

SIMSBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL MEETING
March 18, 2024
BOE Conference Room
6:30 p.m.
AGENDA

- I. CALL TO ORDER
- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
- III. PUBLIC AUDIENCE
- IV. COMMITTEE REPORTS/BOE COMMUNICATIONS
- V. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS
 - A. Approval of Minutes of February 21, 2024 Spec. Mtg. EXHIBIT I
 - B. Approval of Minutes of February 27, 2024 Meeting EXHIBIT II
 - C. Personnel EXHIBIT III
 - D. Approval of Simsbury Community Media Scholarship EXHIBIT IV
 - E. Approval of Educator Diversity Plan EXHIBIT V
 - F. Adoption of Revised 2024-25 Public School Budget EXHIBIT VI
- VI. INFORMATION AND REPORTS
 - A. Next Generation Accountability Report EXHIBIT VII
- VII. PUBLIC AUDIENCE
- VIII. FUTURE BUSINESS
 - A. Next Board Meeting, Tuesday, March 26, 2024,
Central School

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www.simsburytv.org.*

**TOWN OF SIMSBURY
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Record of Proceedings

Special Meeting

February 21, 2024

Mr. Jeff Tindall called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. in the Board of Education Conference Room.

Roll Call:

Members present: Mmes. Jen Batchelar, Tara Willerup, Lydia Tedone, Sharon Thomas and Jessica Parise. Messrs. Jeff Tindall, Brian Watson and Josh Falco.

Also present: Superintendent Matt Curtis, Assistant Superintendent Sue Homrok-Lemke, Assistant Superintendent Neil Sullivan, Director of Finance Amy Meriwether, BOE Student Representative Sophia Luzietti and Recording Secretary Katie Wilde.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

None.

Public Audience

COMMITTEE REPORTS/BOE COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Luzietti reported on activities being held at the elementary schools. She noted that HJMS is holding their 6th grade parent orientation. The next parent series on managing teen anxiety is later this week, as well as Neon Night. Ms. Luzietti noted the success of Guys and Dolls at SHS as well as the success of the winter sports teams.

Communications

Mr. Falco reported on the Communications Committee meeting. He stated the committee discussed the soon to be released Vision of a Graduate video, updating the BOE budget website, and holding a community event when the Latimer Lane School project is completed.

Ms. Thomas stated a Policy Committee meeting is being held tomorrow. She stated that she and Ms. Tedone attending a meeting at CABE regarding chronic absenteeism and requested an update be provided to the board around this topic. Ms. Lemke noted that social worker PLCs look at this data. Ms. Sullivan stated that each school has an attendance team and a notification system.

Ms. Batchelar praised Ms. Liz MacKay for the Capstone video links included in the SHS Program of Studies. Ms. Tedone reported on CABE's CT Unspoken Crisis conference and their efforts with the Dalio Education. She also reported on the NSBA conference and legislative priorities at the federal level.

Ms. Willerup reported on the Curriculum Committee meeting where they discussed our curriculum online platform, applied art credit, the Kindergarten waiver process and the artificial intelligence team. Ms. Lemke stated that the CSDE, in partnership with DonorsChoose, recently offered mini grants for teachers. Twenty of our teachers received grants.

Mr. Sullivan reported on the progress of the Latimer Lane School project. He stated that the meeting with state officials relative to the furniture, fixtures, equipment and technology has taken place. The board will vote at the next meeting on these items

totaling \$1.6 million.

Mr. Curtis reported on this morning's legislative update. He stated that it was well attended as many districts are upset and concerned with the shuffling of money from the Excess Cost Grant to preschool that is proposed in the Governor's budget. Mr. Curtis noted that the Excess Cost Grant legislation states that districts should be reimbursed at a rate of 85%. Last year the rate was 73% and it is anticipated that this year the rate will be 68%, which is a decrease of \$200,000. He noted that special ed needs are up across the state.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

A. Approval of Minutes of January 23, 2024 Meeting

Ms. Willerup: MOVE to approve the minutes of the January 23, 2024 meeting.

