

**TOWN OF SIMSBURY
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Record of Proceedings	Regular Meeting	January 25, 2022
Ms. Susan Salina called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. in the Squadron Line School Library Media Center. <u>Roll Call:</u> <u>Members present:</u> Mmes. Susan Salina, Tara Willerup, Jen Batchelar and Sharon Thomas. Messrs. Todd Burrick and Brian Watson. <u>Members absent:</u> Mrs. Lydia Tedone and Mr. Jeff Tindall. <u>Also present:</u> Superintendent Matt Curtis, Assistant Superintendent Sue Homrok-Lemke, Assistant Superintendent Neil Sullivan, Director of Finance Amy Meriwether, BOE Student Representative Alex Picoult and Recording Secretary Katie Wilde. <u>PUBLIC AUDIENCE</u> <u>Lori Boyko</u>, 15 Oak Hurst Road, referred to Dwight Eisenhower's farewell speech and his statements on the importance of balance. She stated that when you insist on students wearing masks they lose things. Ms. Boyko stated that the research she has done indicates masks are less than 10% helpful in the transmission of COVID. She noted the tradeoff for wearing masks is causing anxiety and delays in children. <u>COMMITTEE REPORTS/BOE COMMUNICATIONS</u> Mr. Picoult reported on activities at the high school including sports, the winter musical and mid-term exams. He noted activities at the elementary schools and stated that staff from HJMS will be visiting each of the elementary schools to talk with 6th graders about course selection at the middle school. Ms. Lemke reported that the SAT is going digital next year and staff at SHS is participating in training on February 8. Mr. Curtis noted the budget binders have been distributed to board members. He stated he is encouraged by the COVID data trends which are heading downward. Mr. Curtis pointed out Governor Lamont's executive powers end mid-February and we will monitor the dialog with the legislature as to whether some of these mandates will become local decisions. <u>RECOMMENDED ACTIONS</u> A. Approval of Minutes of January 11, 2022 Meeting Ms. Willerup: MOVE to approve the minutes of the January 11, 2022 meeting. Mr. Watson: Seconded. So moved. <u>INFORMATION AND REPORTS</u> A. Squadron Line School Report		Public Audience Communications Approval of Minutes of January 11, 2022 Meeting Squadron Line School Report

Principal Meg Evans opened the presentation, “How Squadron Line SHINES Especially During a Pandemic”. She discussed the goals of Squadron Line based on the Vision of a Graduate and BOE goals. This year’s goals are (1) back to basics with instruction and monitoring student growth, and (2) school culture and emotional support.

Assistant Principal Nysheria Sims-Oliver noted that Squadron Line turns 50 this year. She presented video of students and staff celebrating this event. Ms. Sims-Oliver spoke about the Squadron Line Storybook Pumpkin Stroll that takes place each October. Ms. Evans noted the schools Veterans Day celebration and car parade, as well as PJ day in December in support of children with cancer.

Ms. Sims-Oliver stated that Squadron Line is holding a book swap for students this month. More than 3500 books have been collected from families and students will be permitted to choose 3 books to take home. Ms. Evans addressed social and emotional learning at Squadron Line and the work of teachers to take the temperature of students’ emotions and impact during the day. She presented video of feedback around social and emotional learning from staff and students. Ms. Evans thanked the board for their support.

B. 2022-23 Budget

Mr. Sullivan provided historical data on enrollment and staffing. He noted that there has been a reduction of almost 47 positions since the highest period of enrollment in 2008-09. Mr. Sullivan addressed elementary classroom teacher staffing. He pointed out that projected staffing for next year is similar to staffing in 2012-13 when the number of elementary students was similar.

Mr. Sullivan discussed elementary staffing in more detail. He stated projections for 2022-23 allow for flat classroom staffing, particularly due to the addition of several sections late last summer. There is a need to monitor some larger classes at Squadron Line, Latimer Lane and Tootin’ Hills. Mr. Sullivan noted that the Kindergarten enrollment numbers are starting at a reasonable level, and are not as big as last year. He stated that the intervention and support structures have been rebuilt and math tutors were added. The 2022-23 personnel requests are focused on Special Education needs in the areas of mental health and leadership structure.

