

**TOWN OF SIMSBURY  
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Record of Proceedings

Regular Meeting

January 12, 2021

Ms. Susan Salina called the regular meeting to order at 6:34 p.m. in the BOE conference room.

Roll Call:

**Members present:** Mmes. Susan Salina, Tara Willerup, Lydia Tedone, Jen Batchelar and Sharon Thomas. Messrs. Todd Burrick, Jeff Tindall and Brian Watson.

**Also present:** Superintendent Matt Curtis, Assistant Superintendent Sue Homrok-Lemke, Assistant Superintendent Neil Sullivan, Director of Finance Amy Meriwether, and Recording Secretary Katie Wilde.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

None

Public Audience

COMMITTEE REPORTS/BOE COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Tedone stated the Communications Committee is scheduled to meet next week. She noted CSDE Commissioner Miquel Cardona's nomination as U.S. Education Secretary. Ms. Tedone reported on the NSBA 4<sup>th</sup> Equity Symposium that will be held virtually on February 10. She noted that the CT legislation convened last week. The CABE legislative breakfast will be held virtually on February 11.

Communications

Ms. Willerup announced the unveiling of the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial at the Simsbury Free Library on January 18. She noted that the work on the memorial began 10 years ago. The ceremony will take place 2:00-4:00 and includes the ability to drive past the memorial while listening to the program on Radio 87.9.

Ms. Lemke reported that Lynn Lyons, specialist in adolescent anxiety, will continue to consult with school psychologists and social workers on a quarterly basis via Zoom to bring best practices into the schools. Her presentation at HJMS two years ago was very well attended. Ms. Lemke stated that administrators in the district continue to read the book *Unconscious Bias*, working through the leadership piece. The professional development this Friday will be centered on two themes, equity and social/emotional learning for adults and students.

Mr. Sullivan stated that the Policy Committee will meet this week. Significant changes are being made to the policies around Title IX based on changes at the federal level. Mr. Sullivan reported that the Tootin' Hills principal search is on track, with the final rounds of interviews tomorrow. He provided an update on the number of distance learners in the district. On October 1<sup>st</sup> we had 400 students at the elementary level participating in distance learning. That number was 376 on Election Day and is 376 as of last Friday. At HJMS the number has remained stable. At SHS the number has increased from 200 to 275 since October.

Mr. Curtis stated that he, Mr. Sullivan, Ms. Meriwether and Jeff Wysznski attended a virtual meeting with the state School Construction Grants and Review office regarding the potential application in June of projects moving forward. He reported that the individual budget meetings are wrapping up and at the next board meeting

Mr. Sullivan will present the personnel budget, which amounts to 80% of the overall school budget.

Mr. Curtis addressed the status of the COVID vaccination distribution to staff in the education sector. He noted that educators are in Phase 1b of the state distribution. The number of residents now in Phase 1b is close to 1.5 million. The Vaccine Administration Management Systems (VAMS) is prepared for the district to register our employees. The Farmington Valley Health District is considering holding clinics for educators in the Farmington Valley. The issue with the vaccinations is supply. The district will continue to communicate as we receive information as to when vaccinations for educators can begin. Mr. Curtis stated that COVID positivity rates have increased both in the state and the Farmington Valley. He noted that as long as we can contact trace with fidelity in schools, and don't see person to person spread, the district will remain in our current education models.

### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

#### A. Approval of Minutes of December 8, 2020 Meeting

Ms. Tedone: MOVE to approve the minutes of the December 8, 2020 meeting.

Ms. Willerup: Seconded. So moved.

#### B. Approval of Simsbury High School Graduation Date

Ms. Batchelar: MOVE that the Simsbury High School graduation date be established on June 7, 2021.

Ms. Thomas: Seconded. So moved.

#### C. Approval of Music Department Donation

Ms. Willerup: MOVE that the proposed gift of an upright piano to the Simsbury Music Department from the Wilson family be approved.

Mr. Tindall: Seconded. So moved.

#### D. 2021 BOE Meeting Schedule

Mr. Burrick: MOVE that the Board of Education set their 2021 meeting schedule as outlined in the January 12, 2021 board exhibit.

Ms. Willerup: Seconded. So moved.

### INFORMATION AND REPORTS

#### A. Special Education Program Review

Ms. Lemke thanked the special services staff for all of their work. She noted the department's mission statement and stated that the theme for 2020-21 is Grit, Grace & Gratitude. Ms. Lemke reviewed the departments Big Five as we move through COVID. (1) Achievement gap: because there was no standardized testing, we do not

Approval of  
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Approval of SHS  
Graduation Date

Approval of  
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Department  
Donation

2021 BOE  
Meeting  
Schedule

Special Ed  
Program Review

have comparison data. Staff continues to focus on IEPs. (2) Reading/Dyslexia: reading interventions continue with general education curricular shifts to assist those in need. (3) Transition: transitioning back to school was a priority. The extended school year program ran this summer with COVID mitigating strategies in place. The Farmington Valley Transitional Academy has expanded beyond the University of Hartford to Auer Farm providing additional space and more onsite internships. (4) Mental health: We don't yet know the ramifications of the pandemic on students and adults. Social emotional learning (SEL) was a cornerstone tenet of the Simsbury schools reopening plan. An elementary team and a secondary district team were formed to develop and implement professional development. Specific time for SEL has been built into student schedules K-8. Additionally, SEL is a focus in all teacher growth plans. (5) Service delivery had to be addressed in the midst of COVID. Students with greater needs were prioritized for return to school. A learning model implementation plan was put in place if there are different needs from the student's IEP.

Ms. Batchelar asked if there has been a change in the number of students attending school. Mr. Sullivan responded that there has been a trend of SHS students, in December and January, who are now logging in remotely 4 days per week.

Ms. Lemke spoke about the role of the Special Education Parent Teacher Organization (SEPTO) and the programming and support they provide for the department. She addressed the CT Annual Performance Report. The state evaluates district's efforts to implement the requirements and purposes of IDEA. Sixteen indicators create the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) and Simsbury met all of the requirements. Ms. Lemke noted that the district did receive a supplement regarding disproportionate representation of black/brown males as "Other Health Impaired." The Equity Council is looking at this data.

Ms. Lemke addressed the special education budget. She reviewed the budget drivers and stated that the special education budget is 24.05% of overall BOE expenditures. Ms. Lemke identified the parameters of the federal IDEA Grant and the state Excess Cost Grant. She reviewed a five year history of special education staffing, noting the overall change is an increase of 0.14 FTE with an emphasis on social workers. Ms. Lemke outlined the Birth to Three state program. Six months in advance the district receives the number of students and the date of entry from the program. Three months in advance the district receives information about the child's complexity and the intensity of disability. Ms. Lemke noted that this results in an increase in preschool enrollment over the course of the school year.

Ms. Batchelar asked how many students are serviced through the special education program. Ms. Lemke responded that the district services 604 students PreK through age 22. She pointed out that the district also provides services for Simsbury students in non-public schools. The district pays for Simsbury students who attend magnet schools and require special education services. Ms. Salina stated that Ms. Lemke has led the special education department beautifully and much credit is deserved for her and her staff.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

None

Public Audience

ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment

Ms. Willerup: MOVE to adjourn the meeting at 7:49 p.m.

Ms. Batchelar: Seconded. So moved.

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Jennifer Batchelar  
Secretary

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Katie Wilde  
Recording Secretary