

Minutes
Special Board of Education Meeting
June 3, 2019
7:30 p.m.

Board Members Present: James Chakulski, Jr., David Crim, Chairman Christopher Lent and Kathy Tolsdorf

Board Members Absent: Linette Dooley and Gary Littlefield

Others Present:

Karen Caputo, Superintendent Maria Geryk, Assistant Principal Jennifer Hill, Kevin Quinn, Sandy Rij, Town Administrator Mark Walter and Director of Student Services Barbara Wilson

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)

No audience member wished to be heard.

IV. Presentations

It was agreed to invert the presentations on tonight's agenda because technology was being set up for Andrea Drabicki of Sustainable Connecticut.

a. Mr. William DiCristofaro, CFP, MBA, Update Concerning 403b Transfer Process

Mr. DiCristofaro thanked the Board for the opportunity to be here tonight to discuss the 403b plan. Mr. DiCristofaro said the current plan is highly priced, has limited investment options, and is confusing to administer. When he received RFPs he was looking for flexibility, pricing to save money, easy to administer and easy to use. As an advisor to the town, he recommends Empower.

Mr. Daniel Fratalia a representative from Empower, introduced himself. He said Empower is the second largest retirement record keeper. Empower only administers retirement plans and has nine million participants. When you log on to the website you are informed of how much you need for retirement and how on track you are.

Mr. DiCristofaro said the current plan is much more costly and there will be considerable cost savings if plans are changed. Superintendent Geryk stated the certified teachers have language in the contract for choice of plan. The union requested and received additional information, including a presentation. They voted, broadly supporting this change.

In response to questions posed by the current provider, Superintendent Geryk reached out to Shipman and Goodwin for legal clarification. There are no conflict with transitioning to Empower and individuals involved in making the change are very confident with the procedure outlined. There will be an advisory committee consisting of Mark Walter, Beverly Ciurylo, a Board of Education member and union representation for stakeholders. They will meet regularly which

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allows them to consistently evaluate investments. Mr. DiCristofaro reiterated he is an advisor to the town, not Empower.

Chairman Lent said he was also contacted by the current provider with the same questions. Hearing the information Superintendent Geryk received, he is confident we are not taking on additional responsibility with this change.

Mr. Walter said Mr. DiCristofaro's references were glowing. One reference spoke of his responsiveness to an issue and how pleased they were with the outcome. Mr. Frataglia and Mr. DiCristofaro answered Board members' questions.

Superintendent Geryk received an agreement today. When it is signed the transition process will be coordinated with the superintendent's office. Completion will be more toward the fall.

b. Sustainable Connecticut, Andrea Drabicki

Chairman Lent introduced Ms. Drabicki. A few weeks ago he and other members of town committees, boards and departments attended a workshop presented by Ms. Drabicki. Sustainable Columbia is being launched by the town. He invited her to present to the Board to see if this is something the Board chooses to participate in.

Ms. Drabicki thanked the Board for this opportunity to present information. She said Mr. Lent was the first to invite her to present and others have followed his lead. In 2018 the Board of Selectmen passed a resolution of participation in Sustainable CT. The Sustainability Team is comprised of Town Administrator Mark Walter, Executive Assistant Jennifer LaVoie, Sustainable Columbia Program Facilitator Andrea Drabicki and Action Category Co-Chairs of representatives from town departments and committees or Columbia citizens.

According to Ms. Drabicki's presentation, "Sustainable CT communities strive to be thriving, resilient, collaborative and forward-looking. They build community and local economy. They equitably promote the health and well-being of current and future residents, and they respect the finite capacity of the natural environment." Columbia is one of 82 communities to participate in Sustainable CT. This program is modeled after other state programs in NJ, NY and MA. Municipalities self-enroll in the program and all funding is by philanthropic funds.

The benefits of joining Sustainable CT are environmental impacts, economic well-being, cost savings, community building, and health and wellness. This is an opportunity to work collaboratively across town departments, committees, and with residents. There are bronze and silver certifications which are attained by completing actions within categories. A grants portal lists resources to help implement Sustainable CT actions. A highlight is that we are working through the actions with the community, rather than for the community.

