

**Somers Board of Education Regular Meeting
Somers Board of Education Chambers**

Tuesday, May 27, 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, JT Galloway, Shane Manning, Jan Martin, Kim Radziewicz,

Absent BOE Members: Carl Stebbins, Derek Zelek

Others: Dr. Sam Galloway, Caroline Hargraves, Dr. Jaime Rechenberg, Cheryl Fry, Julie Hinkley, Karen Campbell, Dr. Michael Wald, Laurie Somma, Lisa Grenier, Sue Cormier

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. AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

3.1. Retirement Recognitions

Rationale: On behalf of the BOE, Superintendent Galloway, Caroline Hargraves, Director of Pupil Services, and Dr. Jaime Rechenberg, SHS Principal, will present gifts to the following retirees:

Dr. Michael Wald, SHS School Psychologist
Laurie Somma, SHS Special Education Teacher
Lisa Grenier, SHS School Counselor
Sue Cormier, SHS Science Teacher
Ines Dunn, SHS World Language Teacher

Discussion: Superintendent Galloway thanked this year's retirees for their service and congratulated the retirees on their accomplishments. Ms. Caroline Hargraves introduced Dr. Michael Wald, describing him as a "legend." Dr. Wald served as an educator for over 30 years. He has served many students, including some from their elementary years through graduation. Dr. Wald has provided counseling and support to families to help them understand the impact a student's disability may have on his or her life and ways to help each student live as independently as possible. Dr. Wald hopes he is remembered fondly.

Ms. Hargraves introduced Laurie Somma. Ms. Somma served as a Special Education Teacher for 10 years in Somers. She has served in education for over 30 years. Ms. Somma's door is always open for students, as she cares deeply for them. Ms. Somma plans to spend time with her grandchildren, visit her house on

Cape Cod, and travel to Italy. Ms. Hargraves thanked Ms. Somma for advocating strongly for kids and for her dedication to Somers.

Ms. Hargraves introduced Lisa Grenier, a school counselor in Somers for 25 years. Ms. Grenier was a mentor to Ms. Hargraves early in her career. Ms. Hargraves shared the connection to families and students that Ms. Grenier has formed. The loss of the wealth of knowledge that Ms. Grenier has brought to Somers will be felt for a long time. Ms. Grenier plans to spend time with her granddaughter, Nora, in Colorado and travel in her new RV. Ms. Hargraves shared a personal thank you to Ms. Grenier for her professional support.

Dr. Jaime Rechenberg introduced Ms. Sue Cormier, who she described as the "Ski Club Queen" and "Garden Goddess." Ms. Cormier has taught for over 24 years, but her favorite memories lie in the adventures with students during Ski Club. Ms. Cormier plans to spend time in retirement reading and gardening. Ms. Cormier will miss doing labs with students, but not the grading! Dr. Rechenberg thanked Ms. Cormier for her dedication, adventurous spirit, and wise decision to ditch the red pen.

Ms. Ines Dunn could not attend tonight's meeting. Ms. Dunn served in Somers for 26 years as a team leader and mentor teacher. Superintendent Galloway shared that Ms. Dunn plans to brush up on her Italian and French skills and travel. Ms. Dunn also plans to spend time with her 95-year-old father and may serve as a substitute teacher for the Somers Public Schools.

Superintendent Galloway presented a crystal apple to each retiree.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

4.1. Approval of the May 12, 2025 BOE Meeting Minutes

Rationale: The Board to review and approve the minutes from the May 12, 2025 Board meeting.

Motion to approve minutes of May 12th Board of Education Meeting. This motion, made by JT Galloway and seconded by Shane Manning, Carried. **Yea: 5, Nay: 0, Absent: 2 (Carl Stebbins, Derek Zelek), Abstain 2 (Mike Briggs, Ed DePeau)**

5. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

5.1. Superintendent Update

Superintendent Galloway thanked the parents and staff for their support during the budget process, along with the Board of Education for endorsing the carefully thought-out budget. The budget process began with the budget subcommittee reviewing the budget line by line over multiple meetings. It then moved to the full Board of Education, and then to the Board of Finance. The Board of Finance endorsed the budget, fully understanding the rationale behind budget decisions. Superintendent Galloway thanked the town's Chief Financial Officer, Brian

Wissinger, noting his partnership during the process. On 5/20/25, the budget was approved. Chair Kirkpatrick thanked the Board of Finance for their support of the budget and for the clear communication that was shared by the Board of Finance to explain the tax increase. Chair Kirkpatrick shared that in the past, approximately 5% of registered voters came out to vote; however, 12.5% of voters voted in this referendum.

