FINAL

Regional School District 12
Board of Education
Meeting Minutes
Shepaug Valley School
May 24, 2021

The Board of Education Meeting was called to order at 7:06 p.m., on Monday, May 24, 2021, by Chairman Gregory Cava. The meeting was held at Shepaug Valley School in the Library as well as virtually via Zoom. Present were Board members, Joseph Abdella, John Buonaiuto, James Hirschfield, Alex McNaughton, Justin Ongley, Jennifer Pote, Lisa Roush, Michael Sinatra, Julie Stuart, Peter Tagley, and Mary Weber (7:22 p.m.). Also present were: Megan Bennett, Superintendent and Nicole Grant, Director of Finance.

Also in attendance virtually were: Cathy Colella, Principal of Booth Free School and Burnham School; Kim Gallo, Principal of Shepaug Valley School, and Emily Judd, Principal at Washington Primary School.

RECOGNITION OF STUDENTS

Students attending virtually were recognized as follows:

The Superintendent's Student Award - LCSA: School principals announced their school's recipient of the award. Cathy Colella recognized Brianna Johnson as Booth Free School's recipient and Natalie Orletski as Burnham School's recipient. Emily Judd recognized McKenzie Callahan as Washington Primary School's recipient. Kim Gallo recognized Shepaug Valley School's recipients: Margaret Vincent in 8th grade, Elena Gill in 11th grade, and Katherine Hodge in 12th grade.

Superintendent Bennett commented on the *CABE Leadership Award* stating that it is given to students who have shown leadership in Shepaug Valley School. The CABE Student Leadership Award recipients were announced by Kim Gallo as follows: Sydnie Vidal in 12th grade, William Cario in 12 grade, Alondra Artieda in 8th grade, and Nathaniel Konik in 8th grade.

Kim Gallo announced *The Top Five Academic Seniors* for this year's graduating class as follows: Kyle Mieczkowski (Valedictorian), Lily Blyn (Salutatorian), Samual Quigley, William Cario, and Jakob Wild. Principal Gallo shared about each student from their Brag Sheets which is information students wrote that is shared with colleges during the application process.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

CONSENT AGENDA

Approval of Minutes: Board of Education Meeting, May 3, 2021
Annual District Meeting, May 3, 2021
Board of Education Meeting, April 26, 2021

The motion at the end of the April 26th meeting under Actions on Executive Session was amended to read, "to approve the amended contract with Sherman and authorize the Chairman to execute the contract".

The minutes of April 26, 2021 with the amendment were approved without objection.

The minutes of the May 3, Board of Education Budget Hearing were amended in order for the motion to reflect the statement read by Chairman Cava.

MOTION: made by James Hirschfield, seconded by Mary Weber, to approve the Board of Education Budget Hearing minutes of May 3, 2021 with amendment.

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passes 12-0.

All minutes were adopted.

UPDATES ON COVID-19

Superintendent Bennett gave a presentation of Facts & Figures as of May 23, 2021 that included running totals since the start of school on August 31, 2020. It was noted that the only change on the chart since the previous presentation was one student. There have been three weeks without notification of a positive case or a quarantine needed. Superintendent Bennett shared that buses had been provided to bring students receiving the vaccine to the clinic and back to school. It was asked that anyone traveling over the upcoming holiday to please note any travel restrictions and to follow CDC guidelines. As far as the start of the 2021-2022 school year in the fall, Superintendent Bennett stated that guidance will be followed by the State Department of Education. At this time, it is too early to know with a lot depending on the vaccine being made available to the younger age groups. Shepaug Valley School could look different from the elementary schools due to vaccine availability to the different age groups. At the moment the vaccine is not available to ages 12 and under until late September.

Superintendent Bennett reported that high school graduation will look more traditional. Plans have been reviewed by the Department of Health, as well as the plans for our other end of the year celebrations. The recommended guidelines will be followed.

Superintendent Bennett shared that the Department of Health reported 79 Shepaug students, ages 16-17, passed through the clinic two weeks ago.

