

**Regular Meeting
Stafford Board of Education
Stafford Elementary School Cafetorium
Limited In-person Meeting and Electronic Meeting- via Zoom
May 17, 2021, 6:30 p.m.**

Board Members Present (in person): Ms. Kathy Bachiochi
Mrs. Jennifer Davis
Mr. Mike Delano
Mrs. Andrea Locke, Secretary
Ms. Laura Lybarger
Mr. George Melnick
Ms. Sonya Shegogue, Chairperson

Absent: Mr. Ryan Duffy, Student Representative

Also Present (virtual, except as noted):

Mr. Steven Moccio, Superintendent of Schools (in person)
Mr. Steven Autieri, Director of Curriculum and Instruction (in person)
Mr. Jonathan Campbell, Assistant Principal, Stafford Middle School
Miss Allie Curtin, Student Representative
Mrs. Peggy Falcetta, Principal, Staffordville School
Mr. Dean Fortin, IT / Network Coordinator (in person)
Mr. Damian Frassinelli, Director of Athletics and Recreation
Ms. Anna Gagnon, Principal, West Stafford School
Mr. Timothy Kinel, Assistant Principal, Stafford High School
Ms. Beth LaPane, Supervisor of Building Services
Ms. Trish Lustila, Director of Pupil Services
Ms. Mary Claire Manning, Principal, Stafford Elementary School
Ms. Susan Mike, Principal, Stafford Middle School
Mr. Marco Pelliccia, Principal, Stafford High School (in person)
Ms. Diane Peters, Business Manager (in person)

The meeting agenda and copies of all Board meeting materials were posted on the district's website (www.stafford.k12.ct.us) prior to the meeting, in accordance with the requirements for electronic meetings. Audience members were able to participate by phone utilizing the phone number provided on the meeting agenda. The recording of this meeting is available on the district website.

Item I. Call to Order- Establishment of Quorum

The meeting was called to order at 6:31 p.m.

Item II. Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. Shegogue led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Item III. Secretary's Report- Approval of Minutes

Regular Meeting, 05/03/2021

Mrs. Locke made a motion, seconded by Ms. Lybarger, that the Board approve the Secretary’s Report for the regular meeting held on 05/03/2021. Ms. Bachiochi, Mrs. Davis, Mr. Delano, Mrs. Locke, Ms. Lybarger, and Mr. Melnick voted for the motion, which carried.

Item IV. Consent Agenda

A. Acceptance of Resignations- Administrative and Certified Staff Members

NAME	POSITION	SCHOOL	EFFECTIVE DATE	REASON
Hargraves, Caroline	Assistant Principal	Stafford Elementary School	End of School Year, June 2021	Personal
O’Brien, Magdalena	Music Teacher	West Stafford School / Staffordville School / Stafford Middle School	End of School Year, June 2021	Accepted a position in another CT district.
Vaghini, Thomas	Library Media Specialist	Stafford High School	End of School Year, June 2021	Accepted a position in another CT district.

B. Obsolete Equipment- Staffordville School, West Stafford School and Stafford Elementary School

C. 2019-2020 Bills and Grants- 05-14-2021, \$200.00

D. 2020-2021 Bills and Grants- 05-14-2021, \$110,590.39

Ms. Lybarger asked a question regarding the food item that was on the list and if it could be donated. Ms. LaPane said that she would have to check the expiration date and check with the health department.

Mrs. Davis made a motion, seconded by Mr. Melnick, that the Board approve the items listed in the consent agenda, as presented. Ms. Bachiochi, Mrs. Davis, Mr. Delano, Mrs. Locke, Ms. Lybarger, and Mr. Melnick voted for the motion, which carried.

Item V. Correspondence

A. Board Meeting Reminder

Ms. Shegogue read the Board meeting reminder that was posted on the agenda. The Board’s Celebration of Excellence will take place on June 14, 2021, in the high school cafeteria.

Item VI. Board Reports

A. Student Representatives’ Report

Miss Curtin provided updates from each of the schools, as well as the athletic and music departments. Mr. Duffy was absent due to a conflict with an athletic event.

Mr. Melnick asked a question regarding the cancellation of the junior prom and the deposit that Chez Josef would not return to the students when they could not accommodate the junior prom. Mr. Pelliccia

responded that the administration and students tried to work with Chez Josef to no avail. Mr. Pelliccia said that the high school will be no longer using this location for events.

Item VII. Superintendent's Reports

A. Financial Report through April 30, 2021

Mrs. Diane Peters, Business Manager, reviewed the status of the 2020 – 2021 budget for the Stafford Public Schools, as of April 30, 2021. She said that since the last report was as of April 5, there aren't many changes. She reviewed the changes in the balances since the last report. She said that we have an unspent, unreserved amount of the budget \$754,082.54, or 2.7%.

