

Somers Board of Education Regular Meeting
Somers Board of Education Chambers
Monday, August 25, 2025
7:00 PM

(The recorded livestream may be viewed on SPS' YouTube channel on the school website)

Present BOE Members: Anne Kirkpatrick, Mike Briggs, Dr. Ed DePeau, Shane Manning, Jan Martin, Kim Radziewicz, Derek Zelek

Absent BOE Members: JT Galloway, Carl Stebbins

Others: Dr. Sam Galloway, Stephanie Levin, Dorothy Silverstein, Julie Hinkley, Gina Olearczyk

1. CALL TO ORDER

The regular Board of Education meeting was called to order by Chair Kirkpatrick at 7:00 p.m. in the Board of Education Chambers.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

3.1. Approval of the June 23, 2025 BOE Meeting Minutes

Rationale: The Board to review and approve the minutes from the June 23, 2025 Board meeting.

Motion to approve minutes of 6/23 BOE meeting. This motion, made by Jan Martin and seconded by Derek Zelek, Carried. **Yea: 6, Nay: 0, Absent: 2 (JT Galloway, Carl Stebbins), Abstain: 1 (Kim Radziewicz)**

4. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

4.1. Superintendent Update

All certified vacancies have been filled. Teachers and staff will be greeted at Convocation at SHS on 8/26/25.

Administrators participated in an emergency management tabletop exercise that required decision-making as hypothetical emergency situations developed. Superintendent Galloway extended a special thank you to town partners who participated, including the Resident Troopers Office, Fire Department, Public Works, and, specifically, Todd Rolland, Director of Land Use and Public Works. The purpose of the exercise was to ensure that leaders understand how to make quick, decisive decisions at the onset of a problem, to build relationships with other town entities, and to better understand the role of those entities. School leaders received CPR certification and re-certification training. Appreciation was expressed to the Somers Fire Department staff for the block of instruction that was provided to ensure leaders are CPR certified and able to handle a choking emergency.

A representative from Gilbane presented six options at the SES HVAC Committee meeting held over the summer. The committee expressed interest in the sixth option, which would include mini-splits throughout the building. This proposal gained traction as it would be within budget and would not require any students to be relocated.

Thanks were extended to the Somers Education Foundation. A meeting was held with Dr. Salva, and the Foundation reaffirmed its commitment to supporting educators with innovative ideas. The Foundation has awarded over \$73,000 to support the school system, funding projects that promote innovation and out-of-the-box thinking. Over 20 teachers were supported in literacy training with the new curriculum.

Board Member Derek Zelek inquired about the budget for the sixth option for the HVAC project. Superintendent Galloway clarified that the option that was discussed is approximately \$2 million under budget. The mini-splits that are included as part of this project would be placed in classrooms, but would adequately cool hallways and remedy the current ventilation issues.

4.2. FY25 EOY Report

Rationale: Stephanie Levin, Director of Business Services, will be available to answer questions regarding the FY25 EOY report.

Discussion: Stephanie Levin presented the FY25 End of Year Report. She noted that the fiscal year ended with the assumption that the Board will approve the transfers recommended by the Budget Subcommittee at the last meeting. The audit will continue in October and is expected to conclude in December. Pending the outcome of the audit, it is expected that \$177,898 will be "returned" to the town. Since those funds were never accepted, they remain on the town's side. Ms. Levin explained that she and Brian Wissinger balance the budget monthly to ensure the town is aware of what the district has requested and what funds are actually spent.

4.3. FY26 July Monthly Report

Rationale: Stephanie Levin, Director of Business Services, will update the Board on the monthly budget report.

Discussion: Stephanie Levin presented the monthly budget report. The July and August budgets reflect staff changes and salaries. It was noted that the summer budget is very fluid due to the number of staffing adjustments. The July budget included staff being hired and enrolled in insurance, so many of the numbers were approximated and will be adjusted in September. There was little activity in July for tuition and transportation outside of summer school transportation. It was noted that the budget will change substantially at the next Board meeting. Utilities, maintenance, and instructional supplies will continue to be closely monitored.

A question was raised regarding staff insurance. Fourteen current staff members made changes to their enrollment due to life events. In most of these cases, costs

increased. Additionally, eight new staff members became eligible for insurance and elected coverage. Overall, the budget is currently about \$70,000 over the anticipated budget, though further changes may still occur due to staff leaves.

Bus routes were recently reviewed, including group stops. At this time there are only two bus stop change requests. One was granted while the other is still under discussion.

5. OPPORTUNITY TO ADD/DELETE AGENDA ITEMS

6. CONSENT AGENDA

Motion to approve Consent Agenda. This motion, made by Ed DePeau and seconded by Shane Manning, Carried. **Yea: 7, Nay: 0, Absent: 2 (JT Galloway, Carl Stebbins)**

6.1. Warrants of June 30, 2025

Rationale: The Board to review and consent to the warrant of June 30, 2025.

6.2. Warrant of July 14, 2025

Rationale: The Board to review and consent to the warrant of July 14, 2025.

6.3. Warrant of August 8, 2025 (FY 24/25)

Rationale: The Board to review and consent to the warrant of August 8, 2025 for FY 24-25.

6.4. Warrant of August 8, 2025

Rationale: The Board to consent to the warrant of August 8, 2025.

6.5. Warrant of August 25, 2025

Rationale: The Board to review and consent to the warrant of August 25, 2025.