Ms. Thomas: Seconded. So moved.

B. Approval of Minutes of January 31, 2024 Workshop

Ms. Thomas: MOVE to approve the minutes of the January 31, 2024 workshop.

Ms. Batchelar: Seconded. So moved. Ms. Tedone and Ms. Willerup abstained.

C. Approval of Minutes of February 3, 2024 Workshop

Ms. Willerup: MOVE to approve the minutes of the February 3, 2024 workshop as amended.

Ms. Batchelar: Seconded. So moved.

D. Personnel

Ms. Parise: MOVE to accept the resignation of Phil Isner effective February 4, 2024.

Mr. Watson: Seconded. So moved.

Ms. Thomas: MOVE to accept the retirements of Doug Nielson, Martha O'Rourke, and Lori Worthen effective June 30, 2024.

Ms. Parise: Seconded. So moved.

E. Adoption of Capital Improvement Plan

Mr. Curtis noted that the capital plan has come before the board for review multiple times. He stated the focus is on 4 projects for next year: Tootin' Hills roof replacement, SHS auditorium/amphitheater improvements, district flooring improvements, and district network infrastructure improvements.

Ms. Tedone: MOVE that the Board of Education Six Year Capital Improvement Plan for the period 2025-2030 be adopted.

Approval of Minutes of January 23, 2024

Approval of Minutes of January 31, 2024 Workshop

Approval of Minutes of February 3, 2025 Workshop

Personnel

Adoption of 6 Year CIP

Mr. Falco: Seconded. So moved.

INFORMATION AND REPORTS

A. 2024-25 Superintendent's Budget

Mr. Curtis stated his budget is prioritized along the district's strategic plan and board goals. He reviewed the budget development process between November and February. Mr. Curtis stated his proposed budget of \$86,270,668, an increase of 4.97% or \$4,088,533 over last year's budget. He presented historic budget data, a per pupil expenditure comparison, and a 5 year enrollment comparison for both regular ed and special ed students. He noted the need to balance education needs with fiscal reality.

Mr. Curtis stated that he presented a 6.93% budget at the board workshop and tonight's presentation is a reduction of \$1.6 million. New staffing requests have been offset so that staffing remains flat. Budget reduction key drivers include staffing reductions/reallocations, the use of health insurance reserves, and a change in health insurance lowering the increase assumption from 3% to 1.7%.

Mr. Curtis discussed student growth and success, sustainable and strategic investments, and the Vision of a Graduate. He reviewed the main budget drivers: contractual obligations total \$2,738,069, a 3.33% increase; market driven increases in special ed transportation; utilities, software and technology; and supplies/textbooks/services that includes \$70,000 in expenditures for the new math program.

Mr. Curtis addressed last year's budgetary deficits, in particular the increase in special ed costs due to increased out of district tuition, which increased by 11%-14%, and increased third party service costs. He reviewed budgetary increases in the areas of health insurance, pension, and social emotional learning.

Mr. Curtis discussed the regular and special ed staffing requests for 2024-25. On the regular ed side there are 2 requests. One for a 0.2 FTE elementary strings teacher and 0.2 FTE for an American Sign Language (ASL) teacher at SHS. These requests are both enrollment related, including the addition of an ASL class at SHS, and total \$40,644. On the special ed side the request is for 2.0 Intensive Learning Needs (ILN) teachers, an ILN program coordinator, an Educational Support Specialist (ESS) teacher at SHS, a reading specialist at HJMS and a Pre-K ESS special ed teacher. All of these requests are enrollment driven and total \$614,654.

Mr. Curtis reviewed the reductions and reallocations to offset the staffing requests. Utilization of the internal service fund will offset \$650,000. Moving a position to the IDEA grant and repurposing a projected vacancy are a savings of \$101,609 each. The reassignment of non-classroom teachers and certified staff positions, totaling 4-5 FTE will provide an offset of \$584,273. These reductions, with an additional \$40,644 in miscellaneous reductions, total \$1,478,135. Mr. Curtis provided a summary of the main budget drivers and the corresponding reductions resulting in a budget increase of \$4,088,533 or 4.97%.

