

BOARD OF EDUCATION  
TOWN OF SOUTH WINDSOR, CONNECTICUT  
MINUTES

On February 27, 2018, the Board of Education held its regular meeting at the Timothy Edwards Middle School, 100 Arnold Way.

Members present: Audrey Delnicki, Beth Esstman, Erica Evans, Michael Gonzalez, David Joy, Michael Paré, Rick Stahr, Jessica Waterhouse and Craig Zimmerman

Also present: Superintendent Kate Carter, Assistant Superintendent Sheryl Mortensen, Assistant Superintendent Colin McNamara and Director of Finance and Operations, Chris Chemerka.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Zimmerman called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

ROLL CALL

Roll call was taken.

Reverend Gonzalez read the South Windsor Public Schools Vision Statement.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: Move to approve the minutes of the January 18, 2018 special meeting. (*Joy/Waterhouse*)  
VOTE: Approved (8-0-1) Mrs. Delnicki abstained.

MOTION: Move to approve the minutes of the January 23, 2018 regular meeting (*Paré/Waterhouse*)  
VOTE: Approved/Unanimous (9-0)

MOTION: Move to approve the minutes of the February 6, 2018 special meeting. (*Stahr/ Paré*)  
VOTE: Approved Unanimous (9-0)

MOTION: Move to approve the minutes of the February 8, 2018 special meeting. (*Waterhouse/Evans*)  
VOTE: Approved (8-0-1) Mrs. Delnicki abstained.

MOTION: Move to approve the minutes of the February 13, 2018 special meeting (*Delnicki/ Paré*)  
VOTE: Approved (7-0-2) Mrs. Delnicki and Reverend Gonzalez abstained.

COMMUNICATIONS

Superintendent of Schools: Dr. Carter reviewed *Good News from Schools*.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction: Mrs. Mortensen provided follow up information regarding the Invention Convention held on Saturday, February 10, noting that 300 fifth grade students participated in the competition, with forty volunteer judges including teachers, engineers, inventors and community members evaluating the inventions. The top 15% from each school will move on to the regional exhibition at the

Connecticut River Academy on March 24. Those students placing in the top of that competition will move on to the final competition to be held at UConn. She noted that she would keep the board apprised of the outcome.

Student Representatives:

Kellie Ward reported on the following news:

- SWHS Modern World History Exhibition was held on February 6,
- Choral Spectrum performed at the annual Cabaret concert on March 21, they brought the same energy which placed them as gold in their last competition,
- A blood drive will be held on March 7 at SWHS,
- The annual Volleyball Marathon night, put together by the club “Drug Free” will be held on March 9,
- On March 16, the Bobcat Pride Organization will be running their second dance of the year.

Brandon Sze reported on the following news:

- Juniors have begun their preparation for their official SAT which will be held in school on March 21,
- Orchard Hill’s 5th grade music concert will be held on March 14 at 7pm,
- Pleasant Valley will hold a parent math night for grades 3-5 at the PV library on March 1,
- Timothy Edwards Middle School Math Counts had their New England Math League Competition, Everyone did fantastic and the top five scorers from each grade will move on to the next round.

Board of Education Members: Mr. Paré noted that he had the opportunity to judge the inventions, stating that it was a great event with a lot of interesting ideas presented by students.

Mr. Joy informed the board that South Windsor will be hosting an event on March 7 on behalf of CREC for the purpose of addressing neighboring districts regarding the state of magnet school funding, specifically as it relates to the Sheff initiative. In addition to South Windsor, Simsbury and Bloomfield will also be hosting neighboring towns. Mr. Joy noted that he would forward information to the board regarding the meeting details as well as information related to the funding from the state for magnet school tuition.

Chairman Zimmerman reminded board members that Mrs. Walsh had tickets to the Hall of Fame dinner to be held on March 3 at Maneeleys. He remarked that the incoming class of honorees this year is outstanding.

HEARING OF VISITORS: No visitors wished to be heard.

CONSENT

- A. Post-facto approval of the 2017-2019 consolidated grant application for Title I, Part A and Title II, Part A
- B. Post-facto approval of the 2017-2018 grant application for Title IV, Part A
- C. Post-facto approval of the 2017-2019 grant application for Title III, Part A
- D. Post-facto approval of the 2017-2018 grant application for Sheff Open Choice Academic, Student and Social Support
- E. Post-facto approval of Perkins Supplemental Grant Application.

