

Somers Board of Education Regular Meeting
Somers Board of Education Chambers
Monday, February 24, 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, Derek Zelek

Absent BOE Member: Carl Stebbins

Others: Dr. Sam Galloway, Stephanie Levin, Dr. Jaime Rechenberg, Alexis Harrington, Lisa Horan, Julie Hinkley, Carolyn Castonguay

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 February 10, 2025 BOE Minutes

Rationale: The Board to review and approve the minutes from the February 10, 2025 Board meeting.

Motion to approve minutes of February 10th Board of Education Meeting. This motion, made by Ed DePeau and seconded by Jan Martin, Carried. **Yea: 8, Nay: 0, Absent: 1 (Carl Stebbins)**

4. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

4.1. Superintendent Update

The proposed 2025-2026 school year budget was presented several weeks ago. The budget total of \$30,476,322 was closely examined by the budget subcommittee. There are several considerations to note regarding the budget, including the expectation of rising health insurance premiums, a roughly \$75,000 increase for electricity, and the purchase of a K-8 math program. The standards-based math curriculum could positively affect over 900 SPS students. Approximately \$400,000 of savings has been recognized due to retirements and the evaluation of current needs. While positions have been consolidated, the commitment to delivering the same services to students is at the forefront of all decisions. Superintendent Galloway shared that the potential return on investment of the proposed budget is high. SES is a finalist for the Connecticut Association of Schools Elementary School of the Year for 2025. A visit by an evaluation committee will take place on 2/25/25. Somers is competing against some of the wealthiest districts in the state. MBA holds the title of 2024

Middle School of the Year. SHS is currently ranked #23 based on last year's performance index score. This is a jump from #65 the prior year. Somers is on the trajectory to achieve the distinction of a top ten school district in the state. The increases in the budget have been carefully examined to capitalize on efficiencies and still deliver a high-quality education.

4.2. SHS Student BOE Representatives

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

Discussion: SHS student, Carolyn Castonguay, presented an update. Course selection ended on 2/24/25. The process went well. There was a band and chorus concert on 2/12/25. The Spartan Showcase for MBA students took place on 2/4/25. Kindness Awards and Student of the Month Awards were given this month. The Honor Roll for quarter 2 was also released. There are several upcoming events, including a trip to the Pequot Museum on 3/6/25, *The Descendants* drama production on 3/7/25, a trip to Hartford Hospital Center for Education, Simulation and Innovation, and a World Language trip to Sur La Table. The SAT will take place on 3/27/25 with a make up date on 4/3/25. Ms. Castonguay provided a sports achievement recap. Dr. Rechenberg shared that a scheduled change will be announced to students on 2/25/25.

5. OPPORTUNITY TO ADD/DELETE AGENDA ITEMS

6. CONSENT AGENDA

Motion to approve Consent Agenda. This motion, made by Kim Radziewicz and seconded by Shane Manning, Carried. **Yea: 8, Nay: 0, Absent: 1 (Carl Stebbins)**

6.1. Warrant of February 24, 2025

Rationale: The Board to review and consent to the warrant of February 24, 2025.

6.2. Leave of Absence

Rationale:

- Alexis Harrington, SES Special Education Teacher, will be taking a leave of absence at the start of the 2025-2026 school year with an anticipated return date of October 20, 2025.
- Megan Truncellito, 6th Grade ELA Teacher, will be taking a leave of absence at the start of the 2025-2026 school year with an anticipated return date of October 6, 2025.

7. OLD BUSINESS

7.1. Approval of Proposed SPS 2025-2026 Budget

Rationale: The Board to approve the proposed 2025-2026 Board of Education budget to move to go to Public Hearing on March 10, 2025 at 6 p.m. and then to

go to the Board of Finance. Dr. Galloway will be available to answer any questions.

Motion to approve the proposed 2025-2026 Board of Education budget at 5.68% to go to the Board of Education Public Hearing on March 10, 2025 at 6:00 pm in the Board of Education Chambers and then go to the Board of Finance. This motion, made by Kim Radziewicz and seconded by JT Galloway, Carried. **Yea: 8, Nay: 0, Absent: 1 (Carl Stebbins)**

Discussion: Superintendent Galloway front loaded tonight's meeting with key points regarding the budget. He invited Board members to ask questions. Board member Derek Zelek inquired about the current K-8 math curriculum. Superintendent Galloway shared that the experience across classrooms and grade levels can vary quite a bit in terms of materials and instructional strategies. Along with the recent addition of Looker Studio in the district, a K-8 math curriculum would help administrators and teachers track trends in real time and adjust instruction to positively impact student growth and performance.

Chair Kirkpatrick raised a point about increasing Special Education costs across the state. The hope is that funding at the state level will increase, including excess cost reimbursement. The legislative session on the topic extends until June. It is unlikely anything will be decided at the state level before the budget is presented to the town. There is a positive working relationship between district leaders and the town CFO.

Board Member Shane Manning inquired further about the excess cost reimbursement and the lack of full funding from the state. The district currently budgets for all known outplacements, but unexpected outplacement are not considered in the budget. Rising outplacement costs also create budget challenges. The district plans for a 3% increase annually for outplacement costs. The current increases are closer to 5-7%. There is an awareness across the state about rising costs and the lack of a cap on annual increases, making it challenging for districts to plan.

A discussion ensued regarding the draft communication planned to go out after the Board of Finance meeting.

8. NEW BUSINESS

9. COMMITTEE REPORTS

9.1. Curriculum (next meeting 4/28/25 6 p.m., 5/12/25 6 p.m., 6/9/25 5:30 p.m.)

The next meeting will take place on 4/28/25 at 6 p.m. Additional meetings are scheduled for 5/12/25 at 6 p.m. and 6/9/25 at 5:30 p.m.

9.2. Policy

This committee is on hold.

9.3. Planning/Finance

This committee is on hold until the next budget transfer discussion in April. There is potential for another meeting to be scheduled depending on the outcome of the Board of Finance meeting.

9.4. Salary & Negotiations

9.5. Building (next meeting 3/4/25 2 p.m.)

Bid documents for the SES HVAC project are scheduled to be opened on 3/4/25 at 1 p.m. The Fire Marshall approved the request for the removal of ceiling tiles. The next Building Committee meeting will be held on 3/4/25 at 2 p.m.

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

Chair Kirkpatrick will attend the CABE meeting on 3/1/25 with area Board Chairs. SEF will hold its largest fundraiser on 4/26/25 at Joanna's. SEF is looking for sponsors.

11. AUDIENCE TO CITIZENS/STAFF/STUDENTS

Community member Lisa Horan inquired about the second parent meeting for the SES HVAC project. Superintendent Galloway felt it went well, and the presenters accomplished the mission of displaying what SES would look like in various scenarios. Principal Mucci provided a visual to show where students would be housed if they stay at SES. Students who need the most support would experience the most substantial impact. Consequences of remaining at SES include excess noise from multiple classrooms on one stage or in a single classroom. Principal Martello provided a visual to show where 5th grade students would be housed if moved to MBA. Superintendent Galloway commended both principals for their time and effort to develop these plans. Chair Kirkpatrick noted that the meeting was originally scheduled for 1 hour; however, the meeting lasted 2 hours so that all questions were answered.

12. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:40 p.m. This motion, made by Shane Manning and seconded by Jan Martin, Carried. **Yea: 8, Nay: 0, Absent: 1 (Carl Stebbins)**

Jan Martin, BOE Secretary Date

Jenna McDermott, BOE Recording Secretary