

Somers Board of Education Regular Meeting
Somers Board of Education Chambers
Monday, December 9, 2024
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, Carl Stebbins, Derek Zelek

Others: Dr. Sam Galloway, Stephanie Levin, Dina Senecal, Paula Carra, Kerry Duffy, Kevin Duffy, Meg Duffy, Phil Goduti, Laurie Harrison, Julie Hinkley, Lisa Horan, Jim MacFeat

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. Paraeducator of the Year

Rationale: The Board to recognize Laurie Harrison as the 2025 Paraeducator of the Year. A perpetual plaque will be displayed in the Board Chambers.

Discussion: Superintendent Galloway introduced the 2025 Paraeducator of the Year, Laurie Harrison. Ms. Harrison joined the SPS staff three years ago. Ms. Harrison served as a cheerleading coach and mentor, attended Mitchell College, and worked with PreK-Kindergarten age children before joining SPS. Chair Kirkpatrick shared that a plaque honoring recipients of the Paraeducator of the Year recognition will be added to the wall in the Board of Education building. Ms. Harrison's name, along with past recipients' names, will be added to the plaque. Ms. Harrison thanked everyone for allowing her to do what she loves. She felt very welcome when she joined the Somers team.

3.2. Retirement Recognitions

Rationale:

- Paula Carra, SES Paraeducator, will be retiring after 28 1/2 years of service at Somers Public Schools.
- Meg Duffy, SHS Career Specialist, will be retiring after 27 1/2 years of service at Somers Public Schools.

Discussion: Superintendent Galloway congratulated two staff members on their retirement from SPS. Superintendent Galloway recognized Paula Carra for her years of service to SPS. Ms. Carra worked in Somers for many years to support students in the Special Education program. Ms. Carra was awarded the 2018

Paraeducator of the Year award. Ms. Carra has been in Somers for many years due to her drive to support students in the Special Education program. Superintendent Galloway thanked Ms. Carra for her hard work and dedication and stated that she exemplifies the staff who work in Somers- passionate and motivated with their hearts in the right place. Ms. Carra thanked everyone and shared that she is ready to start a new chapter, spend time with her grandchildren, and travel. Superintendent Galloway presented a gift to Ms. Carra.

Superintendent Galloway introduced Ms. Meg Duffy. Ms. Duffy has been with the district supporting students at the high school level since 1997. Ms. Duffy has served as an advisor for many clubs and helped students recognize potential career paths. Ms. Duffy shared that she intends to live a rich and purposeful retirement. She shared that the decision to retire is bittersweet, and she thanked the Board and the community.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

4.1. Approval of the November 25, 2024 BOE Minutes

Rationale: The Board to review and approve the minutes from the November 25, 2024 Board meeting.

Motion to approve minutes of November 25 Board of Education Meeting. This motion, made by JT Galloway and seconded by Jan Martin, Carried. **Yea: 8, Nay: 0, Abstain: 1 (Derek Zelek)**

5. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

5.1. Superintendent Update

Mr. Jim MacFeat provided information regarding an indoor air quality checklist that is mandated by the state. Mr. MacFeat and his team must submit a report with findings from their inspection by 1/1/25. An inspection must be done annually. The inspection is completed for all three schools and is done in stages to address over 230 questions. Some parts are conducted during regular maintenance. There were no surprises found during the most recent inspection. Every 5 years, indoor air quality testing must be done. Testing is done by a state-approved and accredited third party company.

The SES Invention Convention will be facilitated by Ms. Lynn Erickson. Over 40 SES parents recently logged on to the virtual informational meeting. The format of the SES report card has changed. The hope is that the new report card is easier to read and understand.

New grading practices are fully implemented at MBA. The new system separates assessment scores from work habits. Academic performance can no longer be affected by effort components like homework completion.

Superintendent Galloway thanked SEF for a \$10,000 grant for the SHS library media center. There is a team at SHS making connections with Shine (formerly

Somers Comes Together). A partnership with SHS and the American Legion has been formed as a byproduct of the Veterans Day event. Superintendent Galloway highlighted his efforts to build relationships with town entities. For example, an SPS projector is on loan to the library for use in the community space. The library has been accommodating when the district uses that space.

Superintendent Galloway reviewed the protocol used to make decisions about snow days and delayed openings. The process involves discussions with a meteorologist and local superintendents. Much thought goes into each decision based on the information available at any given time.

5.2. Monthly Budget Report

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

Discussion: Stephanie Levin presented the November budget report. Several leaves of absence will affect the budget. The exact amount is not yet determined due to unknown start dates, the availability of long-term subs, and potential snow days affecting the schedule. The use of long-term substitutes will cost the district about \$14,000 more than if staff members were to stay in their positions. An offer was made for the SES Secretary position. The candidate declined the position. The position will be eligible for insurance. The ECS grant will offset Special Education expenditures. The Special Education tuition and transportation budget is currently negative. This will be adjusted in February when the ECS amount is known. Ms. Levin recommended a budget freeze for anything outside of curricular needs. This freeze recommendation will be reassessed in February when the first ECS payment is received, and most of the winter is over. Winter brings along unknown heating and electricity costs.