Columbia will work towards certification over a 2-year period. To date, Columbia has already earned at least 105 points, which is half-way to bronze level certification. Currently we are working on the elementary school solar panel energy management system.

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Other examples of what is being worked on include providing effective community communication (a new town website), support to local businesses (“Welcome Wagon” to new businesses) and recycling additional materials and compost (plastic film recycling challenge).

In the next two to three weeks Action Category Co-Chairs will be nominated. The Sustainable Columbia website will be launched. The program was rolled out to Columbia’s citizens at the mini-mud run and bike rodeo at Porter School on June 2. There will be a Save the Bees/Pollinators event on the Town Green on June 8. There will also be a Plastic Film Recycling Challenge. Other suggestions for events are welcome.

Following Ms. Drabicki’s presentation there was discussion regarding recycling as a topic of high interest. Is there curriculum already addressing topics such as biodegradable waste? If not, at what grade level(s) would it best fit into? Composting is another topic that piqued the interest of Board members and audience members alike. Ms. Drabicki stated there are more than twenty towns that are already certified.

Ms. Drabicki was thanked for her presentation. She and individuals tonight hope to get the town involved in what appears to be a very significant and beneficial program.

V. Action Items (Consent)

Mr. Crim MOVED, Mr. Chakulski, Jr. SECONDED to move item e) Approval of Records Disposal Authorization to VI. Action Items (Discussion and Action).

MOTION CARRIES 4:0

Ms. Tolsdorf MOVED, Mr. Chakulski, Jr. SECONDED to approve items a. Approval of May 6, 2019, Regular Board of Education Minutes; b. Payment of Bills; c. Acceptance of Resignation of Ms. Jennifer Hill, Assistant Principal/Director of Teaching and Learning; d. Acceptance of Resignation of Ms. Joanne Prague Doyle, BOE Vice-Chairperson and Secretary; and f. Approval of 403b Transition to Empower.

MOTION CARRIES 4:0

Superintendent Geryk wanted to recognize Ms. Hill and wish her well. She knows Ms. Hill will do a fabulous job in her new role in Ellington. She greatly appreciates Ms. Hill’s work style and how she implements change. Ms. Hill will bring a great deal of expertise and energy to her new position. She will be missed. Ms. Hill thanked her for the kind send-off and said it has been a pleasure working in Columbia. She will miss the students, staff and community.

Chairman Lent wanted to express his gratitude for the work Ms. Prague Doyle has done while on the Board. She is very dedicated and circumstances do not permit her to continue in this role at this time. She will be recognized at a future meeting.

VI. Action Items (Discussion and Action)

a. Discussion and Possible Action Concerning the Appointment of an Assistant Principal

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Superintendent Geryk would like to appoint an internal candidate to the position of assistant principal. Teaching and Learning and general instructional practices are areas she believes should continue to be addressed without interruption. She has a candidate who also possesses strong skills in addressing social and emotional needs, behavioral strategies in the classroom and has the ability to deal with discipline when necessary. In addition to this internal appointment, she proposes contracting with a behavioral specialist three days per week.

Mr. Chakulski, Jr. MOVED, Mr. Crim SECONDED to authorize the Superintendent to appoint an assistant principal who has the skills for the position.

MOTION CARRIES 4:0

b. Superintendent Evaluation Summary

Superintendent Geryk provided follow-up documents to Board members electronically. Hard copies will be provided if requested. Chairman Lent said all input from members is due by June 14, which will allow the evaluation to be completed by the end of June. There will be an executive session scheduled later in June to discuss other personnel matters. At this meeting they will also present Superintendent Geryk with her evaluation.

c. Fire Alarm Update

Superintendent Geryk said up to \$46,000 was originally approved to update the fire alarm system. However, she is asking the Board to vote to approve as much as an additional \$10,000 for this job due to the actual electrical work and panels, etc. This would be from current year funds.

Ms. Tolsdorf MOVED, Mr. Crim SECONDED to authorize the Superintendent to utilize up to \$56,000 to update the fire alarm system at Porter School.

MOTION CARRIES 4:0

d. Approval of Records Disposal Authorization

Further review of the process is needed prior to proceeding. We will table this item until a later date.

