

**Somers Board of Education Regular Meeting**  
**Somers Board of Education Chambers**  
**Monday, February 10, 2025**  
**7:00 PM**

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

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

Absent BOE Members: Mike Briggs, JT Galloway, Carl Stebbins, Derek Zelek

Others: Dr. Sam Galloway, Stephanie Levin, Dina Senecal, Julie Hinkley, Alexis Harrington, Jen DeRagon, Oliver Roe, Lisa Horan, Paul Hart

**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 January 27, 2025 BOE Minutes**

**Rationale:** The Board to review and approve the minutes from the January 27, 2025 Board meeting.

**Motion** to approve minutes of January 27th Board of Education Meeting. This motion, made by Shane Manning and seconded by Kim Radziewicz, Carried.

**Yea: 5, Nay: 0, Absent: 4 (Mike Briggs, JT Galloway, Carl Stebbins, Derek Zelek)**

**4. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS**

**4.1. Superintendent Update**

Superintendent Galloway attended the Board of Finance meeting on 1/28/25 and communicated the district's budget percentage. The town is facing a challenging budget season due to a decrease in town revenue. The town's operating budget percentage is 6.18%. The proposed school budget is 5.68%. The overall budget consists of CIP, the town budget and the school budget.

There will be a follow-up parent meeting regarding the SES HVAC project on 2/20/25 at 5:30 p.m. in the SES auditorium.

SES is one of two finalists for the CAS Elementary School of the Year. A site visit by the CAS evaluation team will take place at the end of the month.

The last day of school is currently scheduled for 6/12/25. This is dependent on snow days.

#### 4.2. Monthly Budget Report

**Rationale:** Stephanie Levin, Director of Business Services, will update the Board on last month's budget.

**Discussion:** Stephanie Levin presented the January budget report. The report shows negative funds for substitutes hired who will fill long-term absences across the district this spring. Funds will be transferred from the teacher salary account at a later date. The district has not received a deposit from the state for excess costs related to the Special Education Tuition and Transportation budget. The first payment is expected to be about \$237,000 at the end of February. Districts across the state are impacted by a lack of sufficient funding at the state level. It is likely that funding will be an issue again next year, as the governor has not allocated any additional funds for next year. Districts are responsible for costs that are not covered by the state for outplacements. Outplacement costs per student in Connecticut are not capped, and there are no guidelines for outplacement facilities. These facilities can raise tuition costs at any time. The district is exploring local in-district programs. These programs offer a lower cost to the district than a private facility, and they are often closer in proximity to Somers.

Board member Shane Manning inquired whether there have been discussions with health insurance companies to explore supplementing the cost of outplacements. Ms. Levin explained that the district is responsible for the educational costs, while insurance companies may help with medical costs associated with the outplacement. Chair Kirkpatrick noted that the placement of a student must match the needs of the student and remain within a radius of roughly one-hour. The number of available facilities is limited.

### 5. OPPORTUNITY TO ADD/DELETE AGENDA ITEMS

### 6. CONSENT AGENDA

**Motion** to approve Consent Agenda. This motion, made by Jan Martin and seconded by Shane Manning, Carried. **Yea: 5, Nay: 0, Absent: 4 (Mike Briggs, JT Galloway, Carl Stebbins, Derek Zelek)**

#### 6.1. Warrant of February 10, 2025

**Rationale:** The Board to review and consent to the warrant of February 10, 2025.

### 7. OLD BUSINESS

### 8. NEW BUSINESS

#### 8.1. Superintendent's Proposed 2025-2026 Budget

**Rationale:** Dr. Galloway and Stephanie Levin will answer questions regarding the proposed budget that was presented at the January 27, 2025 Board meeting.

**Discussion:** Stephanie Levin shared an updated budget. An adjustment was made to the Administrator Salary line. There was a question regarding the Assistant Principal salary that was clarified with the union contract. Board member Jan Martin inquired about several items in the budget. Ms. Levin shared the following information to address Ms. Martin's questions.

- A .7 School to Career position from the School Counselors office will be eliminated. The responsibilities from that position will be transitioned to another teacher in the Technology Education department.
- A reduction of an art teaching position from 1.0 to .6 has been accepted.
- Special Education at SES is down 4.87% due to a reduction of a PreK-K teaching position. This position was absorbed by another teacher.
- Some line items will be moved from a systemwide budget category to building specific budgets.
- Athletic coaches will receive about a 3% raise.

