

Regional School District 12
Board of Education
Virtual Meeting Minutes
May 18, 2020

E Meeting at <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/72695725556?pwd=NDdCRzdUMVlkMlpranpJRlRIdFIUdz09>
Password: 710496 or call in at 605-313-5441

The Board of Education Meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm, on Monday, May 18, 2020 by Chairman of the Board, Gregory Cava. Present were Board members, Joseph Abdella, John Buonaiuto, James Hirschfield, Alex McNaughton, Jennifer Pote, Justin Ongley, Lisa Roush, Michael Sinatra, Julie Stuart, Peter Tagley, and Mary Weber. Megan Bennett, Superintendent and Nicole Grant, Director of Finance were also present.

Also in attendance: Michael Boucher, SVS Director of Guidance; Kim Gallo, Principal at Shepaug Valley School; Michael Croft, Associate Principal at Shepaug Valley School; Donald O’Leary, Facilities Director.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION: made by James Hirschfield, seconded by Michael Sinatra to adopt the Board of Education Meeting minutes dated May 4, 2020 with amendments to the paragraph regarding the Shepaug roof restoration conversation.

VOTE: Unanimous.

Motion passes 12-0.

CABE COMMUNICATION AWARD

On behalf of CABE, Liz Brown awarded Region 12 with two Bonnie B. Carney Awards. Having met the CABE criteria, Region 12 was recognized by CABE to receive the Award for Excellence in Recognition of Region 12 Public Schools District Newsletters and also an Award of Excellence in Recognition of Region 12 Public Schools “The Shepaug Experience”, audio visual. Superintendent Bennett and Chairman Cava, graciously accepted the awards.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE SHEPAUG VALLEY GRADUATING CLASS TOP 5

Kim Gallo commented on each of the top 5 students, stating it is a pleasure to be their principal and shared teacher comments from letters of recommendation. Principal Gallo spoke on each student’s accomplishments, Senior Project and chosen college. The Top 5 students for the graduating Class of 2020 are Valedictorian, Isabel Eddy; Salutatorian, Elizabeth Neunzig; Sienna Moore; Reese Peck; and Lily Schur. Lily is the fourth Shepaug student who will be attending West Point and it was noted that there will be four students at the academy, one in each class. Congratulations and a round of applause were given to all five students.

UPDATE ON COVID-19

Superintendent Bennett referred to a recent survey which had been sent out by Michael Croft to Shepaug students and families. The survey was designed to generate feedback to improve the distance learning experience to close out the school year on a strong note, as well as the design of distance learning in the event the distance learning environment is necessary again in the future. Superintendent Bennett also explained the Three C's Day. Communicate, Collaborate, Catch-Up, which allows students to communicate with teachers and has been found to be very beneficial.

Superintendent Bennett reported that we are not able to end school early. The governor's orders excuse 180 days if you cannot get the days in the year, but it does not allow for cutting the year short. June 18 is Region 12's last day of school.

Superintendent Bennett reported on programs. Summer school is being planned for as, in-person, using the same guidelines that have been set by the Governor for summer camps. High school graduation is planned for June 20. The design of graduation is still being planned. In-person graduations are not being allowed, however, in-car is. People will be allowed to gather in cars, however they will not be allowed to gather outside their vehicle. Administration as well as the seniors, have been meeting and ideas are being shared. Also reported was that staff will be working extensively on preparing for the fall, such as what the curriculum will look like, students' curricular growth and discussion on, if needed, going back to distance learning.

Superintendent Bennett reported that Nicole Grant is working with the senior class advisors to refund seniors of their class dues and deposits. Due to COVID-19, many senior class functions had to be canceled.

Superintendent Bennett reported that families have until tomorrow, May 19, to select the pass/fail option.

Superintendent Bennett reported there are a few staff members who have notified her with positive COVID-19 diagnoses. Administration is working to support classes and programs so affected staff can focus on their health.

It was reported that on May 20 the custodial staff will begin doing a deep cleaning before allowing staff to return into the buildings. More information will be reported on further in the agenda.

Superintendent Bennett shared that Scholarship Night will be June 10th. Kim Gallo spoke on the Academic Awards, stating that the audience for this are the students and the administration wants to acknowledge students' achievements. Senior awards will be taken aside and be done on their own. The Academic Awards for the student body are being planned for fall of this year.

REPORTS AND RECOGNITIONS

Board Chairman's Report: Chairman Cava commented on the COVID-19 pandemic, the Executive Orders by the governor and how hard school districts are fighting to educate students.

