

**Regular Meeting
Stafford Board of Education
Stafford Elementary School Cafetorium
Electronic Meeting- via Zoom
September 28, 2020, 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

Also Present (virtual, except as noted):

- Mr. Steven Moccio, Superintendent of Schools (in person)
- Mr. Steven Autieri, Director of Curriculum and Instruction
- Mr. Frank Bonavita, Director of School Facilities
- 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 Frassinell, Director of Athletics and Recreation
- Ms. Anna Gagnon, Principal, West Stafford School
- Ms. Caroline Hargraves, Assistant Principal, Stafford Elementary School
- Mr. Timothy Kinel, Assistant Principal, Stafford High School
- Ms. Beth LaPane, Supervisor of Building Services
- Ms. Mary Claire Manning, Principal, Stafford Elementary School
- Ms. Susan Mike, Principal, Stafford Middle School
- Mr. Marco Pelliccia, Principal, Stafford High School
- 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 live recording of this meeting will be 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, 09/14/2020

Ms. Lybarger made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Davis, that the Board approve the Secretary's Report for the regular meeting held on 09/14/2020, as presented. Ms. Bachiochi, Mrs. Davis, Mr. Delano, Mrs. Locke, Ms. Lybarger, and Mr. Melnick voted for the motion, which carried.

Item IV. Consent Agenda

- A. 19-20 Bills and Grants, 09/16/2020, \$356,528.95
- B. 20-21 Bills and Grants, 09/16/2020, \$348,971.91
- C. 20-21 Bills and Grants, 09/23/2020, \$45,197.33

Mr. Delano asked a question regarding the emergency supply expenses related to COVID.

Mr. Delano made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Davis, 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 and the Curriculum Committee reminder that was posted on the agenda.

Item VI. Board Reports

A. Student Representative's Report

Miss Curtin provided a brief sports update.

B. Board Policy Committee Report

Mr. Moccio stated that the Board Policy committee members reviewed via email revisions to the two policies that would be reviewed later on the agenda. Mr. Moccio stated that he will need to schedule the next meeting the week of October 12, 2020.

Item VII. Superintendent's Reports

A. Discussion Regarding Possible Shift in Learning Model

Mr. Moccio provided the Board with the following memo via the portal-

This memo is to provide the Board of Education with an update regarding my plan and timeline for how a decision will be made regarding any potential shift in learning model. Decisions regarding shifts in the learning model are based on a variety of indicators, including the spread and prevalence of COVID-19 in the community, and the ability of the schools to implement mitigation strategies. At the Board meeting on

Monday, September 28, 2020, I would like to discuss the various factors outlined within this memo and would appreciate the Board's input and perspective.

Per the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) and the Department of Public Health (DPH), the key leading indicator when deciding on the level of in-person education is the 7-day average of the number of new cases of COVID-19 per 100,000 population per day. CSDE and DPH have also identified three secondary indicators that include the following:

- Percent test positivity (# of positive tests / # of total tests, 7-day average)
- Number of new COVID-19 hospitalizations per 100,000 population (7-day average)
- Percent COVID-like illness ED visits (7-day average)

The primary and secondary indicators are shared on a weekly basis by CSDE and DPH, and it is important to note that the data provided was reported 7-14 days prior. While the leading and secondary indicators provide context for the level of COVID-19 spread in the community, consideration should also be given to characteristics specific to the Stafford Public Schools. Aspects I continue to review and will be taking into consideration:

- Building and classroom size vs. enrollment
- Ability to physically distance during hybrid vs. full in-person learning
- Ability for a school to cohort students and complete contact tracing should a case occur
- Age and developmental level of students
- Student and staff compliance with self-screening
- Ability to provide adequate staffing in all five schools
- Ability of classrooms to livestream during remote sessions
- Limitations due to the age or connectivity of technology

As of the close of school on Friday, September 25, 2020, students participating in the hybrid model have only attended six (6) days of in-person instruction and eight (8) days of remote instruction. While I would like to increase the number of in-person instructional days for students, I remain cautious. Safeguarding the students and staff is my top priority. As it has only been a few weeks, and due to the lag in metrics, I plan to continue reviewing the data and will share a decision prior to Columbus Day weekend. Any decision will be shared with the entire school community so that students and staff have the time necessary to prepare for any change in learning model. Should a change in learning model occur in October, I would anticipate it continuing until at least Thanksgiving, or until a mandated shift occurs.