VII. Reports and Board Committees

Policy

Superintendent Geryk said much work will be done this summer. The policies received from Shipman and Goodwin are in effect at this time. She will confirm what is on the website for reference.

Budget

The subcommittee met earlier tonight. Chairman Lent said there is a projected surplus of more than \$300,000.

Teaching and Learning

Superintendent Geryk said a Teaching and Learning update was not provided tonight because of the two presentations already on the agenda. She proposes an update be presented in August.

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Ad hoc Committee on Future Needs

Chairman Lent asked for an update in July on meetings with superintendents in both Mansfield and Bolton. Superintendent Geryk said a subcommittee to conduct negotiations is requested. Chairman Lent said he prefers this approach. Discussion turned to potential contract language to be addressed.

Communications and Community Outreach

Superintendent Geryk has been working with a vendor to update the website. The mockup is set for August 1 with a projected August 15 launch.

There was talk about communication between school, community and families. Other forms of communication, such as a school district page, may be a good way to get information to the community at budget time.

VIII. Correspondence/Communications

a. Fundraiser in memory of Daena Parmenter

Chairman Lent said Daena Parmenter was a big part of the community. Students had her in their classes. She touched the hearts of a lot of people. Funds are being raised to plant a tree and place a memorial bench in memory of Daena. A plaque will dedicate these to her. All donations will be collected by Beverly Ciurylo in the Finance Department.

b. Middle School Music – Three Gold Medals Awarded at Fantastic Festivals held at Timothy Edwards Middle School in South Windsor. All three of our middle school ensembles, the middle school concert band, jazz band and panther choir earned Gold ratings!

Board members expressed pride in these students' accomplishments. It was noted that in the past there was concern for a lack of interest in the music classes. The hard work of the teacher and students paid off.

XI. Board of Education Upcoming Meetings

Future Meeting Dates

Monday, July 8, 2019, 6:30 p.m. Subcommittee Meetings, H.W. Porter Conference Room

Monday, July 8, 2019, 7:30 p.m., Regular Meeting, H.W. Porter Cafetorium

Graduation Dates

Porter – Wednesday, June 12, 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m., E.O. Smith HS Auditorium

Bolton – Wednesday, June 12, 6:00 p.m., Bolton HS

Windham Tech – Thursday, June 13, 6:00 p.m., Eastern CT State University, Geissler Gymnasium

E.O. Smith – Monday, June 17, 6:00 p.m., Jorgensen Auditorium on UCONN campus – doors open at 5:00 p.m.

X. Superintendent's Report

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Superintendent Geryk congratulated these educators who will achieve tenure as of June 30, 2019:
Jennifer Guzman – Special Education
Michelle Shive – Art
Jennifer Hill – Assistant Principal

We did not receive the security grant. Superintendent Geryk plans to draft a memo informing FIPAC of this and ask how they would like us to proceed. Discussion about possible scenarios ensued. Will they support full funding, even though there will be no reimbursement? Will the scope of the security plan have to be re-prioritized to get what we can with the funds allotted? Superintendent Geryk said cameras and some things internally are priorities.

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

No audience member wished to be heard.

XII. Future Regular and Subcommittee Agenda Items

Policy – summer
Teaching and Learning – August
Future Needs – July
Communications – August

XIII. Columbia Board of Education Member Remarks

Mr. Crim said a couple of weeks ago the girls team won the track and field state championships. Mr. Lent said there is also good representation on both boys and girls track at E.O. Smith. Superintendent Geryk said that our kids are very well-rounded as they excel in both music and sports.

Chairman Lent noted the CABA annual dues is \$2,746 and he supports our continuing this membership even though we have secured policies from Shipman and Goodwin. CABA membership has other benefits available, such as conferences and valuable communication during budget development. Superintendent Geryk said she will be getting a copy of a student handbook from CABA. It was agreed we will continue membership next year and re-evaluate the need for subsequent years.

XIV. Adjournment

Ms. Tolsdorf MOVED, Mr. Chakulski, Jr. SECONDED to adjourn.
MOTION CARRIES 4:0

The Board adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Christopher Lent, Chairperson