

**TOWN OF SIMSBURY  
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Record of Proceedings

Regular Meeting

January 26, 2021

Ms. Susan Salina called the regular meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. in the BOE conference room.

Roll Call:

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

**Members absent:** Mrs. Tara Willerup

**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 reported on the upcoming NSBA symposium and CREC/CABE legislative breakfast. Mr. Tindall noted that the 2020 increase in home sales in Simsbury ranked 9<sup>th</sup> in the state. Ms. Lemke stated that the Curriculum Committee will meet on February 4 for an update on the district's plans for Black History Month.

Communications

Mr. Curtis stated that budget binders will be provided to board members at the end of the week. He reported that COVID positivity rates in CT have been below 5% over the past week's reporting window.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

A. Appointment of Tootin' Hills Principal

Mr. Curtis introduced Anjanette Belmonte and spoke highly about her accomplishments in the district.

Appointment of  
Tootin' Hills  
Principal

Ms. Thomas: MOVE that the Board of Education appoint Anjanette Belmonte to the position of Principal for Tootin' Hills School with an effective date of February 16, 2021.

Mr. Burrick: Seconded. So moved.

B. Approval of Minutes of January 12, 2021 Meeting

Mr. Tindall: MOVE to approve the minutes of the January 12, 2021 meeting.

Ms. Tedone: Seconded. So moved.

Approval of  
Minutes of  
January 12,  
2021 Meeting

C. Approval of Minutes of January 19, 2021 Special Meeting

Approval of  
Minutes of  
January 19,

Ms. Batchelar: MOVE to approve the minutes of the January 19, 2021 special meeting.	2021 Meeting
Mr. Watson: Seconded. So moved.	
D. Personnel	Personnel
Ms. Batchelar: MOVE that the Board of Education approve the request for non-salaried, guaranteed leave of absence for Melissa Leonard effective January 27, 2021 – June 30, 2021.	
Ms. Thomas: Seconded. So moved.	
E. Approval of Joan Sullivan Memorial Scholarship	Approval of Joan Sullivan Memorial Scholarship
Ms. Watson: MOVE that the Board of Education approve the Joan Sullivan Memorial Scholarship, to be disbursed in 2021.	
Mr. Tindall: Seconded. So moved.	
F. Approval of Latimer Lane PTO Donation	Latimer Lane PTO Donation
Ms. Thomas: MOVE that the proposed gift of \$10,910 from the Latimer Lane School PTO be approved.	
Ms. Batchelar: Seconded. So moved.	
<u>INFORMATION AND REPORTS</u>	
A. Latimer Lane: Character, Community & Connection	Latimer Lane: Character, Community & Connection
Mr. Burrick: MOVE to amend the agenda and postpone the Latimer Lane presentation.	
Ms. Batchelar: Seconded. So moved	
B. 2021-22 Budget – Enrollment & Staffing	2021-22 Budget
Mr. Sullivan presented historical K-12 enrollment data, noting that over time enrollment has declined but has become steady over the past few years. He pointed out that the decline in 2020-21 is related to COVID. Mr. Sullivan presented a K-12 staffing history and reviewed the program enhancements during lean budgets.	
Mr. Sullivan discussed elementary classroom teacher staffing. He pointed out that 102 elementary teachers were budgeted for in 2020-21 based on a projected enrollment of 2,095. The actual enrollment for 2020-21 was 2,018 and with the need for distance learning classes and smaller in-person classes a total of 123 teachers were needed. With a projected elementary enrollment of 2,081 next year the projection is back to 102 teachers.	
Mr. Sullivan noted the specific elementary staffing needs in 2021-22. The goal is to rebuild the intervention and support systems. Mr. Sullivan explained that 16.6	

positions were repurposed last summer. This includes 4 Math Coaches, 5 Language Arts Consultants, 6.6 Reading Intervention Teachers, and 1.0 Library Media Specialist. These positions were reassigned as distance learning classroom teachers. Additionally, 5 positions were added to reduce class size for COVID safety. Mr. Sullivan stated that based on elementary enrollment projections, it is anticipated that one additional teacher will be needed at Tariffville School, one fewer at Latimer Lane School and 2 fewer at Central School. The teachers assigned to distance learning should not be needed in that role unless the state requires a distance learning option.

Mr. Sullivan reviewed the elementary staffing requests for 2021-22. Principals have requested building substitutes and math tutorial support necessary coming out of the pandemic. Principal requests put on hold include a special education teacher at Squadron Line, full-time social worker at Tariffville and Latimer and a secretary for the Elementary Curriculum Center. Ms. Thomas asked about the social worker request and the need for additional mental supports coming out of the pandemic. Ms. Lemke stated that she believes the district is well staffed for mental health needs with school psychologists, social workers, counselors and special education staff.

Ms. Thomas asked if the state has indicated what should stay and what should go based on the pandemic. Mr. Curtis stated that the goal is to bring back the staff members who were repurposed, noting that there may be some additional relief provided through the ESSER funding. Ms. Tedone noted that the CT legislative session runs through June this year.

Mr. Sullivan reported on HJMS staffing. This year an additional PE/Health position was added for COVID safety and the recommendation is to keep this position next year. Enrollment is anticipated to remain flat at HJMS for a third year in 2021-22, and will have little impact on the budget.