Mr. Curtis discussed a proposal to make changes to the Capital Non-Recurring

2024-25
Superintendent's
Budget

(CNR) account. He noted that the amount in CNR has not changed since its inception 20-25 years ago. Mr. Curtis proposed an increase of \$700,000 to address significant building needs, with full funding implemented over a 5 year period. This change would have a budgetary impact of \$140,000. If added to the proposed budget, the budget increase would total \$4,228,533 or 5.15%.

Mr. Tindall thanked the administration for the arduous work that goes into creating the budget. He suggested that the CNR increase makes sense. Ms. Meriwether stated the BOF would be open to a discussion on CNR, but it will depend on the finances. Mr. Tindall stated that if the board believes that 5.15% has value, it would make sense to go in at that increase.

Ms. Batchelar asked if we had an ILN coordinator in the past that we repurposed. Mr. Curtis responded that this program has seen such growth that it requires a coordinator, noting that a department supervisor will be reallocated. Ms. Batchelar questioned whether we should tell the BOF we cannot reallocate these positions. Ms. Parise questioned the impact to the student body. Mr. Curtis stated that these changes are appropriate at this time and he would not create a scenario that undermines what we are doing. He noted that these are 5 positions out of 800 in the district. Ms. Willerup stated that we are always trying to be more efficient.

Ms. Batchelar asked if the increase in CNR would be used to address our bus issues. Ms. Meriwether stated that \$300,000 would be allocated for buses. Ms. Thomas questioned student utilization of the buses. Mr. Sullivan stated that buses at the elementary level are heavily used and we did cut back 2 buses this year.

Ms. Willerup asked if any of the new special ed staffing is a result of mandates. Mr. Curtis responded that we legally need to provide the services outlined in the students IEP. Ms. Thomas questioned how we will know if we are going to need more staffing next year. Mr. Curtis stated that it will depend on the enrollment as to whether we are staffed appropriately. Ms. Parise noted that we don't know if the increased enrollment in the ILN program this year is an outlier, and asked how much flexibility we will have next year with staffing. Mr. Curtis responded that there will not be much flexibility.

Mr. Watson stated that of the 4.97% increase, 66% are contractual obligations. He noted that what is being discussed is about moving small numbers. He stated that the budget that has been put forward is very good. Ms. Willerup stated that we are proud of our teachers and we don't want to put budgetary matters on their backs. Mr. Curtis pointed out that for the better part of a decade the BOE was able to put forward lower budget numbers as our enrollment was declining, but that is no longer the case. Mr. Watson noted that in the year's when the budget increase was 1.5% it was not because there were lower contracts, there were other factors involved.

Ms. Parise questioned how we would fund another position over the course of next year if needed. Mr. Curtis stated that in the past we have taken money from elsewhere in the budget if we needed to make a hire. He explained the use of the non-lapsing fund. Mr. Falco agreed that times were different in past budget years and noted that the Simsbury school district continues to rank well.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

None.

Public Audience

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Willerup: MOVE to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 p.m.

Ms. Batchelar: Seconded. So moved.

Sharon Thomas
Secretary

Katie Wilde
Recording Secretary

Adjournment

**TOWN OF SIMSBURY
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Record of Proceedings

Regular Meeting

February 27, 2024

Mr. Jeff Tindall called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. in the Library Media Center of Squadron Line School.

Roll Call:

Members present: Mmes. Jen Batchelar, Tara Willerup, Lydia Tedone, Sharon Thomas and Jessica Parise. Messrs. Jeff Tindall, Brian Watson and Josh Falco.

Also present: Superintendent Matt Curtis, Assistant Superintendent Sue Homrok-Lemke, Assistant Superintendent Neil Sullivan, Director of Finance Amy Meriwether, Director of Infrastructure & Technology Jason Casey, BOE Student Representative Sophia Luzietti and Recording Secretary Katie Wilde.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

Members of the SHS Earth Advocates: Bobby Shipman, Erin Sim, Brynn Bordeau and Claire Lepak spoke about their support for putting solar panels on our schools. They noted the environmental benefits and the cost effectiveness for the district.