Mr. Sullivan reviewed the elementary staffing requests in the 2022-23 budget. The addition of 2 social workers will create a dedicated social worker at each elementary school to address emerging mental health issues exacerbated by the pandemic. A change in the special education leadership structure with the addition of 1 leadership position will create 3 department supervisor positions that are more building based with one at Squadron Line, one at Tariffville and Latimer Lane, and one at Central and Tootin’ Hills. This change includes the reallocation of 2 current leadership positions. Mr. Sullivan stated the addition of 1 special education teacher is enrollment driven and needed to address large caseloads. This position will be located .5 at Squadron Line and .5 at Latimer Lane. He stated the addition of 1 Speech & Language Pathologist is needed to address large caseloads in PreK and the lower grades. The district is currently using some contracted services to meet those needs. Mr. Sullivan reviewed the funding sources for each of these positions. Four of these positions will be funded through grants, with the Speech & Language Pathologist funded through the operating budget.

2022-23 Budget

Mr. Burrick requested a list of the current positions by school, as well as the proposed changes based on these budget requests. Ms. Thomas asked if there is specific number that is appropriate for number of caseloads. Ms. Lemke responded that it depends on the intensity of the case, but currently a caseworker manages a number in the twenties.

Mr. Sullivan addressed staffing at HJMS. He stated that staffing has decreased as enrollment has decreased. There will be a change in the team structure due to the smaller 6th grade moving into 7th grade. 7th grade will have 2.6 teams and 8th grade will have 3.0 teams. Mr. Sullivan addressed staffing at SHS. He noted that there has been a significant decrease in staffing as enrollment numbers have declined. Mr. Sullivan stated that the district takes a hard look at every retirement to find efficiencies.

Mr. Sullivan reviewed the secondary staffing requests in the 2022-23 budget. No additional staff is being requested at HJMS. The school will continue to maintain the PE/Health everyday experience that was implemented in 2020-21. Class sizes should improve with the re-balancing of the teams. The school administration is committed to offering full after-school programming next year. Mr. Sullivan stated that SHS has requested 1 FTE for capstone support. The exact needs for this proposed position will be known after course selection. The request for an additional School Psychologist at SHS is to address the issue of increased evaluations and testing at both SHS and HJMS. Mr. Sullivan noted that there will be staffing challenges in World Language and Black & Latino Studies at SHS, but this will not have a large budget impact.

Mr. Sullivan addressed additional considerations for district staffing. He discussed the substitute shortage and the need to increase the use of building substitutes and raise rates by 10% in order to be competitive. He noted that principals have asked for additional summer secretarial support for special projects. We will continue to examine retirements and resignations of paraeducators as an offset to the special education certified staffing requests. Mr. Sullivan stated that a pay increase for non-union paraeducators is necessary as we push up against the minimum wage. Nutrition Services and SEED will also need to address this through their budgets as well. Mr. Sullivan stated he is analyzing custodial and nurse overtime which has been affected by the inability to get custodial substitutes right now, and the prior need for COVID contact tracing. Mr. Sullivan reviewed the overall personnel budget themes.

Ms. Batchelar asked why, with the increased elementary enrollment of 90 students, do teachers not need to be added to the budget. Mr. Sullivan responded that due to the addition of positions last summer, class size can be accommodated next year without adding staff. Mr. Curtis noted that there will be a reduction in the number of Kindergarten students next year.

Ms. Batchelar asked why additional capstone support is necessary when many students can qualify for their capstone through existing learning clusters. Mr. Sullivan responded that once course enrollment at SHS is complete, a determination can be made as to whether this position is necessary. Ms. Batchelar questioned the additional support for World Language. Ms. Lemke explained that the district would like to replace the online Chinese courses with in-person instruction. She stated we

are speaking with neighboring districts about sharing this role and also speaking with the American School for the Deaf about our Sign Language course.

Mr. Burrick questioned how, if we are using \$800,000 in grant funding, can these new positions be funded over the long term. Ms. Meriwether responded that the plan to fund the cliff over 3 years will be reviewed during the budget workshop.

C. Policy First Reading

Mr. Sullivan reviewed the proposed additions to the Community 1000 Series. The subject of how we use technology for district communications will be brought forward as a new policy later this year after further review by the Director of Instructional Technology.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

Lori Boyko, 15 Oak Hurst Road, asked for confirmation that the board policies address other types of electronic delivery systems in addition to tobacco. She noted that the funding used for additional administrators may be better used to fund the needs of the school system that are outlined in the budget proposal.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Burrick: MOVE to enter Executive Session and include the Superintendent at 8:05 p.m.

Ms. Batchelar: Seconded. So moved.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Burrick: MOVE to adjourn the meeting at 8:46 p.m.

Ms. Willerup: Seconded. So moved.

Jennifer Batchelar
Secretary

Katie Wilde
Recording Secretary

Policy First
Reading

Public Audience

Executive
Session

Adjournment