

**TOWN OF SIMSBURY  
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Record of Proceedings

Regular Meeting

December 8, 2020

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 and Jen Batchelar. Messrs. Todd Burrick and Jeff Tindall. Sharon Thomas arrived at 6:44 p.m.

**Members absent:** Mr. Brian Watson.

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

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

None

Public Audience

BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Salina presented a gift to Ms. Murray from the board for her retirement. Ms. Salina noted that the Simsbury 350 sign at town hall was created by teacher Cameron Bopp and his students. Ms. Tedone reported on the work of NSBA at the federal level and the CT legislative session. Ms. Willerup reported on the success of Simsbury Celebrates.

Communications

Ms. Murray stated that the Hour of Code starts this week and will run into next week. Ms. Meriwether reported that additional CARES Act funding became available and Simsbury was awarded an additional \$80,000. Ms. Lemke stated that the school district has begun participating in a school nutrition program that provides free breakfast and lunch to all students. Mr. Sullivan provided an overview of the Tootin' Hills Principal search process, noting that Larry Sparks is serving in an interim role in the meantime.

Mr. Curtis gave an update on COVID cases in school and Simsbury. He noted that we will continue with the current learning model structures. Mr. Curtis stated that we continue to look at our ability to staff and contact trace with fidelity. We do not see in person spread within our school buildings. Mr. Curtis thanked staff, students and families for supporting the district's mitigation strategies providing the ability to keep school open.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

## A. Administrative Appointments

Administrative Appointments

Mr. Curtis stated that with Ms. Murray's retirement and changes in central office over the past year, he is recommending a restructure in leadership. Mr. Curtis recommended the appointment of Ms. Lemke to the position of Assistant Superintendent for Teaching & Learning and Mr. Sullivan to the position of Assistant

Superintendent for Administration. He stated that a Director of Pupil Services will be appointed to replace Ms. Lemke. The Director of Pupil Services, Director of Instructional Technology and Director of Elementary Curriculum will report to Ms. Lemke. Mr. Sullivan has taken over some of the responsibilities of the business office and the operations side of the organization will fall under his purview. Mr. Curtis noted that Ms. Meriwether has been serving in the role of Director of Finance, and she will continue in that role for both the town and the BOE.

Ms. Willerup: MOVE that the Board of Education appoint Susan Homrok-Lemke to the position of Assistant Superintendent for Teaching & Learning, and Neil Sullivan to the position of Assistant Superintendent for Administration effective January 1, 2021.

Ms. Tedone: Seconded. So moved.

#### B. Approval of Minutes of November 10, 2020 Meeting

Ms. Willerup: MOVE to approve the minutes of the November 10, 2020 meeting.

Ms. Batchelar: Seconded. So moved. Ms. Tedone abstained.

#### C. Approval of Minutes of November 24, 2020 Special Meeting

Mr. Tindall: MOVE to approve the minutes of the November 24, 2020 special meeting.

Ms. Batchelar: Seconded. So moved.

### INFORMATION AND REPORTS

#### A. Enrollment Projections

Mr. Sullivan reported that as a result of the pandemic enrollment is lower than projected, which is being seen across our demographic group. He reviewed historical enrollment 2016 through 2020, noting that this year will be the end of the low enrollment trend. Next year enrollment is projected to increase by 60 students; by 2025-26 the projection is for an additional 207 students. Mr. Sullivan noted that the district expects those Kindergarten students who did not attend Kindergarten this fall to enroll next year.

In 2021-22 the increase of 60 students includes 63 new students K-6, flat enrollment at HJMS and a decline of 3 students at SHS. Much of the elementary increase is anticipated in Kindergarten and Grade 1. Mr. Sullivan reviewed elementary projections by school. He noted that Latimer Lane is fine for next year, no modulars will be needed. Future decisions for Latimer Lane will be driven by capital projects.

Mr. Sullivan reviewed birth to Kindergarten trends, noting the decrease in the persistency ratio in 2020-21. After next year, HJMS will experience a dip in enrollment for two years then will tick back up. This is due to a small 5<sup>th</sup> grade cohort in the district. SHS will experience a similar dip when the 5<sup>th</sup> grade cohort moves through. Mr. Sullivan noted that given projected enrollment we will not be able to continue to reduce FTE at SHS.