Board member Jan Martin inquired about the release of any editions of the SHS Newspaper. This club has a paid advisor. Ms. Levin and Superintendent Galloway will check on the release of a digital version and provide the Board with access to the newspaper.

Superintendent Galloway shared that district and school leaders are taking a careful look at staffing, particularly when reductions to staffing are made. Conversations about maintaining the quality of education when a retirement or request for reduced time to work are taking place. The impact of such changes is carefully considered.

Board member Kim Radziewicz noted that 5 Board members are on the Planning and Finance Subcommittee. The subcommittee has met 4 times to review the proposed budget prior to tonight's Board meeting. Many questions regarding specific reductions or increases have already been addressed in these subcommittee meetings. Chair Kirkpatrick noted that this subcommittee was added several years ago, along with the change to quarterly budget transfers. These changes were made in an effort to be more transparent and accurate with the budget and to ensure that all Board members have a solid understanding of the budget before it goes to the Board of Finance.

## **8.2. Open Choice Program -- Open Slots**

**Rationale:** The Board to review and approve the 20 slots in the Open Choice program. This is the same allocation as in the 2024-2025 school year.

**Motion** to approve the 20 slots in the Open Choice program. This motion, made by Ed DePeau and seconded by Kim Radziewicz, Carried. **Yea: 5, Nay: 0, Absent: 4 (Mike Briggs, JT Galloway, Carl Stebbins, Derek Zelek)**

**Discussion:** Currently 19 out of 20 Open Choice spots are filled. While 20 spots have always existed in Somers, historically only 5-6 were filled. In the past, students were only accepted in the first grade level of each school. Opening spots to all grade levels has allowed the district to accept more students. In addition, more recruitment is taking place. Building Assistant Principals have attended CREC Open Choice Fairs. Siblings of current Open Choice students are also accepted. Family Nights in Hartford have helped build relationships between families in Somers and families in Hartford. Improvements to recruiting practices and increased marketing of the district are also helpful. There are no Open Choice students in this year's Senior class. There will continue to be 1 opening for next year, unless any current Open Choice students opt to attend school elsewhere. This can sometimes occur when students move up from SES to MBA or from MBA to SHS.

## **9. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**9.1. Curriculum** The Curriculum Committee met today for a preliminary discussion about summer work. The meeting on 3/10/25 has been canceled. The committee will meet again on 4/28/25 at 6p.m. to discuss a K-8 math proposal, on 5/12/25 at 6 p.m. to continue the summer work discussion, and on 6/9/25 at 5:30 p.m. to finalize a proposal for K-8 math to bring to the Board. The math proposal will be in place for next Fall if approved. Fall meetings on 9/8/25 at 5:30 p.m., 10/14/25 at 6 p.m. and 11/10/25 at 6 p.m. are scheduled to discuss curriculum updates, course proposals and adjustments, and test scores and data.

### **9.2. Policy**

There are no meetings scheduled.

### **9.3. Planning/Finance**

There are no meetings scheduled.

### **9.4. Salary & Negotiations**

### **9.5. Building (next meeting 3/4/25 2 p.m., 3/18/25 2 p.m.)**

## **10. CABC/CREC/State Dept. of Ed./SEF**

Three members of the SEF Board were interviewed with Senator Kissel to discuss the impact of SEF over the years. Speakers shared how other communities could duplicate the work of SEF in their own community. The video interview will be available on the SEF Facebook page. The next SEF meeting will take place on 2/24/25 at Joanna's. A grant review is upcoming.

## **11. AUDIENCE TO CITIZENS/STAFF/STUDENTS**

Community member Lisa Horan inquired about the upcoming public hearing dates. The BOE public hearing will take place on 3/10/25. The Board of Finance has not set a date for the public hearing yet.

## **12. ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion** to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 p.m. This motion, made by Shane Manning and seconded by Jan Martin, Carried. **Yea: 5, Nay: 0, Absent: 4 (Mike Briggs, JT Galloway, Carl Stebbins, Derek Zelek)**

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Jan Martin, BOE Secretary                      Date

Jenna McDermott, BOE Recording Secretary