

Regional School District 12
Board of Education
Meeting Minutes
October 4, 2021

The Board of Education Meeting was held in person and virtually in the library at Shepaug Valley School. The meeting was called to order at 7:10 p.m. on Monday, October 4, 2021, by Chairman Gregory Cava. Present were Board members: Joseph Abdella, John Buonaiuto, Angela Macchiarulo, Alex McNaughton, Justin Ongley, Jennifer Pote, Lisa Roush, Candice Schiesel, Julie Stuart, Peter Tagley, and Mary Weber. Also present were: Megan Bennett, Superintendent and Nicole Grant, Director of Finance.

Also in attendance were: Michael Boucher, School Counseling Director; Michael Croft, Assistant Principal at Shepaug Valley School; and Teresa DeBrito Ed.D., Director of Curriculum and Instruction.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

CONSENT AGENDA

Approval of minutes: September 13, 2021, Board of Education Meeting
September 27, 2021, Board of Education Retreat

Amendment to change the word “seeked” to “sought” in the first paragraph on the last page of the September 13, 2021 minutes was requested.

MOTION: made by Lisa Roush, seconded by Jennifer Pote, to accept the minutes of September 13, 2021 with the amendment to the last page, as well as to accept the minutes of September 27, 2021 as is.

VOTE: Motion passes unanimously. (12 - 0 - 0)

AGRISCIENCE AND OPERATIONS MANAGER

Superintendent Bennett introduced Margaret Groht as the Agriscinece Operations Manager and described the duties of the position. Ms. Groht was given the opportunity to speak. Time would be allowed after the meeting for Board members to meet Ms. Groht.

COVID-19 UPDATE

Superintendent Bennett shared her screen which showed the continued tracking and updates for Facts and Figures, as of October 4, 2021 regarding COVID-19. The numbers were reviewed and explained. It was shared that per the Governor’s Executive Order #14, masks will continue to be worn until February, 2022.

Recognizing the cost of testing, Superintendent Bennett stated that if you are not a close contact, the New Milford Department of Public Health is offering free COVID testing from 9:00a – 10:30a on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Other free testing locations within the state have been shared with families.

With the holiday weekend approaching, Superintendent Bennett reminded everyone of the travel restrictions in place. For international travel it had been suggested to check the CDC website.

REPORTS AND RECOGNITIONS

Board Chairman's Report: Chairman Cava thanked Jennifer Pote for chairing the September 13, 2021 meeting in his absence. Chairman Cava shared that the agriscience building committee is close to the end of the project with only a few remaining items and that the project remains under budget.

Treasurer's Report: Mr. Buonaiuto mentioned being aware of the upcoming necessary repairs, renovations and restorations that will be many millions of dollars.

Superintendent's Report: Superintendent Bennett acknowledged students and staff and how well the virtual Open House went.

Superintendent Bennett updated the Board on the agriscience program stating that due to CL (Caseous Lymphadenitis), where two more sheep are affected, the flock will not be returning to campus. Additional precautions were taken to be sure the campus is safe for new animals coming in. Superintendent Bennett noted that the program is to rotate species. Within the next two weeks the program is expected to have goats and chickens on campus.

Superintendent Bennett reported that on Wednesday, she and Principal Schels gave a tour of Shepaug Valley School to the Newtown superintendent, a member of the Newtown Board of Education and their high school principal. Superintendent Bennett shared a comment from the Board member "Our students are so lucky to be able to go here."

Superintendent Bennett thanked the school nurses for providing the flu vaccine clinic to staff, taking place within the schools.

Superintendent Bennett congratulated Shepaug senior Wyatt King for earning the honor of National Merit Commended Student Scholarship recipient.

Superintendent Bennett shared Homecoming information. Thursday, October 7, is the pep rally for fall sports, clubs and agriscience initiatives. On Friday, October 8, sports events include a field hockey game and a boys' soccer game at 3:45pm. Food trucks will be on site and student clubs will be allowed to have booths. A bonfire at 6:30 pm, will close the evening. Jennifer Pote was thanked for her help in making this happen. Matt Perachi was also acknowledged for his efforts in working with Litchfield High School regarding the rescheduling of the girls' soccer game. The Homecoming Dance will take place on Saturday, October 16 at the pavilion in Washington.

Reporting on sports, Superintendent Bennett shared that the girls' cross country team is 6-0 and noted that the team is made up of students from eight different towns. On October 12, the team will compete at home against undefeated Northwestern and Litchfield High School. The boys' soccer team had a strong start to the season, winning their first five games.

Board of Education Meeting Minutes
October 4, 2021

Superintendent Bennett reported on staff leaving: Rachel Benyair, Educational Assistant at WPS, effective October 2, 2021; Michael McManus, College Career Center Coordinator at SVS, effective September 21, 2021; and Charlene Sullivan, Paraprofessional at WPS, effective September 24, 2021.

Committee Reports:

Curriculum and Education – Justin Ongley shared that there is a meeting on October 25, 2021.