MOTION: Move the Consent Calendar. (*Esstman/Joy*)

VOTE: Approved/Unanimous (9-0)

DONATIONS

MOTION: Move to approve the following donations: \$60 to South Windsor Public Schools from Travelers Cybergrants; \$48.55 to Orchard Hill Elementary School from the Benevity Community Impact Fund; \$150 to Timothy Edwards Middle School from Dairy Queen Grill and Chill, South Windsor;

\$6,864.85 to Philip R. Smith Elementary School from its PTO; \$2,500 to Pleasant Valley Elementary School from its PTO; and \$500 to each of the four elementary schools from the South Windsor Soccer Club. (*Evans/Waterhouse*)

VOTE: Approved/Unanimous (9-0)

#### SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS REPORT

Spotlight on Model UN: Mr. Frank advised the board that Model United Nations is one of the largest academic clubs at South Windsor High School, with 140 students from all four grades participating last year. The advisors for the club are Mrs. Erin Simcik and Mr. Bill Richards of the Social Studies Department. He provided background information on the program noting that students research views on current political, economic, social, and environmental issues in their assigned countries. At the main simulation, run by the World Affairs Council of Connecticut, 35-40 students travel to New York City to visit with country missions, the United Nations building, and participate in exercises regarding their topics. The event culminates in a two-day conference at the University of Hartford. He introduced the four students with him at the meeting, Sai Manasani, Bhavna Gunda, Andrew Segoo and Griffin Cox, noting that they are veteran participants who have taken their experiences beyond the state level, attending the Harvard Model United Nations conference involving students from across the United States and the world. He noted that South Windsor is among a select few Connecticut high schools (public or private) that participates in the Harvard Model UN conference and has done so since the late 1980s.

Each of the students provided information on their unique experiences in Model UN, all noting their appreciation for the program as well as the invaluable experiences that each provides. The students responded to board member questions. At the close of the presentation Dr. Carter noted that as the Superintendent she was filled with pride, not just for the model UN program, but for the students, noting that they were incredible ambassadors for the school district.

Authorize the Disposal of Furniture: Chairman Zimmerman requested Reverend Gonzalez to read the motion:

MOTION: Move to authorize the Superintendent to dispose of furniture as outlined in Mr. Hankard's January 29, 2018 memorandum. (*Gonzalez/ Paré*)

Discussion: Dr. Carter advised that with the opening of the new Orchard Hill school and closure of Wapping school, there is excess furniture that is not appropriate for continued use. She noted that any furniture that was usable and valuable has remained in the district to be disbursed and that the district has exhausted any needs. She noted that Mr. Hankard had been fortunate to have found a very worthy organization, *Habitat for Humanity*, willing to accept the furniture. She noted that she conferred with the Town Manager, who was in full support of the disposal, noting that he was fully aware of the added expense that could be incurred if this furniture were to be stored. Dr. Carter responded to board member questions.

Chairman Zimmerman called the motion:

VOTE: Approved/Unanimous (9-0)

Curriculum Review Presentation – Physical Education: Mrs. Mortensen advised the board that Mr. Sytulek, Director of Health, PE and Athletics, would be providing the board with a report on the Physical Education curriculum. She noted that last year, along with teachers, Mr. Sytulek completed an in-depth review of the curriculum and that he will be sharing the commendations, recommendations and long-and-short term goals.

Mr. Sytulek provided an in-depth review of the K-12 physical education program. He reviewed the district's goals for physical education, and provided an overview of the programming and elements of study for PE for the elementary, middle and high schools. The elementary students meet once a week for 45 minutes and their curriculum follows the CT Healthy and Balanced Living Curriculum Framework. He noted that in grade four, students participate in a bicycle safety week which encompasses bicycle safety and maintenance, culminating in a town-wide ride. Timothy Edwards Middle School students meet twice a week for sixty minutes. The high school graduation requirement for PE is one credit which is earned in half-credit courses and meets four days a week for freshmen and sophomores. In addition, elective courses are offered in racquet sports, fitness and nutrition, dance and unified sports. All high school students are required to take a physical fitness test as part of the PE I and PE II courses. In addition, students receive CPR/AED training in PE II and are able to become certified if they so desire. Mr. Sytulek reviewed the elective courses that are offered to juniors and seniors as well as short-term and long-term next steps. Mr. Sytulek responded to board member questions.