Ms. Shegogue asked a question regarding the propane and diesel fuel accounts.

Mr. Moccio stated that \$500,000.00 of the remaining balance will be used to reduce the impact of the 2021 – 2022 budget to the taxpayer. He said that he would be asking that any remaining balance above the \$500,000.00 be placed in the district's Unexpended Fund to offset the district's portion of the next Security Grant.

Ms. Shegogue clarified that at this time there is no mandate from the Board of Finance to reduce the 2021 – 2022 budget.

B. Notification of COVID-19 Special Education Stipend

Mrs. Trish Lustila, Director of Pupil Services, on behalf of the district, applied to the Connecticut State Department of Education Bureau of Special Education (CSDE-BSE) for a one-time, \$20,000 stipend, to be spent before September 30, 2021. The purpose of the stipend is to assist the district in addressing the number of students requiring cognitive evaluations due to referral, postponement due to the COVID-19 pandemic, or due to triennial testing.

In accordance with Board of Education Policy 3280 Business and Non-Instructional Operations: Gifts, Grants, and Bequests, *The Superintendent of Schools may approve gifts, grants, and bequests that are valued over \$500 in total and meet criteria established by the administrative regulations established in accordance with this policy....The Superintendent, in consultation with the principals and/or designee and considering the wishes of the donor, may determine the school(s), program(s) or facility(ies) to which the gift shall go if it is valued at more than \$500. The Superintendent shall inform the Board of Education of any gift valued at more than \$500 that has been accepted by the district.* As such, Mr. Moccio included this item on the agenda to notify Board members of the one-time stipend from CSDE-BSE.

VIII. Public Comment

A member of the audience was looking for clarification regarding the line item entitled "Audit" and why it increased by \$9,000. Mrs. Peters stated that every other year the district is charged for different pieces of the audit. Next year, the district will be required to pay this extra amount. Mrs. Peters said that the reduction in the amount of \$9,000 was in the outside consultant line and doesn't have anything to do with the increase for the audit.

She also said that it looks like Staffordville School has not been fully removed from the budget. She asked for clarification regarding the amount of \$20,000.00 in the substitute line for Staffordville School. Mrs. Peters responded that the budget is a working document, so the amount has yet to be reallocated to West Stafford School and Stafford Elementary School. Mr. Moccio clarified that since no certified staff positions were reduced, the amount for substitutes was not removed from the budget, but will rather be reallocated to the schools to which the teachers will be reassigned. She asked if the line items will be updated in the budget prior to the referendum. Mr. Moccio said that an updated document will be made available via the district's website as soon as the changes have been incorporated.

A member of the audience asked about pre-kindergarten enrollment and if the information has been shared with parents regarding slots for the fall. She asked if there were still 100 slots available for pre-kindergarten, as promised, and how many students are on the wait list. Mr. Moccio said that there are no 4-year old students on the wait list, and he would have to get information regarding 3-year old students that are currently on the wait list. She said that this information is important when making a decision regarding whether she will remain in town.

Ms. Lybarger stated that she visited all of the schools last week and met a fourth-grade student that was very interested in what the Board of Education does. She invited him to attend tonight's meeting. The student said that he would like to share his ideas regarding the upcoming school year. He said that he would like a longer April vacation, a bigger playscape for the first graders, since more students will be attending Stafford Elementary School. He also thinks that the school day should be adjusted so that there would be more time for specials at the end of the day after lunch.

Item IX. Old Business

There was no Old Business.

Item X. New Business

A. Review and Possible Approval of Adjustments to the Board Approved 2021 – 2022 School Year

Mr. Moccio said that backup documents for this item are available on the district website.

Mr. Moccio said that at the Board of Education meeting on February 8, 2021, the Board approved a budget in the amount of \$29,392,292.86, which represents an increase of \$1,102,494.45, or 3.9% over the 2020-2021 appropriation. The Board approved 2021-2022 budget was presented to the Board of Finance on March 1, 2021. He said that it was not until the most recent Board of Finance meeting that there was any indication that possible reductions would be required. Mr. Moccio said that he anticipates that the Board of Finance will make a motion at a future meeting to reduce the BOE budget in the amount of \$305,532.00, which will result in a zero mill rate increase.

Mr. Moccio said that during the 3 months since the budget was approved by the Board, there have been several adjustments, changes and corrections necessary, which total approximately \$205,172.00 and were detailed on the list that was provided to the Board via the portal and provided for the audience via the district website.

