

TOWN OF SIMSBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION

Record of Proceedings

Regular Meeting

October 10, 2017

Mrs. Willerup called the regular meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. in the Board of Education Conference Room.

Roll Call:

Members present: Mmes. Tara Willerup and Susan Salina. Messrs. Mike Goman, Todd Burrick and Tom Frank.

Members absent: Mrs. Lydia Tedone and Messrs. Jeff Tindall and Mr. Tom Doran.

Also present: Superintendent Matt Curtis, Assistant Superintendent Erin Murray, Assistant Superintendent Sue Homrok-Lemke, Business Manager Burke LaClair, Director of Personnel Neil Sullivan, Student Representative Dylan Fitch and Recording Secretary Katie Wilde.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

Bob Duguay, Nod Brook Drive, stated that he had 4 children go through the Simsbury school system and he is unhappy with the newspaper report about how Coach Cohen was treated after coaching for 35 years. He explained how Coach Cohen had a profound effect on one of his children and on countless other families. He suggested that Coach Cohen was poorly treated and is owed an apology. Mr. Duguay also mentioned his concern with the naming of the football field. Ms. Willerup clarified that no one on the board, or the administration, think that Coach Cohen was a bad coach.

Public Audience

BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Fitch updated board members on the bike/walk to school events at the elementary schools as well as the Simsbury Fire Department school visits for National Fire Safety week. He stated that Mr. White will hold a parent breakfast on October 18th at HJMS. SHS had a successful homecoming weekend and freshmen, sophomores and juniors will take the PSAT tomorrow.

Communications

Mr. Sullivan shared information about SHS Social Studies teacher Clarke Bashelor who recently passed away.

Ms. Willerup reported on the solar dedication ceremony at SHS and thanked those involved in making it happen. She stated that SHS Science teacher Keith Berthiaume did a walkthrough of the online portal that tracks the efficiency of the system, noting that this data will be used by students in the classroom.

Mr. Curtis reported that at the state level both sides are talking across the aisle and once a budget is in place the BOF/BOS/BOE will meet together.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

A. Approval of Minutes of September 26, 2017

Mr. Frank: MOVE to approve the minutes of the September 26, 2017 meeting.

Approval of
Minutes of
September 26,
2017

Ms. Salina: Seconded. So moved. Mr. Goman abstained.

B. Personnel

Mr. Sullivan stated that the last certified teacher hire was Jack Ford who will teach three classes at HJMS, those previously taught by the HJMS Math Department Supervisor.

C. Energize CT Resolution

Mr. LaClair reviewed the completed and ongoing energy efficiency projects in the schools. He stated that EverSource and CT Natural Gas are providing energy incentives and 0% "on-bill" financing through the Energize CT Municipal Lease Simple Funding Program. Mr. LaClair noted that these projects have an estimated payback within 4 years and the net cost of \$152,009 will be paid as part of the utility bills, essentially making it cost neutral.

Mr. Goman: MOVE that the Board of Education has determined that a true and very real need exists for the acquisition of the Equipment described on Exhibit A of the Taxable Government Obligation Contract dated as of September 1, 2017, between Town of Simsbury, Connecticut Board of Education (Obligor) and M-Core Credit Corporation (Obligee); and the Board of Education has determined that the Contract, substantially in the form presented to this meeting, is in the best interests of the Board for the acquisition of such Equipment, and the Board hereby approves the entering into of the Contract and hereby designates and authorizes the Superintendent to execute and deliver the Contract on the Board's behalf with such changes thereto as such person(s) deem(s) appropriate, and any related documents, including any Escrow Agreement, necessary to the consummation of the transaction contemplated by the Contract.

Ms. Salina: Seconded. So moved.

Mr. Frank requested that an update, quantifying the financial benefits of these projects and the solar project, be given to the board at a later date.

INFORMATION AND REPORTS

A. October 1 Enrollment Report / Magnet School Enrollment

Mr. Sullivan stated that enrollment has decreased 71 students between 10/1/16 and 10/1/17. The projection for 10/1/17 was 4,036 and our actual enrollment is 4,039. Mr. Sullivan provided a comparison of projected versus actual enrollment by grade, as well as by school.

Mr. Sullivan reviewed the new developments being constructed in town and the resulting number of additional students up to this point. He stated that he will provide the board with an update every 6 months. Mr. Frank noted that the average number of students per new family in these units is 1.3. Mr. Sullivan stated that the size of the condominium tends to determine the number of additional students, as there was not a large proportional increase from Dorsett Crossing but there has been from Aspen Green.

Personnel

Energize CT
Resolution

October 1
Enrollment
Report/Magnet
School
Enrollment

Mr. Sullivan discussed the 5 year historical enrollment trend, noting that there has been a decline of 291 students which is a 7% decrease. He stated that this year we have 100 Pre-K students at Squadron Line and 165 PK-12 Open Choice students. The largest cohorts are in Grades 10 and 11 and the smallest are in Kindergarten and Grade 2. Mr. Sullivan stated that it will be 5 more years before the largest cohorts have moved through the high school.