SCHOOL OPERATION IN THE TIME OF COVID

Superintendent Bennett commented on what remarkable leaders and staff members we have in our schools. Principals Cathy Colella, Emily Judd and Kim Gallo shared how the school days adapted to the necessary guidelines. Changes were made to schedules, social skills, instruction and learning. A PowerPoint with comments by elementary staff and students aided in the presentation. It was noted that implementing safety precautions was most important. Kim Gallo shared a few examples of changes on how lunch groups were formed, changes in the seating of classrooms, learning for remote and in-person students, and how transitions between classes were staggered. Webcams for all schools were purchased for remote learning. The elementary PTO's had been thanked for the extra playground equipment provided. At Shepaug Valley School, Beth Harvison and Ben Allen were thanked for allowing students to be creative while still performing in curricular and extracurricular activities.

REPORTS AND RECOGNITION

Board Chairman's Report: Chairman Cava pointed out that school has been in session since the opening on August 31, 2020. Chairman Cava stated how very proud he was of the superintendent, administrators, principals,

finance director, facility director, all staff, and all students. Being able to stay open has been a tribute to all.

Superintendent's Report: Superintendent Bennett reported that the prom was held Saturday night. A thank you was given to the Ingrassias for their generosity in allowing the use of Spring Hill Farm as the venue. Thank you was also extended to the three first selectmen: Jim Brinton, Barbara Henry and Curtis Read for their financial contributions as well as their willingness to celebrate to champion the students.

Superintendent Bennett stated that she is proud to report that the three elementary schools; Burnham School, Booth Free School and Washington Primary School have been recognized as top achievers in the Governor's Reading Challenge.

Superintendent Bennett reported that graduations and promotion ceremonies will be held in person this year including Aloha Day.

Superintendent Bennett reported on Shepaug Alumni Wilson King, who is currently studying at the London School of Economics. On the recommendation of one of his teachers, Wilson entered the Renaissance Competition. Wilson is this year's winner of the Renaissance Prize, making him the first American to win. Wilson had to describe the rapid changes in consumer spending during the Coronavirus pandemic, and how the curtailment of in-store price collection led to measurement error. Superintendent Bennett shared that the judging panel noted how this essay stood out from a strong field for the comprehensiveness of the discussion, and for the clarity with which technical issues were explained. Wilson had given credit to his teachers at Shepaug Valley School that included Chris Dennis, Wendy Youngblood, Mark Peters, Christine Shugrue, Marianne Maher, Tara Flaherty and Diane Robbins.

Superintendent Bennett reported on the assignment of Meghan Berry, Agriscience Teacher, Shepaug Valley School. Also reported on were the resignations of Richard Innaimo, School Resource Officer (effective June 14, 2021) and MaryAnn Somoroff, Paraprofessional at Washington Primary School (effective May 17, 2021). The retirement of Christine Shugrue, English Teacher at Shepaug Valley School was also announced (effective June 30, 2021).

Treasurer's Report: John Buonaiuto reported how COVID-19 continues to affect the budget lines such as unemployment and heating oil. Two lines are well under budget, REACH and Transportation. The year should finish in good shape with 10.39% remaining, which is a balance of $2,369,548. This means monies should be able to be transferred into the Non-Recurring Capital Fund. Mr. Buonaiuto shared that he had been looking through State Statutes and found that Region 12 was the first in the state to be a complete K-12 region. Originally Region 12 consisted of five towns, Bethlehem, Bridgewater, Roxbury, Sherman, and Washington, but had dropped down to the current three.

Committee Reports:

CABE - Mary Weber reported the final webinar will be held on June 14. This is the legislative wrap up and is free to attend. It was reported that the Bill to remove religious exemptions passed with current K-12 exemptions being grandfathered in. Nothing has been heard regarding the 1% Capital-Reserve fund being increased to 2%.

Curriculum and Education – Michael Sinatra and the committee will have their last meeting June 16. Julie Stuart and her committee were thanked for the work on the new brochure.

Finance and Operations – Alex McNaughton reported they will meet May 17. They had begun reviewing the financials with Nicole Grant. The committee discussed the 1% Fund and transferring monies. The committee voted unanimously to recommend to the Board of Education to transfer 1% of the budget to the Fund. It was

reported that the RFP's (Request for Payment) are in progress. There were 16 people at the walk through. It was stated that while summer work is being done at Shepaug Valley School, the Summer School Program would be held at Washington Primary School. The committee discussed food service which will be reported on later in the meeting by Nicole Grant. Discussion.

Labor Negotiations – James Hirschfield reported that negotiations with the Custodial Union are ongoing. Initial proposals have been exchanged.