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Chairman Cava reported on comments from conversations he has had through CABA with other Board Chairman throughout the state. Chairman Cava commented on graduation conversations stating that there has been talk of drive-in, drive-by, and drive-through ideas.

Superintendent's Report: Superintendent Bennett reported that the Stephen Reich Award will be presented virtually this Thursday, May 21st. Since this is happening during the student's class day, 5th and 6th periods, they will be able to be part of it. The community will also be invited to view the virtual ceremony.

Scholarship Night will be held Wednesday, June 10th. Michael Boucher was recognized for his hard work to make sure everything is in place, especially making sure Zoom will be up and available.

Superintendent Bennett reported that the elementary schools are working on a virtual field day, June 8, with fun events planned. Allowing for health and safety guidelines, a last day of school parade is in the works where teachers will stand the required distance apart, allowing cars with parents and students to drive by and wave to the staff.

Superintendent Bennett reported on virtual graduation celebrations. Fifth and eighth grade graduations are in the process of being planned. High school graduation will be more of a drive-in type graduation with the details still being discussed.

Superintendent Bennett reported that the negotiations with Trane (HVAC), with the help of legal counsel on terms, has been finalized. An order will be placed with work expected to be completed over the summer.

Superintendent Bennett reported that enrollment numbers continue to be watched as numbers are on an increase. It was reported that there are multiple new families living in the Region as a permanent residence. The new residents will be filling seats that are usually empty and available for tuition-in students. Acceptance letters have been provided to families who are continuing to tuition-in. A decision has not been made on new families seeking to tuition-in. Responding to class size questions, Superintendent Bennett reported an increase in grades kindergarten and first at Washington Primary School. She has had conversations with Principal Emily Judd as to how best to utilize staff rather than splitting up the grade. Another option available to families, is having the opportunity to enroll in another of the Region's elementary schools.

Superintendent Bennett reported on personnel shifts including the appointments of Jonathan Cop, Special Education Teacher at WPS beginning August 24, 2020; Sue Haverly, CO/Agriscience Secretary beginning July 1, 2020. She reported the leave of absence by Fran Beilinson, Special Education Teacher at SVS (May 12, 2020 - June 18, 2020); Julie Desena, Kindergarten Teacher at WPS (August 24, 2020 – January 4, 2021); Amanda Koeschel, Special Education Teacher at SVS (November 2020 – TBD); and Elyse Sadtler, Literacy Tutor at SVS (September 21, 2020 – January 4, 2021). Also reported was the resignation of Heidi Edel, World language Teacher at SVS, effective June 18, 2020, and the retirement of Tracy Rebillard, Paraprofessional at SVP, effective June 18, 2020.

Treasurer's Report: John Buonaiuto thanked Superintendent Bennett for her weekly updates, keeping everyone apprised of what is happening in the Region. John reported on the different grants mentioning the \$1300.00 Ag Grant, stating that seeing this led him to a conversation with Nicole Grant as to other grants the Region receives, which can have monetary amounts. It was noted that most of the grants are federally funded

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and administered by the Connecticut Department of Education. John described the application process from start to finish. Examples of these grants are: Title I, Title II and the Perkins Grant. It was pointed out that a Federal/State School Lunch Grant is approximately \$32,500.00 for the current fiscal school year. Superintendent Bennett added to the report commenting that this is the first year the Region has been eligible for the Perkins Grant. Nicole Grant who had worked with EdAdvance to obtain this was thanked.

Committee Reports: CAFE - Mary Weber commented on the CAFE awards for students that would be happening at the end of the school year. Superintendent Bennett elaborated on the awards. Donations of used devices had been discussed. It was reported that one of the issues with this, is having to destroy the hard drive, which stores student information.

Curriculum & Educational Programming Committee – Michael Sinatra reported that the committee has been discussing plans for the reopening of schools in the fall. More information will be reported later in the agenda.

Finance and Operations Committee – Alex McNaughton reported that the committee has not met since the last meeting on April 30 and the next meeting is June 1. The HVAC situation is being followed.

Labor Negotiations – James Hirschfield stated that due to a Zoom issue, although he was not able to participate, is aware of a potential agreement with the Nurse's Union.

Strategic, Long Range Planning Committee – Julie Stuart reported that the committee has not met since their last meeting, and that members continue to work on long range goals. A contract with SandorMaxx has been signed and the committee is waiting to view the first proposal.

NEW BUSINESS AND UPDATES

Presentation of the NEASC Accreditation Update: Kim Gallo stated that the faculty five-year study has been completed. She shared with the Board the NEASC letter which stated that The Commission on Public Schools at its April 16, 2020 meeting voted to accept the Five-Year Progress Report of Shepaug Valley School and to continue the school's accreditation. In that letter accommodations were listed with no mention of recommendations. Shepaug Valley School is scheduled to host its Decennial Accreditation visit in the calendar year 2026. A copy of the letter had been shared and displayed via Zoom during the update by Kim Gallo.