Approval of  
Minutes of  
November 10,  
2020

Approval of  
Minutes of  
November 24,  
2020

Enrollment  
Projections

In conclusion, Mr. Sullivan stated that the projections suggest that K-12 student enrollment will increase by an average of 41 per year over the next 5 years. Staffing decisions for the primary grades in 2021-22 will need to be flexible. Mr. Tindall noted that the decrease in enrollment this year occurred across CT, not just in Simsbury.

#### B. 2021-22 Budget

#### 2021-22 Budget

Mr. Curtis presented the fixed costs moving into 2021-22. He pointed out that insurance and union contracts result in more than a 3% budget increase. During the BOF/BOS/BOE meeting the BOF provided a 1.5% guideline for the 2021-22 budget. Mr. Curtis noted that the budget planning process will begin with 3% in fixed costs, and this is not a year we can capture FTE with flat enrollment. There may be some savings as a result of the staff hired due to COVID.

Mr. Curtis stated that the district has moved to a new budget process with updated forms for this year. A reduction from 3% to 1.5% is \$1.2 million and will be a challenge in the current environment. Mr. Curtis stated the BOF has requested a separate meeting to discuss the capital plan.

Mr. Tindall expressed his frustration with the tri-board meeting and the lack of collaboration among the boards. He noted that the BOF role is advisory and to provide guidance. They should not be asking the BOE to open bargaining unit contracts, particularly given the impact of COVID. Ms. Salina agreed that the request was inappropriate.

Mr. Curtis noted that we are running an additional school this year for distance learning, and the BOE budget is based on supporting students and teachers. Ms. Willerup stated the tri-board meeting was not open and collaborative, and in the future should include set items for discussion. Ms. Thomas stated she expected the BOF to address the fixed costs provided by the district and the town to reach a final budget guideline number. Mr. Burrick agreed he did find the meeting to be collaborative. Ms. Salina stated that the job of the BOE is to put forward the best school system we can, and we always work hard to reach the guidelines.

#### C. Capital Improvement Plan

#### Capital Improvement Plan

Mr. Curtis reviewed the update capital project plan. He noted that the Latimer Lane School maintenance items have been removed and the school renovation has been added. Additionally, the HJMS addition is now included. Mr. Curtis stated that both of these projects will be discussed at the next tri-board meeting. He noted that the Latimer Lane project is the priority between the two projects.

#### D. Humanities Elective

#### Humanities Elective

Ms. Murray stated that the African American/Black History Puerto Rican/Latino Studies course is an elective state mandated course. The course is 2 semesters and is a 1 credit course. High Schools must offer the course by 2022-23. The curriculum for the course is being developed by the State Education Resource Center (SERC).

Georgia Robert, SHS Assistant Principal, stated that the SHS requirement is for 3.5 credits in social studies but many students take 4 credits. The plan is to offer this

course at multiple levels. Prerequisites are U.S. History and Modern World History. The coursework will provide students with tools to identify historic and contemporary tensions around race and difference; map economic and racial disparities over time; strengthen their own identity development; and address bias in their communities. Ms. Robert pointed out the course relates to the district's equity goals and global citizenship within the Vision of a Graduate. She reviewed the learning objectives and essential questions for the course.

Mr. Tindall noted that the Puerto Rican section of the course seems to be more specific and the Latino section seems less specific. Ms. Murray responded that the Latino Studies is a broader course. Ms. Robert stated that Simsbury will collaborate with other high schools as they will all use the same curriculum.

Ms. Murray stated that a social studies and Spanish teacher at SHS will co-teach a Latino pilot course next year, for which we wrote the curriculum. In 2022-23 the SERC curriculum will be used to offer a full year course elective.

Ms. Lemke reviewed the SPS Equity Statement, Core Beliefs and Stance. She noted how this course brings these objectives to life and related specific areas to the course curriculum. Ms. Murray reviewed the summary of next steps.

#### PUBLIC AUDIENCE

None

Public Audience

#### ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Batchelar:MOVE to adjourn the meeting at 7:56 p.m.

Adjournment

Ms. Willerup: Seconded. So moved.

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Jennifer Batchelar  
Secretary

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Katie Wilde  
Recording Secretary