6.6. Resignations

Rationale:

- Jennifer Sugermeyer, Grade 5 Teacher, is resigning after six years of service at SPS.
- Noreen Harnett, MBA, World Language Teacher, is resigning effective August 24, 2025, after four years of service at SPS.
- Linda Preston, SHS World Language Teacher, is resigning effective August 25, 2025, after more than 26 years of service at SPS.

7. OLD BUSINESS

8. NEW BUSINESS

8.1. Board to Approve District School Maintenance Worker

Rationale: The Board to review and approve the hiring of Karl "Ross" Bower, District School Maintenance Worker per DBS Policy 4112.8 - Nepotism.

Motion to approve the hiring of Karl "Ross" Bower as District School Maintenance Worker per DBS Policy 4112.8-Nepotism. This motion, made by Jan Martin and seconded by Kim Radziewicz, Carried. **Yea: 7, Nay: 0, Absent: 2 (JT Galloway, Carl Stebbins)**

Discussion: Superintendent Galloway asked the Board to consider the hiring of K. Ross Bower as a district maintenance worker. Mr. Bower is the son of the SHS Head Custodian. If hired, Mr. Bower would not report directly to his father, though it is possible they could work in the same building. This maintenance position has been vacant since March, and efforts to recruit a certified electrician and plumber have been unsuccessful, largely due to salary constraints. Mr. Bower has some certifications and brings 20 years of experience. It is important to acquire certified staff to reduce the reliance on outside vendors. Last year the district spent over \$130,000 on contracted services, including electrical, general contracting, plumbing and landscaping. It was further noted that while the district currently employs capable and handy staff members, certain types of work require licensed and certified professionals.

8.2. Recommended FY25 EOY Transfers

Rationale: The Board to review and approve the recommended FY25 EOY transfers.

Motion to approve the end of the year FY25 transfers recommended by the Budget/Planning Committee. This motion, made by Kim Radziewicz and seconded by Shane Manning, Carried. **Yea: 7, Nay: 0, Absent: 2 (JT Galloway, Carl Stebbins)**

8.3. 1st Posting DBS Policy 4000.1/5145.44 - Students - Title IX (2021)

8.4. 1st Posting DBS Code 4000.1/5145.44 - Students - Prohibition of Sex Discrimination, Including Sex-Based Harassment (2025)

Discussion: A policy adopted in 2021 and later revised in 2024 must be reverted to its 2021 version, as required by the federal government.

8.5. 1st Posting DBS Code 9222 - Resignation/Removal of Board Officer

8.6. 1st Posting DBS Code 9325.2 - Time, Place, Notification of Meetings

8.7. 1st Posting DBS Code 2400.1 - Evaluation of the Superintendent

8.8. Required New BOE Member Training

Rationale: Anne Kirkpatrick will discuss the required training needed for new Board members.

Discussion: A state law passed last year requires newly elected Board members to complete training within their first year of service. CABE has been designated to provide the required training. Board members may fulfill the requirement by attending the CABE Convention on November 21-22 or by participating in free CABE webinars. The cost of training is covered in the Board of Education's professional development budget.

9. COMMITTEE REPORTS

9.1. Curriculum (next meeting 9/8/25 5:30 p.m.)

The next meeting will be held on 9/8/25 at 5:30 p.m.

9.2. Policy

This committee met on 8/25/25. There will be several new policies posted at the next meeting on 9/22/25 at 6:15 p.m.

9.3. Planning/Finance

This committee met last week to discuss budget transfers.

9.4. Salary & Negotiations

This committee is on hold.

9.5. Building

Updates regarding the SES HVAC projected were reviewed in the Superintendent's Report. The primary concern at last year's parent meeting was the relocation of students during construction. The sixth option presented by Gilbane both reduced cost and explored an alternate solution to avoid student relocation. The exact timeline and cost of moving forward with the sixth option are not yet known. Construction could potentially be scheduled at night or during the summer to minimize disruption. The Building Committee will continue to meet on the first and third Tuesday of every month through December.

10. CABE/CREC/State Dept. of Ed./SEF

The annual SEF meeting took place over the summer. SEF is still looking for a new board member.

11. AUDIENCE TO CITIZENS/STAFF/STUDENTS

Dorothy Silverstein, the parent of an incoming 10th grader, addressed the Board regarding a book assigned for summer reading. She read an excerpt from the text and expressed concern about its content. As a mother of four boys and as a woman, she stated she was appalled at the sentiment of the passage and stressed that students are impressionable. She emphasized that she was not advocating for banning books but believed there should be greater discretion in selecting required reading. She noted that *Catcher in the Rye*, which was referenced in the discussion, was published 74 years ago.

Gina Olearczyk expressed her appreciation that mini-splits are being considered as part of the facilities project. Ms. Olearczyk encouraged the Board to plan for their long-term maintenance, including a staggered replacement schedule to avoid a large, one-time replacement cost. She also shared her gratitude to all educators for preparing her son, who graduated in June and recently began classes at Quinnipiac University. She noted that the AP and ECE courses he completed in high school left him feeling confident and well-prepared for college-level work.

12. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:41 p.m. This motion, made by Jan Martin and seconded by Shane Manning, Carried. **Yea: 7, Nay: 0, Absent: 2 (JT Galloway, Carl Stebbins)**

Jan Martin, BOE Secretary

Date

Jenna McDermott, BOE Recording Secretary