Use of Facilities by Outside Organizations for 2020-2021: Don O'Leary reported that he spoke with the Director of Washington Park and Rec and that they have canceled their summer programs, thus they will not be requesting the use of the schools. Don reported that there was a conversation regarding morning swim, which at the moment is not taking place. There is a request from the Director as to a possible reopening of the pool area for swimming. The consideration of not having the use of the locker rooms is being explored. Sports type indoor/outdoor camps, which use the facilities are on hold due to close play which does not offer safe distancing. Also on hold are art, music and theatre camps. It was reported that Bridgewater has also canceled their Summer Park and Rec Program. Don spoke on the deep cleaning of the schools over the summer, on making plans and adjusting areas for a safe return in the fall.

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Superintendent Bennett briefly addressed the Summer School Program. This is being considered and would begin in July using the guidance and considerations set by Governor Lamont.

Re-Opening, Phase-In Plan: Superintendent Bennett stated that upon the reopening of schools in September, they will look different. Conditions of return by the State have not been received yet. Contingency plans have been made with different scenarios. Superintendent Bennett reported that staff will be able to go into their classrooms and do an end of year classroom close out, which would be the same end of the year close out which normally would take place. Building principals will make a schedule. All guidelines such as wearing masks and keeping social distancing, must be followed. Custodians will return to full time on Wednesday, May 20th, with a staggered schedule and each will have zoned cleaning areas to promote healthy environments. Beginning May 26th, staff will be allowed to enter schools based on a schedule. Starting in June, clerical and administrators will be able to return to the schools with staggered scheduling, still allowing for the work from home aspect. Requirements of face masks, gloves and cleaning have been established. Don O'Leary is working with his custodial staff to be sure that expectations are met and maintained. Superintendent Bennett stated that due to COVID-19, it is expected to have an increase for additional expenses. Discussion. It had been asked that the Superintendent look into, if there is any liability to the Region, should a student become ill and get the virus.

ACTION ITEMS

To consider and if appropriate, approve the list of capital projects for Non-Recurring Funds for the Upcoming Budget.

Superintendent Bennett and Nicole Grant spoke on the consideration. The request is for approximately \$92,000.00 and would be replenished at the start of the 2020/2021 fiscal school year. A project list had been reviewed. Chairman Cava explained the background and use of the fund. Don O'Leary addressed the question regarding the Burnham School roof.

MOTION: made by Mary Weber, seconded by Peter Tagley, to approve the list of capital projects for Non-Recurring Funds for the Upcoming Budget.

VOTE: Unanimous.

Motion passes 12-0.

To consider and if appropriate, approve the distribution of the Washington NOW survey with results to be shared with the towns of Bridgewater, Roxbury and Washington.

Superintendent Bennett spoke on the consideration stating that the NOW survey results would be shared with the selectmen of all three towns, that all three towns will see the same survey, how Region 12 could use the data and that there is no cost associated with the survey. It was reported the NOW survey had been discussed with legal counsel. Discussion. It was noted that names are not associated with the survey.

MOTION: made by Joseph Abdella, seconded by Jennifer Pote, to approve the distribution of the Washington NOW survey with results to be shared with the towns of Bridgewater, Roxbury

and Washington

VOTE: Unanimous.

Motion passes 12-0.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Discussion of negotiation strategies and consideration of potential settlement of the Connecticut Health Care Associates, National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees agreement (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021).

Discussion of teachers' union MOU regarding stipends.

MOTION: made by Jennifer Pote, seconded by Alex McNaughton, to go into Executive Session at 8:59 pm for the discussion of negotiation strategies and consideration of potential settlement of the Connecticut Health Care Associates, National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees agreement (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021), and for the discussion of the teachers' union MOU regarding stipends, inviting Superintendent Bennett and Nicole Grant.

VOTE: Unanimous.

Motion passes 12-0.

At 9:10 pm, the Executive Session ended and the meeting returned to public session.

ACTION ON EXECUTIVE ITEMS

MOTION: made by James Hirschfield, seconded by Michael Sinatra, to accept the Connecticut Health Care Associates, National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees one-year contract. (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021).

VOTE: Unanimous.

Motion passes 12-0.

Chairman Cava shared information regarding the building progress and an update on the soccer field erosion.

There being no further business, the Board of Education meeting was adjourned by consent at 9:18 pm.

Respectfully submitted by S. Haverly