In response to a question posed by Ms. Esstman regarding the substitution of the dance elective for PE II, Mr. Sytulek explained that the dance elective can be substituted for Phys Ed II and that students who chose dance are able to earn the CPR/AED graduation in that class.

Responding to a point made by Chairman Zimmerman regarding the community partnership with respect to the bike safety program, Mr. Sytulek noted that the program is made available, in part, by volunteers who provide students with literature as well as the helmets at an affordable cost. He noted that it had been a great partnership.

In response to a question posed regarding whether students could get a graduation credit if they participated in one of the SWHS sports teams, Mr. Sytulek relayed his philosophy that students get a more well-rounded education by taking Phys Ed, which provides an opportunity to learn life activities (such as golf, etc.) that may be helpful in their careers, as opposed to only knowing one sport.

## UNFINISHED AND NEW BUSINESS

### BOE Policy #5145.52 Nondiscrimination Students – First Read BOE Policy #4118.11 Nondiscrimination Personnel – First Read

Mr. McNamara advised the board that the changes made to these policies were made to include veterans as a protected class, to highlight the process for complaints, and included minor changes to align the regulations with recommendations from the Office of Civil Rights.

Mr. Paré questioned why the student policy does not reference “genetic information” as a protected class as is reflected in the personnel and community nondiscrimination policies. Mr. McNamara indicated that he would review the question with Shipman & Goodwin and provide feedback.

### BOE Policy #1220 Nondiscrimination Community – First Read

Mr. McNamara advised that when the student and personnel nondiscrimination policies were revised, it was recommended that South Windsor adopt a similar policy related to the community which aligns with the student and personnel policies and serves to address those residents who do not have an employment association with the district or are students.

### BOE Policy #5114.1 Student Discipline – First Read

Mr. McNamara advised that the updates to the student discipline policy include changes to definitions as well as to procedures regarding expulsion hearings, such as parental notification timeframe and the ability of a family to

request a postponement of a hearing for up to a week in order to obtain legal representation. In addition, the policy contains changes to alternative education opportunities offered to expelled students.

In response to a question regarding the district's decision to utilize a hearing officer, rather than a board panel, Dr. Carter noted that in her superintendency, the district has utilized a hearing officer. She stated that this is considered a best practice and an increasing practice throughout districts. She stated that a hearing officer provides for a much more confidential process with a decision being made on behalf of the board by an impartial attorney who has experience in these types of hearings. She noted that, in her opinion, this method allows for the most objective and fair outcome and alleviates conflicts. She did note that Mr. McNamara does send out a very limited communication to board members following hearings providing the results, which are in compliance with FERPA.

In response to a question posed by Mr. Zimmerman regarding a reference to the policy related to discipline for students walking out of school, and the implications of that if there were to be a planned walkout, Dr. Carter noted that building administration would have some discretion in that instance, and that there was a difference between a student who chooses to walk out of the building and not return, rather than participating in a formalized process. She also indicated that the building administration is planning to meet on Thursday to discuss the proposed walkout being discussed in the media, noting that the district will need to consider allowing the students to have a voice, while keeping them safe. Mr. Zimmerman also inquired whether the superintendent is involved in building-based student suspensions, or is informed of them post suspension, to which Dr. Carter indicated that the superintendent is not involved in decisions around suspensions, as is typical in other districts.

Reverend Gonzalez inquired as to the procedures surrounding a district walk out, to which Dr. Carter referenced an upcoming meeting with administration, noting that she would be seeking the principals' input. She did note that globally the district recognizes that there are age-appropriate differences between middle and high school students and that school safety will be at the forefront. She noted that eventually there will be a communication sent to families.

#### Approve the 2018-2019 Board of Education Budget

Chairman Zimmerman asked Mr. Joy to read the motion into the record:

**MOTION:** Move to approve Fiscal Year 2019 Board of Education budget in the amount of \$74,038,368 representing a 3.97% increase as presented by the Superintendent of Schools at the January 18, 2018 meeting. (*Joy/Stahr*)

**Discussion:** Dr. Carter addressed the board prior to its taking action on the budget. She proposed an amendment to the budget that would incorporate a new position – Director of School Safety and Security. In order to make the request cost and FTE neutral, she withdrew her request for the 1.0 FTE World Language Teacher that was in the proposed budget. She relayed her disappointment in withdrawing the request, and relayed her position that in order to further strengthen the district's security posture, the Director of School Safety and Security must be her priority. She noted that she had been considering this position for some time, and relayed her confidence that this position would be a responsible and commonsense improvement to the school safety plan.