5.3. Data Presentation

Rationale: Dina Senecal, Senior Director of Curriculum and Instructional Operations, will present the test score data to the Board.

Discussion: Ms. Dina Senecal presented the 2024 Standardized Assessment Data Summary. The data summarized includes ELA and Math SBAC data for grades 3-8, AP and SAT data, and NGSS data for grades 5, 8 and 11. Data is available through EdSite Secure. Ms. Senecal stressed the importance of looking at this data longitudinally. It is also important to note that historical data includes years affected by COVID. The baseline goal for the district is for 70% of students to reach levels 3 and 4 and for all students to achieve individual growth.

SBAC and NGSS data shows that SPS students are outperforming state averages. Ms. Senecal explained that these assessment scores are one data point that is considered when looking at student performance. Data teams match SBAC and NGSS data with several other data points taken over the course of the year, including universal screener data. Projection data is also used. Teachers are

embedding IAB practice assessments throughout the school year. Instructional Coaches are working on aligning IABs with existing curricular units. Exposure to IABs helps familiarize students with the test-taking interface and provides more data points for teachers.

School leaders are collaborating with other districts monthly to learn and mimic best practices and attend site visits. The addition of Looker Studio helps to organize assessment data. Teachers spend less time searching for data and more time utilizing it to make instructional decisions.

Programmatic shifts in ELA were discussed that could have an impact on SBAC ELA scores. A new program, CKLA, is being implemented across K-5 with fidelity and with support from instructional coaches. Ongoing professional development, partially funded by SEF grants, are being utilized. Pacing guides and embedded assessments aligned with CKLA are also being used to help support growth in this area. Fifth grade has shifted back to being self-contained rather than students rotating for subjects. This practice is believed to better support fluidity with timing and the teaching of cross-curricular content.

Math SBAC scores were shared. Two years ago, the district expedited a curricular review of math programs and materials. A math leadership team has been created with K-12 representation. The team has been looking at Go Open CT materials. These materials are provided by the state, free of charge, and are aligned with state standards. The state also provides a list of programs that are aligned to CT math standards. K-8 teachers are piloting and vetting the materials, and shifts in instruction are happening. The goal is to select a program that spans K-8.

NGSS Achievement Data was shared for grades 5, 8, 11. Slight improvements are noted after beginning to use OpenSciEd materials. A comparison of SBAC and NGSS scores of Somers vs. similar districts was shared. These districts include Bolton, Canton, Ellington, Somers, Suffield and Tolland. Somers ranks "in the mix" with these districts.

The SAT is open to all enrolled juniors. SPS has about a 95% participation rate. Administration of the SAT shifted to a digital test last spring. SHS students are outperforming the state in ELA and math. A discussion ensued about how courses are preparing students for the SAT and tools used to prepare students for the logistics of online testing. It is hoped that there will be a positive correlation between SAT scores and students who engage in SAT prep sessions. Data from AP tests was shared. A discussion ensued about the participation of students in AP and ECE courses. There were 169 AP exams taken last year. Pass rates range from 57-100% across different AP assessments. All students who enroll in SHS AP courses must take the AP test. A discussion ensued regarding increasing enrollment numbers in some AP courses. A discussion ensued regarding backward planning from middle school to put kids on the trajectory to AP classes in high school. School leaders are also refining the course selection process to

build more student-friendly course descriptions to encourage students to try new and challenging classes. Building positive relationships between students and teachers may also have an impact on enrollment in certain courses.

Board Member Carl Stebbins raised a question regarding getting parents more involved in the conversation on this topic. Ms. Senecal noted the ways that have worked to get parents engaged in various aspects of student learning. Board members raised questions regarding exactly what data can be reviewed in Looker Studio. Ms. Senecal and Superintendent Galloway explained what data is available and how teachers can view data not uploaded to Looker Studio.

Chair Kirkpatrick shared concerns about third grade reading scores. She shared that the proficiency score in this area has not gone above 57% in about 25 years. Questions regarding the causes of this low score were discussed. Superintendent Galloway suggested that an "after action" report is necessary but has not been done in past years after a low performance. This is a practice that will be implemented along with a close look at other data points.

6. OPPORTUNITY TO ADD/DELETE AGENDA ITEMS

Motion to delete agenda item 9.3- *1st Posting of DBS Code 4115- Evaluation and Support* because it has not been updated. This motion, made by Kim Radziewicz and seconded by Carl Stebbins, Carried. **Yea: 9, Nay: 0**

7. CONSENT AGENDA

Motion to approve Consent Agenda. This motion, made by Shane Manning and seconded by Carl Stebbins, Carried. **Yea: 9, Nay: 0**

7.1. Warrant of December 9, 2024

Rationale: The Board to review and consent to the warrant of December 9, 2024.

