

**Minutes**  
**Board of Education Meeting**  
**February 3, 2020**  
**7:30 p.m.**

Board Members Present: David Crim, Linette Dooley, Christopher Lent and Michael Maziarz  
Board Member Absent: James Chakulski, Jr., Joseph Napolitano and Kathy Tolsdorf

Others Present:

Finance Director Beverly Ciurylo, Superintendent Maria Geryk and Christine Sposito

**I. Call to Order**

Chairman Lent called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m.

**II. Pledge of Allegiance**

**III. Comments from the Audience (Bylaws of the Board #9300)**

Time allotted for public participation is twenty (20) minutes; time allotted for an individual speaker is three (3) minutes.

Chairman Lent welcomed all present and opened the floor to comments from the audience.

Christine Sposito, 62 Doubleday Road, attended the Budget subcommittee meeting that was held immediately prior to the Regular meeting. She asked if now would be an appropriate time to ask questions and/or provide her feedback related to the Superintendent's 2020-2021 budget proposal, which was shared at the subcommittee meeting. No other attendees were present, so it was agreed that we will move to the next agenda item, which is the Superintendent's proposed budget.

**IV. Presentation**

2020-2021 BOE Budget Public Input

Superintendent Geryk presented her 2020-2021 Budget proposal to the Budget subcommittee earlier this evening. It was decided the minutes will summarize that presentation. To develop the budget, the leadership team reviewed known and anticipated costs, known revenue, budget history, staff requests and current student needs.

Columbia School District is a highly regarded district which provides a safe environment where a commitment to innovation, creativity and academic excellence ensures that learning comes first. Continuous Improvement Plan goals are based on the identification of program strengths and areas for improvement. They include:

- Strengthen the structures and systems necessary to support an embedded professional development model
- Strengthen and align a model of high quality instruction, standards based instruction, assessment and interventions
- Create a comprehensive framework to create a positive learning environment and to improve school-wide climate
- Strengthen communication among and between staff, families and broader community

The budget is comprised of increases, reductions and/ realignment of resources. Increases are due to health insurance; contracted salary increases; curriculum, instruction and intervention improvements; as well as security assessment recommendations and operational improvements. Reductions are anticipated in magnet and special education tuition, and transportation. Realignments are of instructional teaching coach, special education reading specialist and a grade 4 teacher.

Next steps will be projections becoming known costs; an evaluation of all requests; continued review of staffing needs, schedule and student needs; and scheduled budget-related meetings.

Questions about Superintendent Geryk's proposal included the reallocation of a special education teacher to a reading specialist. What are the credentials and/or additional training needed to have the title of a reading specialist? Will the specialist be working with students who are identified and not identified? Will the special education program decrease because of the reduction? Why the reallocation instead of adding a position?

Reduction of an enrichment teacher was questioned because significant intervention is believed to be outside the realm of the classroom teacher. Ms. Sposito said Tier 1 interventions are provided to kids in the class, but she feels strongly that Tier 2 interventions should be provided outside the regular classroom. Our school is a small community and we should be able to embrace the programs. Ms. Sposito also expressed concern that social and emotional problems and struggles will fall on the classroom teachers.

Superintendent Geryk acknowledged the questions and comments provided. She will review and then address these at the next budget meeting. She reiterated her support of teachers and stated she does not ask them to do anything she did not know will be highly effective and something they would feel really good about at the end.

Discussion about grade 5 being part of the middle school model ensued. Developmentally, is it appropriate for fifth graders to be considered middle schoolers? Are there functions/events that should not combine fifth through eighth grades? Superintendent Geryk said she will be happy to look at this.

**V. Action Items (Consent)**

A consent agenda is presented by the Chairman at the beginning of the meeting. Items may be removed from the consent agenda on the request of any one member. Items not removed may be adopted by general consent without debate. Removed items may be taken up either immediately after the consent agenda or placed later on the agenda at the discretion of the assembly.

Mr. Crim MOVED, Mr. Maziarz SECONDED to move c. Second Reading, Policy 1007 to VI. Action Items (Discussion & Action).

MOTION CARRIES 4:0

Mr. Maziarz MOVED, Mr. Crim SECONDED to approve a. Approval of January 7, 2020 Regular Board of Education Minutes; and b. Payment of Bills

MOTION CARRIES 4:0

**VI. Action Items (Discussion and Action)**

a. Superintendent Mid-Year Evaluation

Chairman Lent said we are still in the midst of doing this. Superintendent Geryk provided her self-evaluation to him. He sent Board members her last evaluation as a reference. He will compile their feedback to provide to Nick Caruso at the upcoming Board self-evaluation.

b. BOE Self-Evaluation

The working session with Nick Caruso has been rescheduled to February 20. It was agreed information will be provided to him in advance so he may work with the Board to tweak, tailor and/or re-write Board goals, as that is the focus of this retreat.

c. Non-Lapsing Account Information from CABA & C.G.S.A. 10-248a

Chairman Lent said CABA sends questions to Board chairs. Nick Caruso reached out to other Board chairs, asking if they have a non-lapsing account. He received 22 responses and the results are summarized. Connecticut revised the statute this past July, allowing districts to set aside up to 2% of their school budget in a non-lapsing account. This may be a good time for the Board to see if FIPAC would agree to a Memorandum of Agreement to increase from “up to 1%” to “up to 2%.” Board members and Ms. Ciurylo engaged in a brief discussion on this matter.

d. Second Reading, Policy 1007

Superintendent Geryk said some policies that will be up for review are more philosophical than legal. Some are rather nebulous, i.e., how we communicate with others. She requests assistance from Board members. Policy 1007 will be further reviewed in the near future. No action was taken.