EdAdvance – Joseph Abdella reported that there is a Directors' meeting this Thursday which he plans on attending.

Finance – Alex McNaughton reported on the meeting that took place this evening. Enrollment had been discussed. Mr. McNaughton reported that there was a presentation on solar panels potentially for Washington Primary School and possibly Booth Free School. The presentation included the selectmen from the region's three towns. Don O'Leary shared areas of concern that would need to be addressed. Mr. O'Leary was asked to get figures for needed projects, which will be presented to the Board of Education. Also reported was that the agriscience business model is turning out to be very profitable.

Labor Negotiations – Chairman Cava reported that negotiations had begun with the non-certified staff, clerical and paraprofessionals with their next meeting scheduled for tomorrow.

Long Range Planning – Julie Stuart reported that the committee continues to move forward with the long range planning process. Ms. Stuart stated that the committee would like the Board to hear a presentation by the Connecticut Center for School Change. The sign for Shepaug Valley School is not in place yet due to a lack of materials. The committee discussed tuition-in for the upcoming school year for the middle and high school and will be making a presentation to the Board. PTO liaisons were discussed by the committee where each PTO would have a Board member to connect with.

NEW BUSINESS AND UPDATES

Class of 2021 Presentation and Achievement – Michael Boucher presented information on the graduating Class of 2021. Mr. Boucher spoke about the Class Profile, AP Scholars, Answering a Call to Citizenship, and on students' Future Plans as of June 11, 2021, along with a list of colleges students had been accepted to. Questions followed.

Student Achievement During COVID – Superintendent Bennett displayed information on Smarter Balanced testing results. Included was a comparison table for the school year 2018-2019. Superintendent Bennett reminded the Board that there were no assessments given in the spring of 2020. Data analysis had been explained. It was acknowledged that student achievement had been impacted and course sequence will be looked at as well as local testing and professional development topics.

October 1 Enrollment Data – Superintendent Bennett reported on the enrollment. Enrollment numbers continue to fluctuate with 763 students enrolled this year as of October 1, 2021. When comparing enrollment from last year, REACH had not been offered and the agriscience program continues to grow. Superintendent Bennett shared that the agriscience program is in its third year with 119 students enrolled of which 75 are from sending towns. Questions were addressed. Regarding remote learning, this is no longer an option, all learning is in

person. In the event a student needs to quarantine, their work is available in Google Classroom with 20 minutes available with the teacher every day. Also available if needed, at home tutoring via Zoom with a Literacy Tutor.

Teacher Evaluation Presentation – Teresa DeBrito shared what the 2021-2022 teacher evaluation looks like stating student needs are the focus of the evaluation. Areas of the evaluation were reviewed. Last year there was a focus on social and emotional learning. Students' needs are still part of this year's evaluation. Also, staying constant are teacher observations and review of practice and growth. Year end observations will also remain. Feedback is important with surveys being an important aspect for gathering information. It was also shared that the State is revamping what is being asked of teachers.

TikTok Challenges and Student Response – Chairman Cava commented on what is happening on the two previous challenges, one of which was school vandalism and is happening nationwide. Chairman Cava reported that Principal Schels sent out an email to families communicating that these challenges would not be tolerated, and students would be held accountable including paying for any damages. If need be, local law enforcement would be involved.

ACTION ITEMS

To consider and if appropriate assign Board Members as liaisons to PTO and Agriscience Advisory. Julie Stuart spoke on the request as it is coming from the Long Range Planning Committee. It was suggested that this be standardized across the District for all the PTO's. Questions followed. As a reminder, Superintendent Bennett stated that the Agriscience Advisory Council does need a Board representative. Alex McNaughton shared that he attended a recent PTO meeting at Burnham School. Part of the discussion at the meeting was that the elementary students would like to visit the agriscience program, especially the animals. Chairman Cava did not feel the need to bring this to a vote as this could be treated as a committee where Board members would be appointed.

To consider and if appropriate, approve the disposal of Region 12 property as listed. Superintendent Bennett reported that there are 65 items listed for disposal, all of which had been stored in the planetarium. Other school districts who could possibly be in need of any of the listed items would be contacted prior to disposal. October and May would be months where this request would be made to the Board, if needed. Discussion followed. Alex McNaughton and Lisa Roush stated they had not seen the list and would abstain from voting.

MOTION: made by Jennifer Pote, seconded by Mary Weber, to approve the disposal of Region 12 property on the list distributed prior to the meeting.

VOTE: in favor: Joseph Abdella, John Buonaiuto, Gregory Cava, Angela Macchiarulo, Jennifer Pote, Justin Ongley, Candice Schiesel, Julie Stuart, Peter Tagley, and Mary Weber.

opposed:

abstain: Alex McNaughton and Lisa Roush.

Motion passes 10-0-2.

Board of Education Meeting Minutes
October 4, 2021

Chairman Cava announced that the Board of Education meeting scheduled for October 25, 2021, was rescheduled to November 1, 2021. Julie Stuart stated that the Long Range Planning Committee meeting was also rescheduled to November 1.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by S. Haverly