Mr. Sullivan reviewed the Open Choice historical enrollment. Over the past 6 years the enrollment has increased from 126 students to 165 students. He noted that this year, with the decrease in enrollment, the district has reached the 4% threshold for Choice students. Mr. Frank asked if there is a policy decision to increase the percentage of Choice students. Mr. Sullivan responded that the percentage naturally rises as the enrollment decreases. Mr. Frank asked about our policy around Open Choice. Mr. Curtis responded that the district does not have a set policy, but the program has grown due to full day Kindergarten and the addition of Pre-K students. He noted that last year the board discussed adding students to reach the 4% threshold which results in a higher reimbursement rate from the state.

Mr. Sullivan addressed students attending out of district programs. He stated that we have 143 students attending full-time magnet and out of district programs, 69 of whom are enrolled in K and Pre-K programs. Ten students attend part-time magnet and out of district programs.

Mr. Goman stated the national marker for enrollment per dwelling is .6-.7 students. Simsbury is at .13. He suggested that we need to know the nature of these developments and a Facilities & Enrollment Task Force meeting should be scheduled soon. Mr. Goman noted that if the new developments are primarily in the northern and southern parts of town, we may need to consider redistricting.

B. Class Size Report

Mr. Sullivan reviewed the elementary class sizes. Currently there are 10 elementary classes over the guidelines, 8 of these classes are 1 over the guideline. The other 2 classes have 24 students and are the classrooms where tutorial support has been added. Mr. Sullivan noted that HJMS is where class sizes have remained the most static.

Anjanette Belmonte, HJMS Assistant Principal, discussed the move to the block schedule this year where 3 days of the week follow a regular schedule with 42 minute classes and 2 days of the week are 4 block periods that are 78 minutes in length. These longer classes allow teachers to go deeper into content and have added connections with students. Ms. Belmonte noted that with the new schedule you can now take Art and/or Consumer Science for a full year.

Ms. Belmonte stated that students now get their first choice for World Language. The PE/Health/Wellness curriculum is on a rotational basis, and Health is now a full year course. Ms. Belmonte noted that the school year is now trimesters rather than quarters. She pointed out that these changes have been made with no additions to staffing. The overall number of classes has decreased from 339 to 308 due to the decrease in enrollment. Ms. Belmonte noted that the overall changes have resulted in positive feedback both from students and faculty.

Class Size Report

Ken Pera, SHS Assistant Principal, addressed class size at SHS. He noted that this year staffing at SHS was reduced by 2.8 FTE. As a result, the decision was made to have bigger class sizes for senior year and high level classes. The number of core classes was reduced from 380, in the prior year, to 367. The number of classes exceeding the guidelines has increased from 36 to 63 and the number of classes below the guidelines is now 105, down from 118 last year. Mr. Pera pointed out that some class sizes are affected by safety considerations. He stated that this year some classes had to be closed. The year started with a waiting list for a couple of classes, but those requests were eventually accommodated.

Mr. Pera noted that 62 of the 63 classes exceeding guidelines are over by 1 or 2 students. There is a French class that is 2 or 3 students over guideline. Classes under the guideline are under by only a couple of students. In some cases there are singleton classes that need to be available to students based on their schedules.

Mr. Frank asked if the increase from 9% to 17%, of the number of classes exceeding the guideline, is solely the result of the reduction in FTE. Mr. Sullivan responded that this is largely due to the reduction in FTE, noting that the district is strained with the additional \$1 million in cuts at the end of the year. Mr. Curtis pointed out that in the past a teacher would have been added at Latimer Lane, but the decision was made this year not to add a teacher.

Mr. Frank suggested that the board review class size guidelines. Mr. Curtis agreed and noted that the class size guideline policy hasn't been revised in just over 10 years, when the second grade class size was reduced from 25 to 22. Mr. Frank pointed out that the implementation of technology improves efficiency and has an effect on teaching. Mr. Curtis noted that, in addition, there have been changes to the curriculum and the implementation of new standards.

Mr. Burrick pointed out that the classes over guideline tend to be Level II or III classes which have smaller class size guidelines. He noted that changing the guideline doesn't change the number of students in the class. Mr. Goman suggested that we look at how this data is reported, as having a class one below or one above guideline is not a material difference and maybe we should set a percentage over/under that is reported. Mr. Sullivan pointed out that taking the average, the number of students divided by the number of sections, presents the best picture.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

None

Public Audience

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Frank: MOVE to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

Mr. Goman: Seconded. So moved.

Adjournment

Todd Burrick
Secretary

Katie Wilde
Recording Secretary