Mr. Melnick asked a question regarding the savings from the resignations that were accepted this evening and if they've been included in the adjustments. Mr. Moccio said that since he received the resignations

after the Board meeting was published last Friday, any savings have yet to be included in the budget adjustments. He also asked if the 12-month assistant principal could be kept as a 10-month position. Mr. Moccio said that the position was discussed as part of the budget process and the Board determined that the it would be changed to a 12-month position, especially with more students attending the school.

Mrs. Davis said that she has an issue with the process that was followed by the Board of Finance. She said that Board of Finance decided not to vote to give direction to the Board of Education regarding what to do with regard to the budget. Mrs. Davis asked why the Board is being asked to make these adjustments now instead of waiting for the mandate from the Board of Finance. She said that it is unprofessional and confusing if the Board of Finance doesn't give the Board of Education direction. Mr. Moccio stated that the Board could wait until after the Board of Finance makes a motion to reduce the budget, hold a special meeting and approve the adjusted budget at that time. She said that the Board of Finance doesn't understand how fluid the numbers can be at this time of the year and the Board of Education's numbers could have very easily gone in the other direction had additional costs been identified.

Mr. Melnick said that he would prefer to table this item and then vote to reduce once we have the number from the Board of Finance, since a special meeting would be required anyway.

Ms. Shegogue asked why the district has to have their budget completed so early. She said that completing the budget so early makes it very difficult to present an accurate budget. Mr. Moccio said that in a typical year, the budget process for a May referendum makes sense.

Mrs. Locke asked if the Board of Finance mandates a reduction in the amount of \$305,532.00, will the district be looking at staffing and programmatic reductions. Mr. Moccio said that the entire budget would be revisited, and he hopes that he will not have to look at staffing. If staffing reductions are required, he would be looking at the open positions so that a staff member would not be losing their job.

Mr. Delano said that although there are some adjustments that the district could make, there are many capital projects that have yet to be budgeted. Mr. Delano said that he does not think it is the time to make reductions to the district's budget.

This item was tabled. A special meeting will be scheduled for Monday, May 24, 2021, in anticipation of a mandate from the Board of Finance.

B. Review and Possible Approval of the Superintendent's Recommendation Regarding the Elimination of the Voluntary Remote Learning Option for the 2021 – 2022 School Year

Mr. Moccio said that the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) provided initial guidance, which was previously provided to Board members, regarding remote learning instruction for the 2021-2022 school year. He said that the CSDE guidance states, *"At this time, DPH and CSDE do not anticipate the need to mandate, due to public health necessity, that all school districts provide an option for students and their families to opt-in to a voluntary remote option after this school year."* The continuation of remote learning as an option for students in the 2021-2022 school year **will be at the discretion of individual school districts.**

Mr. Moccio said that the administrators feel that while remote learning may prove beneficial for a small percentage of students, or to meet the needs of a student with a specialized, individualized situation, they were not in favor of continuing the option next school year.

He said that the benefits of remote learning are the increased ability of the staff to use technology.

Concerns regarding remote learning were raised, such as the social-emotional, academic, and behavioral aspects of increased isolation. Administrators have reported increased numbers of chronically absent students, and increased distractibility of those that are attending virtually. He said that as an example, Stafford High School currently enrolls 18% of the population as remote learners. During the third quarter, the school reported 278 failing grades. Of the failing grades, 45% of them are associated with remote learners, meaning that each remote learner failed three or more classes, as compared to a struggling student that attended in-person and may fail a single class.

Instructionally, concerns were raised regarding teacher and paraprofessional access to students, which is greatly limited when students are working remotely. The lack of access results in instructional challenges and an inability to effectively differentiate to meet varying student needs. Students are also not able to participate in authentic group work, or take part in project-based group assessments. The validity of assessments is also an area of concern from teachers, since students cannot be closely monitored and have access to applications or web-based problem solvers during assessments. The teachers have also voiced how difficult it is to teach both in-person and remotely.

Mrs. Davis made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Locke, that the administration be directed to implement an in-person learning program, without a voluntary full-time remote learning option for the 2021-2022 school year, unless either required by the State of Connecticut, be in alignment with flexibilities for emergency or weather-related situations, or if deemed necessary by the Stafford Board of Education. Ms. Bachiochi, Mrs. Davis, Mr. Delano, Mrs. Locke, Ms. Lybarger, and Mr. Melnick voted for the motion, which carried.

Ms. Lybarger said that she observed several remote lessons when visiting schools last week, and she feels that students should be learning in the classroom. She said that teachers are doing a great job teaching in-person and remote, but it is very difficult. She believes that remote learning should only be available when absolutely necessary.