Chairman Zimmerman summarized the options before the board: 1) vote on the motion made and pass the budget, as is, 2) make the amendment swapping the security position for the World Language position, or 3) taking the budget that was proposed and adding a security position. Chairman Zimmerman requested board member feedback.

Mr. Paré expressed his desire to put forth the budget with the security position as well as the world language position, noting that the school safety position is important and that the world language position is part of the district's Strategic Plan initiatives.

Mr. Stahr expressed his support for the budget at the presented 3.97% increase, giving the superintendent the flexibility to allocate the funds as she sees fit to prioritize. He noted that the board passes the budget based on dollars and the allocation is up to the superintendent's discretion, for which the superintendent has prioritized security over world language, which he felt was appropriate. He noted that the world language position is a future five-year commitment.

Ms. Waterhouse expressed her desire to keep the world language position in the budget as well as the security position.

Mr. Joy expressed his opinion that the budget that was presented is not the budget being voted on and suggested that there would need to be an amendment to remove the world language position and add the security position. He noted the long-standing practice that any staff positions are approved by the board, while the district has flexibility to make decisions based on enrollment.

Ms. Evans expressed her support to keep both positions in the budget, noting that the loss of world language in place of safety would be a disadvantage to the school district. She noted that adding the safety position to the budget would be appropriate.

Chairman Zimmerman questioned the dollar figure and percentage increase if both positions were to be included in the budget, to which Dr. Carter requested Ms. Chemerka to provide.

Dr. Carter stated that the way the motion is written is for a dollar figure and percentage which does not delineate which positions are in or out of the budget. She noted her reluctance to start a practice of adopting motions that are that specific. She noted that the district has to make decisions frequently that require them to hire outside the budget process. She provided the example that if a student needs paraprofessional support to keep them safe, it is the district's responsibility to be responsive. She stated her appreciation for board members protecting the world language position, but noted her comfort level moving forward either way. Ms. Chemerka advised that the new percentage would be 4.06% with a dollar figure of \$74,098,368.

Reverend Gonzalez expressed his support for moving the budget forward to the Town Council with both the world language and security positions added.

Ms. Esstman expressed her support for the superintendent's recommendations; however, noted that there needed to be more discussion regarding world language program before that position moves forward.

Mr. Paré reiterated his concern that the district continues to adhere to its Strategic Plan, which calls for the addition of world language at the elementary level. He cautioned that the demands of the budget will always necessitate something that may be deemed more important and no matter which year the position is put in place, there will always be a five-year funding plan in front of them for the program. He noted that South Windsor is one of few districts that does not have world language at the elementary level.

Mrs. Delnicki expressed her support for the security position in place of the world language position, which is a five-year commitment. She noted that she wanted to budget to move forward to the Town Council at the current percentage.

Following the discussion, Chairman Zimmerman made the following amendment to the motion which was seconded by Mr. Paré: Move to increase the total amount of the budget that we discussed previously to \$74,098,368, 4.06% and add the new safety and security position. Chairman Zimmerman called the vote. As the vote was not unanimous, Chairman Zimmerman requested the clerk to call the roll.

Motion passed (5-4) Voting in favor: Mr. Zimmerman, Ms. Waterhouse, Mrs. Evans, Mr. Paré and Reverend Gonzalez

Voting against: Mrs. Delnicki, Mr. Joy, Ms. Esstman, and Mr. Stahr

Discussion: Mr. Joy noted that the board has had the superintendent's proposed budget for more than one month which includes specific staff positions. He noted that the board was provided with information regarding the security position at a special meeting this evening and that he has had little time to reflect. He noted that he was not inclined to support the position, referencing his concerns regarding adding to the district's head count, noting that that is why the district is where it is with its per pupil spending. He restated that he was not interested in increasing the request beyond the 3.97%.