7.2. Leave of Absence

Rationale: Jenna Fortini, SHS Math Teacher, will be taking a leave of absence approximately May 6, 2025 through the end of the school year.

7.3. 2nd Posting New Course Proposal - Global and World Cultures

7.4. 2nd Posting New Course Proposal - Freshman Academy

7.5. 2nd Posting New Course Proposal - ECE Solidworks for Industrial Design

7.6. 2nd Posting New Course Proposal - Digital Literacy

7.7. 2nd Posting New Course Proposal - AP Physics C: Mechanics

7.8. 2nd Posting New Course Proposal - AP Calculus BC

7.9. 2nd Posting New Course Proposal - AP Precalculus

7.10. 2nd Posting New Course Proposal - Middle School Math Applications

8. OLD BUSINESS**9. NEW BUSINESS****9.1. 2025 Washington D.C. Trip**

Rationale: Phil Goduti, SHS History Teacher, will present the 2025 Washington D.C. trip to the Board.

Motion to approve the field trip requested by Phil Goduti for April 3, 2025 to April 5, 2025 to Washington DC. This motion, made by Kim Radziewicz and seconded by Jan Martin, Carried. **Yea: 9, Nay: 0**

Discussion: Dr. Phil Goduti presented the Washington D.C. Trip to the Board. Dr. Goduti shared a presentation with photos from last year's trip. Forty of 42 students enrolled in the AP U.S. History class attended last year. The itinerary changes each year based on schedules and availability. Dr. Goduti shared highlights of last year's trip, including visits to monuments, the American History Museum, the African American History Museum, the Natural History Museum and several memorials. Dr. Goduti shared attractions he hopes to visit on this year's trip.

Board member Shane Manning shared that this is an incredible learning experience for students. It is a great way for teachers and students to build relationships. Board member Jan Martin asked about last year's requirement to create a documentary based on a topic covered in the AP U.S. History class. This project is completed and shared with the class after the AP exam. This year students will create a PowerPoint instead of creating a documentary.

9.2. 1st Posting DBS Code 4000.1 - Sexual Harassment/Title IX**9.3. 1st Posting DBS Code 4115 - Evaluation & Support****9.4. 1st Posting DBS Code 4222 - Paraeducators****9.5. 1st Posting DBS Code 5114 - Suspension****9.6. 1st Posting DBS Code 5118 - Residence****9.7. 1st Posting DBS Code 5145.53 - Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Youth****9.8. 1st Posting DBS Code 6146 - Graduation Requirements****9.9. 1st Posting DBS Code 6148 - FAFSA (revision)****9.10. 1st Posting DBS Code 9321.1 - Bylaws of the Board: Meetings****9.11. 1st Posting DBS Code 9321.2 - Notification of Meetings****10. COMMITTEE REPORTS****10.1. Curriculum**

This committee met on 12/3/24 and reviewed data that was shared at tonight's meeting. The next meeting will be held on 2/10/24 at 6p.m.

10.2. Policy

The next meeting will be held on 1/13/25 at 6 p.m.

10.3. Planning/Finance

This committee met on 12/9/24 for a high-level overview of the budget. The subcommittee will meet two to three times in January before the first draft of the budget is shared on 1/27/25.

10.4. Salary & Negotiations**10.5. Building**

The next meeting will be held on 12/11/24.

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

There are no CREC or SEF updates. The town meeting will be held on 12/10/24 at 7 p.m. The Harlem Wizards Game will be held at SHS on 12/10/24. The town referendum will take place on 12/17/24. The SES winter concert is upcoming and will be held at SHS.

12. AUDIENCE TO CITIZENS/STAFF/STUDENTS

Community member Lisa Horan shared her understanding of what admissions counselors look for when reviewing college applications. Ms. Horan expressed her belief that it is important to foster a challenge mindset beginning in elementary school to push kids to achieve at their level of capability and beyond. Ms. Horan also shared that she has heard questions regarding the town meeting and referendum. A review of the timeline of past events that led to another referendum was reviewed. Ms. Levin shared that the state requires that the town approve the entire project cost and cannot take reimbursement into consideration. The project is currently projected to cost \$15.3 million; however, the town will receive \$5.8 million in grant reimbursement. At the time of the first referendum, the project cost was believed to be less.

Chair Kirkpatrick shared that the next Board meeting will take place on 1/13/25. Chair Kirkpatrick wished everyone a happy holiday season, and encouraged all community members to vote on 12/17/24.

13. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 9:19 p.m. This motion, made by Jan Martin and seconded by JT Galloway, Carried. **Yea: 9, Nay: 0**

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