Mr. Moccio stated that he is recommending that the new K – 5 learning model begin on Monday, October 19, 2020, to allow the administrators and directors to prepare for the change (transportation, food service, class size, staffing, etc.). He said that he would plan to communicate the change to families this week, and parents would be requested to communicate any changes to the schools by the middle of next week.

Following discussion, the Board members agreed that Mr. Moccio should move forward with the proposed plan.

B. Financial Report, July 1, 2020, through August 31, 2020

The Board was provided via the portal with a financial report sorted by object code of funds budgeted and encumbered/expended from July 1, 2020, through August 31, 2020, as prepared by Mrs. Diane Peters, Business Manager. Currently, schools are required to request permission prior to any purchases, as a spending freeze continues and only those items necessary in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the immediate needs of the students are being authorized.

The total budget for the 2020-2021 school year is \$28,289,798.41. The year to date expenses represent 11% of the total budget. The unspent, unreserved amount of the budget is 19%. The application for the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund through the CARES Act has been completed and accepted by the Connecticut State Department of Education. The fund will pay for much of the necessary technology and technology-related items purchased for remote learning.

Mrs. Peters highlighted several areas of the budget. She also reported that she just completed the application for the Coronavirus Relief Fund Grant, in the amount of \$406,000.00. She said that this grant must be used by December 30, 2020, and must be used for expenses related to the reopening of schools for in-person learning (may not be used for items related to remote learners).

Mr. Moccio stated that Mrs. Peters is working very hard to ensure that the district maximizes the grant monies available.

Mrs. Peters responded to questions from Board members.

III. Public Comment

A member of the audience stated that the district has done an amazing job thus far, but some students are struggling with wearing a mask, even two days per week, her child included. She asked if there's been any consideration for accommodation now that students will be going to school more often. Additionally, she asked if students wear warm clothes, will they be allowed to get outside, even in colder weather. Mr. Moccio said that he will be discussing this matter with the leadership team and that the district has tried to find creative ways to allow students to get outside and have safe mask breaks.

Mr. Delano asked about the status of snow days- can students learn remotely instead of having to make up the days at the end of the year? Mr. Moccio said that this has been one of the top questions asked at every meeting he attends with other Superintendents. He has been told that the Commissioner of Education cannot authorize that change, but rather it must be approved by the State Board of Education. Mr. Moccio said that he will keep the Board updated.

A member of the audience asked about the potential classroom setup when the learning model shifts, as well as the classroom procedures (lunch, recess, etc.). Additionally, she asked for clarification regarding when the district may shift back to the original hybrid model. Mr. Moccio stated that the same classroom procedures will be in place, which will keep students in the same cohort as much as possible. Students will continue having their lunches in the classroom. He said that the classroom configuration would be determined once we have an estimate of the number of students that plan to return when the learning model shifts. Social distancing may be reduced. With regard to shifting back to the original hybrid model, Mr. Moccio said that

the State's leading indicator is a seven day average of the number of new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population per day. He said that if that number is 10 or higher, a hybrid model is favored. However, Tolland County could be above 10, but Stafford could be well below 10, which may allow some flexibility. There are also secondary indicators, such as new hospitalizations.

Item IX. Old Business

There was no Old Business.

Item X. New Business

A. Review and Possible Approval of CSDE Flexibilities Associated with the Stafford Public Schools Professional Learning Plan

The Commissioner of Education, in alignment with Executive Order 7C, has permitted school districts to adopt flexibilities to the Educator Evaluation Program for the 2020-2021 school year only. The Board of Education must be notified of, and approve, revisions to the district's Educator Evaluation Plan, which includes both teacher and administrator plans.

The Board was provided via the portal with a memorandum prepared by Mr. Steve Autieri, Director of Curriculum & Instruction. In his memo he stated that the Professional Development and Evaluation Committee (PDEC) met on September 16, 2020, for the purpose of reviewing the suggested flexibilities, which include adjustments to goals, observations, and the waiver of the aggregate summative rating. Each educator will still receive an evaluation with narrative feedback that shares commendations, areas for improvement, and professional learning recommendations.