Mr. Stahr stated that out of principle he would not vote in favor of the amendment as it wasn't what was being proposed by the superintendent, indicating that he did not wish to disregard the superintendent's decision.

Reverend Gonzalez questioned why Dr. Carter chose world language, to which Dr. Carter advised that the program was a new investment and that the lion share of the increases in the budget are non-negotiable. Dr. Carter indicated that she sees this as a postponement and is comfortable having made the recommendation, noting her commitment to the board to make a recommendation that would not have increased the dollar figure or the percentage. She stated that the district is responsible for the safety and supervision of over 4,000 students and 600 staff which calls for them to be nimble, taking action and making decisions at times without much forewarning. She stated that if this had come about after tonight's meeting, she would have informed the board post the adoption of the budget, noting that sometimes decisions do not always fall neatly within a budget presentation cycle. Reverend Gonzalez thanked Dr. Carter for her response and reiterated his support for the district being nimble in responding to what is happening in today's society with regard to school security. He also reflected on the earlier student presentation of Model UN, in which several students noted their desire to speak another language, which is why he also supports the world language addition. He summarized that in his view, both budget items should be kept in the budget.

Mr. Joy recounted the current state of finances in the state of CT describing it as a financial mess. He also noted that this month towns were notified that the governor is talking about reducing ECS funding by \$1.3M for FY19. He stated that the board should be holding staff to the absolute "must have" category and continue to do so until the state can manage its deficit. He noted that he would support the 3.97% if the superintendent thinks that it is important to make the swap of positions, but could not support the 4.06%.

Ms. Esstman noted that she is an advocate for initiatives that enhance student achievement; however, noted her concern with the ongoing commitment for the world language program. She suggested that if the world language program were approved, she would be more comfortable starting at the higher grades and adding to the program in the lower grades in the event future funding was not supported.

Chairman Zimmerman called for a five-minute recess at 9:00 PM. The board reconvened at 9:05 PM.

Mr. Paré circled back to the unpredictable state funding, noting that there is almost to be an expectation that the district cannot rely on receiving the same amount of state funding. Given that, the town will need to make a determination of the degree to which it is willing to fund the budget, absent of state funding. The board will also need to decide what programs to put forth with or without state funding with regard to programs within the Strategic Plan.

Mr. Joy commended his fellow board members for the deliberations, noting that it assists them in understanding each other's passions. He stated that if the amendment were nullified, he would support the 3.97% budget, restating his concern with a five-year commitment for world language. He referenced the unexpected enrollment trend despite the due diligence of the board and the sound work done by Milone & MacBroom. Given the lack of clarity for what is happening in South Windsor, he restated that the budget should be only what is absolutely needed in the moment.

Chairman Zimmerman noted that he was looking forward to the Superintendent, in cooperation with the board, presenting the budget to the Town Council. He noted that he is looking forward to making the argument about how cost effective we've run the school system over the last couple of years with cuts that had been made. He noted that he is looking forward to the discussion regarding last year's budget and the brunt of the cuts that were

absorbed by the school district, funds which should have gone back to the board. He noted that he welcomes the opportunity to make the argument that this is a budget that the council can and should support.

Following the discussion, Chairman Zimmerman called the vote on the budget as amended. As the vote was not unanimous, Chairman Zimmerman requested the clerk to call the roll.

Motion passed (5-4) Voting in favor: Mr. Zimmerman, Ms. Waterhouse, Mrs. Evans, Mr. Paré and Reverend Gonzalez  
Voting against: Mrs. Delnicki, Mr. Joy, Ms. Esstman, Mr. Stahr

Committee Reports: Mr. Stahr provided a report on the last meeting of the technology committee, noting that the district is deploying *Google File Stream* to teachers, which is a free cloud-based service. He remarked on the transition of computer labs to 1:1 devices, noting his support for this transition and his hope that Chromebooks are deployed throughout the district in the future.

HEARING OF VISITORS: No visitors wished to be heard.

ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS: There were no items for future agendas.

#### ADJOURNMENT

On a motion made by Mr. Stahr, seconded by Mr. Paré, the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



David Joy  
Secretary

*Minutes completed by Ann Walsh, Clerk to the Board, on behalf of the Secretary*

A video recording of the entire meeting may be found on the district website,  
[www.southwindsorschools.org](http://www.southwindsorschools.org)