The Board of Selectmen will meet on 6/5/25 to designate building committee members. Superintendent Galloway plans to be an active member of the committee and advocate for students.

A Walk-a-Thon was held at MBA on 5/23/25. Over \$1,800 was raised for HARC CT.

Capstone presentations will take place in the SHS Library Media Center on 5/28/25. All Board members are invited to attend.

5.2. School Wellness Committee Report

Rationale: Cheryl Fry, Head Nurse, will present the School Wellness Committee update.

Discussion: Ms. Cheryl Fry, Head Nurse, presented to the Board. Ms. Fry shared the number of visits to the Health Offices across the three schools for various reasons. Ms. Fry advocated for a breakfast program at MBA, noting 739 student visits to the Health Office for food. The MBA Health Office has snacks available funded through the health budget and Choice grant, but these snacks often run out. Students generally visit for food between 7:30-9:30 a.m. Often, the same students visit the Health Office for food. Board Member Shane Manning inquired whether this information has been shared with families. Ms. Fry shared that individual families have been contacted and the Health Office has asked for food donations from the community.

Ms. Fry shared data about hearing, vision and scoliosis screenings. Nurses are continuing to see an overflow of students from the counseling office for mental health needs. In addition to the Nurses involvement in MTSS meetings to stay aligned with student goals, nurses are also involved on the Attendance Committee to help curb chronic absenteeism.

Ms. Fry discussed the use of hygiene kits to supply students with the tools needed to brush their teeth, wash their faces and apply deodorant. The nurses are seeing more students with sleep issues. There were multiple rounds of the flu and pneumonia this year, but not many cases of COVID-19 or strep throat. Allergies were also difficult to manage this year. In addition to students, the nurses also support staff members who visit the nurses office to share their struggles.

Ms. Fry reported positively on this year's new Medical Advisor. The Medical

Advisor visited the schools, reviewed files, and was accessible and responsive. The district returned to in-person training for staff on health related topics like bloodborne pathogens, first aid, and EpiPen administration.

Board Member Mike Briggs inquired about students visiting to report being tired and whether they are legitimately tired or trying to avoid class. Ms. Fry noted that nurses often have to "call the bluff" of MBA students who visit to avoid class. Staff will not deny students access to the nurse. These types of visits are tricky when the health office gets busy with other types of visits. Mr. Briggs also inquired about the correlation between poor nutrition, sleep issues and sickness.

Board Member JT Galloway inquired as to how parents are contacted when it comes to visits for food. Board Member Shane Manning suggested that it is not the district's responsibility to feed and clothe students and inquired whether the requested breakfast program would be for all students or only those in need. Ms. Fry suggested that the program be for all students, but it should not be free of charge.

Chair Kirkpatrick shared that the food issue is concerning. A discussion regarding community resources ensued. Chair Kirkpatrick also noted the rise in anxiety and depression among kids ages 11-14 across the country and inquired whether the number of students with anxiety and depression in Somers is going up. Ms. Fry shared that the diagnoses of these issues is increasing, but parents are not necessarily medicating their children for anxiety and depression. Ms. Fry concluded by sharing that the SPS nurses feel supported and love working in this community.

5.3. SHS Student Representatives

Rationale: SHS students, Emma Ciciarella and Carolyn Castonguay, will update the Board on recent SHS events.