C. Review and Possible Approval of ESSER II Grant Funded Positions

Board members were provided with a memorandum from the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) regarding the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRSSA) Act, otherwise known as the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER II). The Stafford Public Schools has been allocated \$830,593. Per the Connecticut Office of Policy and Management, the funds must be utilized before September 2023 and are to be aligned with one of the following four state-level priorities:

- Academic Supports, Learning Loss, Learning Acceleration and Recovery
- Family and Community Connections
- School Safety and Social-Emotional Well-being of the “Whole Student” and of our School Staff
- Remote Learning, Staff Development, and the Digital Divide

Mr. Moccio said that as mentioned during the Board meeting on May 3, 2021, the ESSER II grant is heavily laden on academic supports, to address learning loss, and provide opportunities for learning acceleration and recovery. Mr. Moccio said that the Leadership Team has identified a number of positions, which are short-term in length and meant to assist the district toward our goal of educational recovery and learning acceleration. He said that if approved by the Board, the positions would be funded by the grant, and are not anticipated to be carried over to the Board of Education budget without prior Board approval. Board members were provided with a proposal for each position that details the rationale, location, and overall cost of the position is included with this memorandum.

Mr. Moccio, Ms. Manning, Mrs. Mike, and Mr. Pelliccia reviewed the proposals.

Mr. Melnick said that he looked at the average class sizes and thinks that they are pretty low right now. He said that he is in favor of having an additional teacher, but that smaller class sizes aren't the issue. He said that he believes that the lower test scores are due to the loss of instruction.

Ms. Bachiochi asked how the scores are across the State. Mr. Autieri said that lower test scores is a trend across the entire State of Connecticut. He said that the social-emotional trauma experienced by students that haven't been interacting with their classmates and the amount of support at home is different from family to family also affect test scores.

Mr. Melnick asked about testing and if remote students were tested. Mr. Autieri said that the district is working with families to test the remote students to administer the test. He said that testing this year is very important so that the State and district have information regarding how best to support all students.

Mrs. Davis made a motion, seconded by Mr. Delano, that the Board approve the following ESSER II grant-funded positions for the 2021-2022 school year, as presented:

- 1.0 FTE Math Intervention Teacher at SES for 2-years
- 1.0 FTE ELA Teacher at SMS for 2-years
- 1.0 FTE ELA Tutor at SHS for 1-year
- 1.0 FTE Math Tutor at SHS for 1-year

Ms. Bachiochi, Mrs. Davis, Mr. Delano, Mrs. Locke, Ms. Lybarger, and Mr. Melnick voted for the motion, which carried.

Mrs. Davis made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Locke, that the Board place items XI.A.- Superintendent's Evaluation (Executive Session Anticipated), B.- Review the Contract of Employment for the Director of Athletics and Recreation (Executive Session Anticipated), and C.- Review the Contract of Employment for the Board Certified Behavioral Analyst (BCBA) (Executive Session Anticipated), into executive session. Ms. Bachiochi, Mrs. Davis, Mr. Delano, Mrs. Locke, Ms. Lybarger, and Mr. Melnick voted for the motion, which carried. Mr. Moccio was invited to attend executive session. The Board entered executive session at 8:00 p.m.

Mrs. Davis made a motion, seconded by Ms. Bachiochi, that the Board return to regular session. Ms. Bachiochi, Mrs. Davis, Mr. Delano, Mrs. Locke, Ms. Lybarger, and Mr. Melnick voted for the motion, which carried. The Board returned to regular session at 8:31 p.m.

Item XI. Personnel Matters

A. Superintendent's Evaluation (Executive Session Anticipated)

No action was taken on this item.

B. Review the Contract of Employment for the Director of Athletics and Recreation (Executive Session Anticipated)

Mrs. Locke made a motion, seconded by Mr. Melnick, that the Board approve the 3-year Contract of Employment for the Director of Athletics and Recreation. Ms. Bachiochi, Mrs. Davis, Mr. Delano, Mrs. Locke, Ms. Lybarger, and Mr. Melnick voted for the motion, which carried.

C. Review the Contract of Employment for the Board Certified Behavioral Analyst (BCBA) (Executive Session Anticipated)

Mrs. Locke made a motion, seconded by Mr. Melnick, that the Board approve the 3-year Contract of Employment for the Board Certified Behavioral Analyst (BCBA). Ms. Bachiochi, Mrs. Davis, Mr. Delano, Mrs. Locke, Ms. Lybarger, and Mr. Melnick voted for the motion, which carried.

Item XII. Student Matters

There were no Student Matters.

Item XIII. Adjournment

Mr. Melnick made a motion, seconded by Ms. Bachiochi, to adjourn. Ms. Bachiochi, Mrs. Davis, Mr. Delano, Mrs. Locke, Ms. Lybarger, and Mr. Melnick voted for the motion, which carried. The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Christine C. Marinelli, Recording Secretary

Sonya Shegogue, Chairperson

Andrea Locke, Secretary