Mr. Sullivan stated that significant staffing reductions have been taken at SHS over the past decade. The decline in enrollment has stopped and therefore staffing will remain flat in 2021-22. New course requests can be met with the existing staff. Mr. Sullivan addressed summer school programming at SHS. With students struggling in the hybrid and distance learning models, it will be necessary to offer remediation courses and credit recovery options. These additional Department of Continuing Education offerings will add \$25,000-\$30,000 to the 2021-22 budget. Ms. Thomas asked if these programs will be offered to middle school students. Mr. Sullivan responded that there is some remedial programming for middle school students in the summer, noting that middle school students are in school 4 days per week.

Mr. Watson asked how our staff to student ratio at SHS compares to other districts. Mr. Sullivan responded that the state has districts provide average class sizes in key courses and he will look up that information.

Mr. Sullivan addressed district staffing. A Director of Equity and Access will be a new budgeted position in 2021-22. Central Office has been restructured providing savings with the transitions of Burke LaClair and Erin Murray and the Director of Finance shared with the town. The addition of 3 custodians, during COVID, will be revisited. The target with non-certified staff is a reduction of 5.0 FTE. The district currently has 255 FTE in non-certified staffing.

Mr. Sullivan discussed personnel budget themes. At the elementary level the intent is to rebuild support and intervention systems. At HJMS, maintain the PE/Health position added in 2020-21. At SHS new course offerings in computer science, diversity studies, PE/Health, capstone and summer programming. At the district level, the addition of a Director of Equity and Inclusion. Relative to budget reductions, these include a 5.0 FTE reduction in non-certified staff, addressing principal requests through repurposing of existing staff and the restructuring of Central Office.

Mr. Sullivan presented the 2021-22 roll forward personnel budget drivers. Mr. Curtis pointed out the value of the teacher's contract is a 1.8% increase which is the largest driver of the budget. He noted that the district cannot capture certified FTE next year from an enrollment standpoint.

Ms. Thomas noted that if everyone is not vaccinated by the end of the summer, our current cleaning protocols will need to remain in place. Mr. Sullivan stated that the additional 3 custodians hired are here to fill any custodial absences we have, and we expect to reestablish our custodial substitute pool next year. In response to Mr. Watson, Mr. Curtis confirmed the BOF budget guideline is 1.5%. Mr. Watson pointed out that this is an approximate increase of \$1 million.

#### C. Six Year Capital Improvement Plan

Mr. Curtis reviewed year one of the capital improvement plan. District security improvements are a continuation of the work that began last year. The SHS bleachers and press box is a resubmittal of last year's request. The Latimer Lane School renovation and HJMS additional projects are a result of the Facilities Master Plan Phase 1 recommendations. It may be necessary to decouple the two projects, with Latimer Lane School as the number one priority. Mr. Curtis stated that Ms. Meriwether will work with us on the debt service modeling for this project. We will offer tours of Latimer Lane School to BOS and BOF members. Mr. Curtis stated it is important that we work closely with the BOS as they incorporate our plan into their plan for submission to the BOF.

#### D. 2019-20 Audit Report.

Ms. Meriwether reported that revenues exceeded budget by \$1.2 million. Relative to the BOE, the town received an additional \$65,000 in ECS grant funding, investment income was in excess of \$250,000, and there was additional revenue from the non-public school budget in the amount of \$50,000. On the town side, increased revenues resulted from building fees and property taxes collected over budget.

Ms. Meriwether stated that relative to expenditures, the \$298,775 is mostly related to BOE savings of \$266,308 due to the closing of schools as a result of COVID. She noted that on a GAAP basis, excess of revenues over expenditures was over \$5 million. The GAAP basis is what the rating agencies care about, which is important relative to the Latimer Lane School project. The town started the year with a fund balance of \$17,109,547 and ended the year with a fund balance of \$18,904,280. Once non-spendable (prepaid expenditures), committed (non-lapsing) and assigned expenditures are taken into account the unassigned general fund for July 1, 2020 of \$17,775,774. This is 17% of operating expenditures. Most AAA bond rated communities maintain a balance of 15.5%.

6 Year CIP

2019- Audit  
Report

Ms. Meriwether addressed the management comments. The accounting procedures manual is a holdover from last year regarding the development of a comprehensive accounting procedures manual for the town and BOE finance offices. Once the implementation of the new Munis accounting system is in place, procedures for the town and BOE will mirror each other, and one manual for both entities will be created. The auditor also suggesting a fraud risk assessment. The funding request for the assessment was made during the FY 20 budget process in year three of the six year capital plan for the town.

#### E. Quarterly Budget Analysis

Ms. Meriwether pointed out that the district is receiving an increase in the Excess Cost Grant of \$283,472. These additional funds, as well as some additional grants, will offset the out-of-district tuition deficit. The Coronavirus relief funds have been added to the quarterly report. To date, the district has been awarded \$476,055 in funds and is expecting another allocation soon.

Ms. Meriwether addressed the increased percentage of expenditures as compared to last year. Last year's number reflects 9 payrolls for the period and this year's number reflects 10 payrolls for the period. Ms. Meriwether addressed individual expenditure fluctuations compared to last year at this time. Due to the uptick in expenditures, a budget freeze is being put in place through the end of March.

#### PUBLIC AUDIENCE

None

#### ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Tedone: MOVE to adjourn the meeting at 8:14 p.m.

Mr. Tindall: Seconded. So moved.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jennifer Batchelar  
Secretary

\_\_\_\_\_  
Katie Wilde  
Recording Secretary

Quarterly  
Budget Analysis

Public Audience

Adjournment