Discussion: SHS representatives Emma Ciciarella and Carolyn Castonguay were unable to attend tonight's meeting due to illness and athletic commitments. Dr. Jaime Rechenberg reported the SHS updates. The COTA (Celebration of the Arts) recently took place. During the event, band students played music throughout the school, artwork was displayed, and there was a cabaret in the cafeteria. The band and chorus put on a full concert. The Somers Youth for Change Spirit week took place. This event was spearheaded by Ava DePeau to increase mental health awareness. The AP Art students hosted a Paint Night to fundraise for their field trip to Boston, and the Junior class held a car wash. The BioBlitz was a success. Students investigated at stations and completed scavenger hunts. AP and NGSS testing are complete. Students showed up, asked questions and stayed for extra time if needed. Any student who showed a certain level of growth or met proficiency will be exempt from the final exam in their science class. Dr. Rechenberg shared thanks to all the parents who supported Teacher Appreciation Week. SHS students, Molly Tabb and Devon Nethercott brought their Capstone

projects from the Fall to life by hosting the Morgan's Challenge community event. The purpose of the event was to bring awareness to suicide among athletes and break down the stigma of asking for help. Through the project, 35 bicycles were delivered to the MBA gym for Somers families by partnering with a bicycle group in Massachusetts.

The Honors English 9 students went to the Mark Twain House. George and Molly, therapy dogs, retired. Additionally, yearbooks were released. Rockville Bank Community Foundation Scholarships were awarded. Chorus and band students participated in the Memorial Day Ceremony.

Architecture Design II students presented their kitchen and classroom design projects. Students applied their skills from class to revamp the existing kitchen and classroom spaces. Seven students collaborated, interviewed staff at school and in the industry, and worked with construction managers to design the spaces. Students used CAD to create a walking tour.

Capstone Projects will be presented on 5/28/25. The Prom will take place on 5/29/25. Underclassmen Awards will be held on 6/3/25, Senior Awards on 6/4/25, and the Senior Picnic on 6/6/25. The Step Up Day will take place on 6/9/25. Graduation will be on 6/12/25.

6. OPPORTUNITY TO ADD/DELETE AGENDA ITEMS

7. CONSENT AGENDA

Motion to approve Consent Agenda. This motion, made by Kim Radziewicz and seconded by Ed DePeau, Carried. **Yea: 7, Nay: 0, Absent: 2 (Carl Stebbins, Derek Zelek)**

7.1. Warrant of May 27, 2025

Rationale: The Board to review and consent to the warrant of May 27, 2025.

7.2. Resignations

Rationale:

- Laurina Sanford, 6th Grade Math Teacher, will resign effective June 30, 2025.
- MaryBeth Lipman, 8th Grade ELA Teacher, will resign effective June 30, 2025.
- Timothy Foster-Kibbler, 8th Grade Social Studies Teacher, will resign at the end of the school year.

7.3. Retirements

Rationale:

- Sue Cormier, SHS Science Teacher, will be retiring at the end of the 2024-2025 school year after nearly 25 years with SPS.

- Lisa Grenier, SHS School Counselor, will be retiring effective June 19, 2025, after nearly 25 years with SPS.

8. OLD BUSINESS**9. NEW BUSINESS****10. COMMITTEE REPORTS****10.1. Curriculum**

The next meeting will be held on 6/9/25 at 5:30 p.m.

10.2. Policy

The next meeting will be held on 6/23/25 at 6 p.m.

10.3. Planning/Finance

This committee is on hold.

10.4. Salary & Negotiations

This committee is on hold.

10.5. Building

A meeting will be held on 6/5/25 to update members and schedule future meetings.

11. CABA/CREC/State Dept. of Ed./SEF

SEF's Spring Fest raised around \$39,000. Board Member Jan Martin shared that the presentations were impressive and both of the proposed grants were approved.

12. AUDIENCE TO CITIZENS/STAFF/STUDENTS

Community Member Julie Hinkley suggested that securing food for the health office could be an SEF grant opportunity.

13. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Rationale: The Board to enter into Executive Session and invite Dr. Galloway into Executive Session to discuss his evaluation.

Motion that the Board enter Executive Session and invite Dr. Galloway to discuss his Evaluation at 8:10pm. This motion, made by Kim Radziewicz and seconded by Shane Manning, Carried. **Yea: 7, Nay: 0, Absent: 2 (Carl Stebbins, Derek Zelek)**

The Board exited Executive Session at 8:55 p.m.

14. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:56 p.m. This motion, made by Shane Manning and seconded by Jan Martin, Carried. **Yea: 7, Nay: 0, Absent: 2 (Carl Stebbins, Derek Zelek)**

Jan Martin, BOE Secretary Date
Jenna McDermott, BOE Recording Secretary