTS

6. OPPORTUNITY TO ADD/DELETE AGENDA ITEMS

Motion Passed: Motion to add agenda item 8.2 -- BOE Discussion for Off-Site Meeting passed with a motion by David Palmer and a second by Jan Martin. **9 Yeas - 0 Nays.**

7. CONSENT AGENDA

Motion Passed: Motion to approve Consent Agenda as presented passed with a motion by David Palmer and a second by Jeremy Anderson. **9 Yeas - 0 Nays.**

7.1. Warrant of September 28, 2020

Rationale: Board to consent to warrant of September 28, 2020 in the amount of \$213,895.49.

7.2. 2nd Warning of Somers Policy DBS 4118.11 Personnel Certificated/Non-Certificated

Rationale: Board to review and consent to policy DBS 4118.11-Personnel Certificated/Non-Certificated. Policy Committee approved this change on November 11, 2019.

7.3. 2nd Warning of Somers Policy 4118.112 Personnel - Certified/Non-Certified

Rationale: Board to review and consent to policy DBS 4118.112 Personnel – Certified/Non-Certified. Policy Committee approved this change on November 11, 2019.

7.4. 2nd Warning of Somers Policy DBS 5114 - Students-Suspension and Expulsion/Due Process

Rationale: Board to review and consent to policy DBS 5114 – Students Suspension and Expulsion/Due Process. Policy Committee approved this change on November 11, 2019.

Discussion: Discussion ensued regarding the wording of the policy. Superintendent Czapla clarified the policy.

7.5. 2nd Warning of Somers Policy DBS 5145.5 - Students - Sexual Harassment

Rationale: Board to review and consent to policy DBS 5145.5 - Students – Sexual Harassment. Policy Committee approved this change on November 11, 2019.

7.6. 2nd Warning of Somers Policy DBS 5145.52 - Students - Harassment

Rationale: Board to review and consent to policy DBS 5145.52 - Students – Harassment. Policy Committee approved this change on November 11, 2019.

7.7. 2nd Warning of Somers Policy DBS 3541 - Transportation

Rationale: Board to review and consent to policy DBS 3541 -- Transportation. Policy Committee approved this change on November 11, 2019.

8. NEW BUSINESS

8.1. 1st Warning of the 2021 Board of Education Meeting Schedule

Rationale: The Board will review the 2021 Meeting Schedule and vote on it at the next meeting.

Discussion: A correction needs to be made regarding Tuesday, May 24, 2021. The date needs to be changed to Monday, May 24, 2021.

8.2. Board of Education Discussion for Off-Site Meeting

Rationale: The Board of Education will discuss an off-site meeting.

Discussion: David Palmer suggested an off-site BOE meeting to discuss things that the BOE are doing well and ways to improve process and performance. The BOE may consider including a FOI presentation by CAFE as well. Meeting dates will be circulated to BOE members and will be voted on at the next BOE meeting. Location TBD.

9. OLD BUSINESS

10. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

10.1. Teacher Evaluation Update

Rationale: Mrs. Dina Senecal will present the updated Somers Teachers Evaluation Plan.

Discussion: Mrs. Dina Senecal, Director of Curriculum, updated the BOE on future teacher evaluations. Due to the pandemic situation, the CT State Department of Education is providing flexibility within the requirements of State guidelines. The State is allowing teachers to develop one student learning goal. Observation requirements consist of two informal observations and one review for teachers with more than two years of experience. There will be three informal observations and one review for first and second year teachers as well as those who have performed below the standard of practice the previous year. Ratings will be waived this year. The CT State Department of Education is supporting educators in their focus on family engagement.

10.2. Somers Elementary School Remote Learning Update

Rationale: Mrs. Melissa Mucci, Principal of Somers Elementary School, will give the Board an update.

Discussion: Mrs. Melissa Mucci, SES Principal, updated the BOE on SES's remote learning. SES had to switch to full remote on 9/18/20 due to the number of Covid-19 cases as well as the potential for more cases to occur. SES will return to the hybrid learning model on 10/2/20. SES designed a hybrid and full remote plan, and the State designed a plan to follow as a guide. The full remote

plan was implemented quickly in a matter of a day. Students and staff already had devices. Finding a balance between technology and developmental appropriateness has been challenging. SES is required to provide synchronous or live instruction for grades K-5. Students in grades K-5 will also receive assignments via SeeSaw, a digital learning platform. There continues to be revisions to the plans and schedules.

Superintendent Czapla stated that there was a lot of feedback from parents regarding distance learning last spring requesting more livestreaming and less paperwork. Livestreaming has increased, but this may not be the balance due to developmental appropriateness. Mrs. Mucci stated that there was never time to develop a rhythm with the students or recognize who the students were as learners. Baseline assessments are being designed. Superintendent Czapla stated that the use of Paraeducators will be extremely important and instrumental in smaller sessions. Teachers have already sent out schedules to families, but these may be modified within the next couple of days.