**VII. Reports of Board Committees**

*Policy*

Superintendent Geryk discussed in further detail the policies being reviewed by the subcommittee.

*Budget*

Chairman Lent said the subcommittee met earlier tonight and heard Superintendent Geryk’s draft 2020-2021 budget. Superintendent Geryk again stated she will respond to questions raised earlier.

*Teaching and Learning*

Superintendent Geryk said an update will be provided on March 2. She wants to know the topics Board members would like addressed. Ms. Dooley said she would like to hear how new curriculum is being rolled out and how teachers feel about it. Are we moving forward after feeling as though we took a few steps back? Mr. Crim asked what our next focus would be. Superintendent Geryk

summarized they are asking what our road map for Teaching and Learning looks like. This is a multi-year plan and it takes some time to right the ship. She will provide the requested information.

### **VIII. Correspondence/Communications**

- a. Memo to First Selectman, Steven Everett, Donations 1/13/2020
- b. Chronicle Article – Pump Malfunction

Superintendent Geryk answered questions about the pump malfunction. From this incident she saw first-hand the responsiveness and flexibility of both Columbia parents and the bus company. She also learned from this event the incredible knowledge Mike Sylvester possesses of the school's infrastructure. She wants him to start documenting the ins-and-outs of the systems, which will be extremely helpful to reference.

- c. Chronicle Article – Columbia OK's High School Contracts
- d. Chronicle Article – What Does Peace Mean to You?
- e. Arts Integration Article, 11/8/2019

Superintendent Geryk said this is an article she believes members will find interesting as we look at current research and initiatives. She and Board members discussed examples of how children learn using different techniques.

Superintendent Geryk also shared an article about the new electronic sign. She said it is rare to see parents and teachers so committed to fund raising to benefit the school and students. Chairman Lent said parents are sharing and encouraging others to continue the successes in this area.

### **IX. Board of Education Upcoming Meetings**

- a. Future Meeting Dates:
  - Monday, February 10, 2020, BOE Budget Subcommittee, 7:00
  - Thursday, February 20, 2020, BOE Retreat with N. Caruso, CABA
  - Monday, February 24, 2020, 7:00 p.m. BOE Budget Public Hearing, HWP Cafetorium
  - Monday, March 2, 2020, 6:30 p.m., BOE Subcommittee Meeting, LMC
  - Monday, March 2, 2020, 7:30 p.m., BOE Regular Meeting, HWP Cafetorium

Chairman Lent said that, if needed, another budget meeting is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, February 26 at 6:00 p.m.

### **X. Superintendent's Report**

Superintendent Geryk updated the Board on the website revision. The company contracted to update the website has come through and responded to all our requested changes. Identified staff were trained regarding how to manage the site. A memo with a link to the website will be sent within the week to gather input for adjustments. Once the website is operational, we will begin to focus more fully on communication protocols.

Sections of the draft Continuous Improvement Plan and the full Continuous Improvement Plan pamphlet will be sent out to families and staff with a survey within a week. The goal is to have the process completed and voted at the March 2 Board meeting.

Chairman Lent and Ms. Dooley represented the Board on the Stipend Review Committee on 1/22/2020. Feedback from the group working on job descriptions is due by 2/10/2020.

Fourth grader Gavin Rafala and fifth grader Allison LeBlanc won The Fire Prevention Poster Contest. This is an annual contest sponsored by the Fire Department which is limited to grades 4 and 5. The Fire Marshall selects the winners. Gavin Rafala was chosen as the Tolland County winner – one of only four students chosen. He will be awarded \$150 and attend a banquet with his family. His artwork will be entered into the State competition, which has a \$750 grand prize for the student and \$500 for the student's school.

Town and school representatives were recognized at a ceremony on January 31 by CIRMA for improvements which reduced the general liability claim severity by 73%. The Town experienced a 0% loss ratio over the past year. Improvements to the school site include sidewalk repairs, cafetorium storage and stairway, and repairs to the playscape access ramp rails.

**XI. Comments from the Audience (Bylaws of the Board #9300)**

Time allotted for public participation is twenty (20) minutes; time allotted for an individual speaker is three (3) minutes.

Christine Sposito sought and received clarification about which meetings allow for public input vs. observation.

**XII. Columbia Board of Education Member Remarks**

Mr. Maziarz congratulated both Gavin and Allison. Gavin's advancement in this contest is very impressive.

Ms. Dooley thanked Ms. Sposito for attending Board meetings as community participation is very important to the job at hand. She also shared the Bolton High School play is this week on Thursday, Friday and Saturday at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Crim also thanked Ms. Sposito for her participation.

Chairman Lent thanked Ms. Ciurylo for her work on the budget and sharing copies of the town audit report. He asked Superintendent Geryk about the mentorship she wished to pursue. She answered the experience was not as she had hoped, but is very pleased she has Willington, Mansfield, Ashford and Bolton contacts. She said Region 19 and Kristen Heckt of Bolton are extremely helpful and she is appreciative of their guidance.

**XIII. Adjournment**

Mr. Crim MOVED, Mr. Maziarz. SECONDED to adjourn.

**Approved 3/2/2020**

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MOTION CARRIES 4:0

The Board adjourned at 8:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Christopher Lent, Chairman