Mr. Autieri reviewed a PowerPoint presentation and responded to questions from the Board. He also thanked the members of PDEC for their work on this project.

Mrs. Davis made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Locke, that the Board of Education approve the Stafford Educator Evaluation Plan with incorporated CSDE flexibilities, for the 2020-2021 school year. Ms. Bachiochi, Mrs. Davis, Mr. Delano, Mrs. Locke, Ms. Lybarger, and Mr. Melnick voted for the motion, which carried.

B. Review and Possible Approval of Revised Board Policies #3541- Transportation; #5132- Dress Code

The Board was provided via the portal with two policies for review and possible approval. The district's current policies are from Shipman & Goodwin and an explanation of the proposed changes is provided below.

Policy # 3541 - Transportation

The policy was revised to clarify that it is not a hazardous condition for a student whose residence abuts a public street, road, or highway to either (1) wait on the private property, or (2) exit a school bus on the public street, road, or highway so that the student can access the private property where he or she resides.

It was also updated to include the statutory requirement that the Superintendent of Schools report to the Commissioner of the Department of Motor Vehicles any (1) complaints received regarding school transportation safety during a twelve month period and (2) accidents involving pedestrian students at or in the area of a school bus stop. The change aligns policy language with the language of the existing statute, Conn. Gen. Stat.10-221c. This is a recommended permanent policy change from Shipman & Goodwin.

The final revision was the addition of "or his / her designee" to the section of the policy that requires parents to request permission for a PreK - Grade 3 student to be dropped off with an Approved Parent Designated Sibling. Current practice requires parents to submit a form, which is approved by Diane Peters, who also serves as the transportation coordinator.

Mrs. Davis made a motion, seconded by Ms. Lybarger, that the Board approve the revisions to Board Policy #3541 – Transportation, as presented. Ms. Bachiochi, Mrs. Davis, Mr. Delano, Mrs. Locke, Ms. Lybarger, and Mr. Melnick voted for the motion, which carried.

Policy # 5132 - Dress Code

The policy was revised to clarify that attire or accessories depicting the Confederate flag or the Nazi swastika constitute "[a]ttire or accessories depicting or suggesting violence so as to disrupt the educational environment or that provokes others to act violently or causes others to be intimidated by fear of violence or that constitute 'fighting words'" and thus are prohibited. The policy was further revised to clarify that masks may be worn in school in conjunction with health and safety protocols.

Following discussion, this policy was tabled and will be sent back to the Board Policy Committee for further review.

Mrs. Locke made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Davis, to move item XI.A.- **Superintendent's Evaluation (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.

Item XI. Personnel Matters

A. Superintendent's Evaluation (Executive Session Anticipated)

Mrs. Davis made a motion, seconded by Mr. Delano, to enter executive session. Ms. Bachiochi, Mrs. Davis, Mr. Delano, Mrs. Locke, Ms. Lybarger, and Mr. Melnick voted for the motion, which carried. The Board entered executive session at 8:11 p.m.

Mrs. Davis made a motion, seconded by Mr. Melnick, to 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 8:40 p.m.

Mrs. Davis made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Locke, that the Superintendent's contract be extended by one year. Ms. Bachiochi, Mrs. Davis, Mr. Delano, Mrs. Locke, Ms. Lybarger, and Mr. Melnick voted for the motion, which carried.

Mrs. Locke made a motion, seconded by Mr. Melnick, that the Superintendent's contract be increased by 2% for the 2020 – 2021 school year. Ms. Bachiochi, Mrs. Locke, Ms. Lybarger, and Mr. Melnick voted for the motion. Mrs. Davis and Mr. Delano voted against the motion. The motion carried by majority vote. Mrs. Davis and Mr. Delano stated that they voted against this motion due to fiscal constraints and that their vote had nothing to do with the Superintendent's performance over the last year.

Item XII. Student Matters

There were no Student Matters.

Item XIII. Adjournment

Mrs. Davis made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Locke, 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 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Christine C. Marinelli, Recording Secretary
(In Person)

Sonya Shegogue, Chairperson

Andrea Locke, Secretary

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