Discussion ensued regarding the livestreaming information on the SPS website involving parental observation and student privacy. Superintendent Czapla and BOE members acknowledged the hard work and dedication of Mrs. Mucci and the teachers at SES. Superintendent Czapla stated that SES has been thoroughly cleaned and is in good shape as far as the positivity rate coming into the school. Sarah Bollinger inquired about students on IEP's and 504's with distance learning. Superintendent Czapla will ask Dr. Denise Messina, Director of Pupil Services, to report on Special Education in the Covid era.

10.3. Superintendent Goals: District Improvement Plan

Rationale: The Superintendent will be there to discuss his goals.

Discussion: Superintendent Czapla updated the BOE on the District Improvement Plan. He decided that the Strategic Plan will continue to move forward while managing the Covid situation. The goals remain similar to last year's goals: student achievement, professional learning, and accountability. Regarding student achievement, staff will need to evaluate ways to improve practices and student success skills. He has asked the administrators to submit their goals that are reflective of district-wide goals. Professional learning continues to be a goal with the new Director of Curriculum, Mrs. Dina Senecal. There have been half-day Professional Development added throughout the year. Some PD may now be livestreamed. The teacher evaluation was based on federal mandates. This didn't make sense from an educational standpoint. The Commissioner now has said that it is time to take a look at the teacher evaluation and what makes sense while looking at factors such as social-emotional learning. This will be a multi-year process. Superintendent Czapla stated that while testing is important in order to assess students' baselines to direct appropriate instruction, it is burdensome and takes away from instructional time. There may be adjustments regarding assessment strategies. He stated that

SPS will try to move toward attaining these goals, but it may be difficult this year due to all of the uncertainties regarding the pandemic.

10.4. Superintendent Update

Rationale: Superintendent will give an update on the latest events at Somers Public Schools.

Discussion: Superintendent Czapla updated the BOE on the recent, drastic decision to close SES for two weeks due to the number of positive Covid-19 cases that ultimately impacted operations. Classes were unable to be covered due to a lack of substitutes. Guidelines were suggested by the State, and every decision has been made in conjunction with the local health department and officials. There was a meeting with an epidemiologist who reviewed the processes as well. There were a number of people who didn't feel well and were symptomatic. There haven't been any additional cases at SES that have affected other people. He is confident that SES will return on 10/2/20 under the hybrid learning model. Ultimately, the goal is to return to full in-person school. MBA and SHS are in good shape. He does, however, have concerns regarding the start of the sport season. Superintendent Czapla has met with the MBA and SHS administrators with a target date for a full return to school on 10/13/20. This date is tentative and subject to change. He's working with staff who will make a formal announcement by the end of the week. He has been asking for perspectives and input from staff. SES is more complicated, and he is not ready to announce the full return date as of yet. Discussion ensued among the BOE members.

Superintendent Czapla discussed the transition into athletics starting 10/1/20. Athletics will still operate under executive orders. There may be 100 people at the athletic event until 10/8/20 at which time there may be 150 people. Under the conference rule, only home fans may attend home games. Visiting fans are not allowed at this time. This will be difficult to monitor, but he is relying on SPS fans to not travel to an away game. Social distancing and masks must be maintained while outside. He has hired staff to help remind onlookers of the rules. If onlookers do not abide by the rules, he may have to enforce shutting down the game and potentially cancelling home games. He is relying on parental cooperation.

The students have acclimated well to school and are doing fabulous. There haven't been any disciplinary actions needed.

11. COMMITTEE REPORTS

11.1. CURRICULUM

Discussion: No report.

11.2. POLICY

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

11.3. SALARY & NEGOTIATION

Discussion: David Palmer reported that the Administrators' Negotiations will begin this Tuesday. There may be a meeting on the day of the next BOE meeting.

11.4. PLANNING

Discussion: David Palmer reported that the next meeting will be in October.

12. CREC UPDATE

Discussion: Anne Kirkpatrick included a packet for the BOE members. She noted one item added this fall by suggestion from Council members was to add more time at the end of the meeting for comments. Comments made at the last Zoom meeting included districts' hybrid models. She stated that SPS was the only district to have five days of instruction. Other districts have also had to increase their substitutes' pay.

13. ADJOURNMENT

Motion Passed: Motion to adjourn the BOE meeting at 8:21 p.m. passed with a motion by Jan Martin and a second by Sarah Bollinger. **9 Yeas - 0 Nays.**

Jan Martin, BOE Secretary

Date

Shannin Burns, BOE Recording Secretary