Strategic - Long Range Planning – Julie Stuart reported the committee met this evening. Sample brochures were given to Board members. Printing of 500 copies of this version will be sent to real estate offices as well as the towns. The brochure is already posted online. Julie shared that there have been 202 requests for tuition in students. It was also reported that the committee looked at the tuition-in policy and will bring recommendations for changes to the Board at a later date. Regarding signs, Booth Free School, Burnham School and Shepaug Valley School will have new signs prior to the start of school in the fall. Washington Primary School already has a terrific sign. Comments. Chairman Cava complemented the new brochure and thanked the committee.

NEW BUSINESS AND UPDATE

Presentation of graduation plan for June 12, 2021 – Superintendent Bennett reported that graduation will be June 12, 2021. After strong feedback, and a survey, 85% of the students wanted graduation to be more traditional than it had been last year. This year will be a hybrid of last year and the more traditional. The parade will still take place. The parade will begin at 11:30 a.m. from Shepaug Valley School and pass through all three towns ending at the Bridgewater Fair Grounds. Graduation will be outside beginning at 1:00 p.m. Graduation will be inclusive with each graduate having an 8'x 8' space for five family members. Superintendent Bennett shared that while staying within the 8'x 8' space, masks will not be required. There will be parking provided for anyone wishing to stay in their cars. Two large screens will be set up for viewing. Students will walk across the stage, and there will be an area designated to take pictures. Comments.

EdAdvance support of the cafeteria – Nicole Grant spoke on the partnership which had taken place with EdAdvance in 2020. The goal then was to improve the quantity and quality of the servings. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 plans were affected and changed. This coming school year, EdAdvance will be taking over the management of the cafeteria bringing in their own managers. It is hoped to expand the offerings and quality which was started two years ago. EdAdvance will provide the opportunity to offer lunches to the elementary schools. Also with EdAdvance, the user fees will fund the program and should there be a deficit, it will fall to EdAdvance and not to the Region.

ACTION ITEMS

To consider and if appropriate, approve disposal of Region 12 property as presented.

Superintendent Bennett spoke to the request and referred to the list which was included in the Board packet. The goal is to clear out items no longer in use and utilize those areas where items are being stored, for example the planetarium. Superintendent Bennett stated that twice a year she will be coming to the Board with a list of items being requested to be disposed of. It was shared that items on the presented list are either broken or obsolete.

MOTION: made by James Hirschfield, seconded by Jennifer Pote, to approve disposal of Region 12 property as presented.

Superintendent Bennett stated that anything that could be donated will be. Anything broken will be disposed of. It had been requested that anything that can be recycled, be recycled.

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passes 12-0.

To consider and if appropriate, approve waving the bidding policy regarding the planetarium digital technology package.

Superintendent Bennett spoke on the request to waive the bidding policy regarding the planetarium digital technology package. She referred to the information provided in the Board packet. The cost of bringing back the planetarium is $108,000. Money has been set aside to fund expenses. The request being made is so that the purchase can move forward.

MOTION: made by James Hirschfield, seconded by Mary Weber, to approve waiving the bidding policy regarding the planetarium digital technology package.

VOTE: in favor: Joseph Abdella, Gregory Cava, James Hirschfield, Alex McNaughton, Justin Ongley, Jennifer Pote, Lisa Roush, Michael Sinatra, Julie Stuart, Peter Tagley, and Mary Weber.

opposed: John Buonaiuto

Motion passes 11-1.

Amendment to the motion – Nicole Grant corrected the cost as $118,000.
Amendment accepted by James Hirschfield and Mary Weber.

Superintendent Bennett stated that the overview of the planetarium was included in the Board packet and that she can provide a breakdown of the work. Spitz, Inc., will be doing the work. Discussion on curriculum implementation followed.

To consider and if appropriate, approve the transfer of $228,084.00 to the 1% Non-Recurring Capital Reserve Fund.

MOTION: made by Mary Weber, seconded by Joseph Abdella, to approve the transfer of $228,084 to the 1% Non-Recurring Capital Reserve Fund.

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passes 12-0.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

To discuss non-certified/non-union staff increases for 2021-2022

MOTION: made by Lisa Roush, seconded by Joseph Abdella, to enter into Executive Session at 9:40 p.m. for the purpose of discussing non-certified/non-union staff increases for 2021-2022 and invite Superintendent Bennett to attend.

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passes 11-0.

ADJOURNMENT

The Board returned to Public Session at 9:50 p.m. The meeting was adjourned by consent.

Respectfully submitted S. Haverly