Public Audience

COMMITTEE REPORTS/BOE COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Luzietti reported on HJMS Neon Night, Latimer Lane School bingo and the Central School auction. She noted that a freshman member of the SHS wrestling team is a state champion, a capstone question and answer session is being held, and graduating seniors can now apply for SHS scholarships.

Communications

Ms. Willerup stated she is glad that students came and spoke to the board during public audience. Ms. Tedone noted that March 13 is CABA Day on the Hill and she will speak with the student representatives about attending. Ms. Thomas also stated she is glad the students came and spoke to the board. She reported that the Policy Committee met last week and anticipate bringing policy revision first drafts to the board during a March meeting.

Mr. Casey reported that the Tariffville modular project is complete and students are occupying the space. He stated that we ran into some drainage issues due to the heavy equipment that was brought in. An additional \$18,000 was approved by the BOS and will go before the BOF on March 5. Mr. Casey reported that air conditioning was being considered as a remedy for a humidity issue at Squadron Line School. Since then we located a plumbing leak and are using equipment to remove water from carpeting so we are holding back on the funding for air conditioning. Mr. Casey addressed the comments regarding solar panels. He stated the strategy for solar panels is that as we replace roofs we wait a couple of years to make sure there are no issues, and then look toward adding solar panels. He noted that the new roof at Latimer Lane is solar ready, and the next two roof projects are at Tootin' Hills and Tariffville School.

Ms. Lemke reported that culinary students will compete in the ProStar Invitational against other districts at Dunkin' Donuts Park on Wednesday. She noted the growth of the culinary program.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

A. Latimer Lane Furniture & Equipment Specs Approval

Mr. Casey stated that this is a DAS requirement for Phase 3 of reimbursements that must be approved by the boards before going out to bid. He noted the budget for this phase is \$1,615,000.

Ms. Willerup: MOVE that the Board of Education approve the plans, drawing and project manuals for Phase 3 Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment (FF&E) & Technology as prepared by Tecton Architects dated February 2, 2024 along with the professional cost estimate for the Latimer Lane Renovation Project.

Mr. Watson: Seconded. So moved.

B. Approval of The Peter T. Blake Scholarship

Ms. Thomas: MOVE that the Board of Education approve The Peter T. Blake Memorial Music Scholarship, to be disbursed starting in 2024.

Ms. Willerup: Seconded. So moved.

C. Adoption of 2024-25 School Budget

Mr. Curtis stated that a budget increase of 6.93% was presented by the administration to the board at the budget workshop. He noted that last week he presented a 4.97% budget to the board, which is a reduction of \$1.6 million. At that meeting there was further discussion about including funds to increase the amount of the CNR budget. Mr. Curtis stated that next Tuesday the board will present their budget to the Board of Finance. He pointed out that the BOF may provide some direction to the board, noting that the BOF has the authorization to set the final budget number. He stated that the average superintendent budget request for Hartford area superintendents is 5.96%.

Mr. Tindall noted the work done by the administration and staff to reduce the numbers and offset potential hirings. He stated that it is a tough budget year with zero Grand List growth, noting that there is already pushback on the numbers. Mr. Tindall stated that the CNR conversation is ongoing, and he recommended the board put forth a 4.97% budget. Mr. Curtis noted that he would still put forward the proposed CNR plan during the presentation to the BOF.

Ms. Thomas stated she supports tonight's motion without the inclusion of additional CNR funding. Ms. Tedone stated she does not like the optics of a 4% vs. 5% budget when there is the opportunity to have a discussion about CNR at a later time. Ms. Willerup agreed that moving forward with 4.97% would be prudent. She stated she wishes the increase could be smaller, but the board needs to meet the needs of students. Mr. Watson noted that if you look at the line item fixed cost increases he does not see how we can get much leaner.

Mr. Falco noted that peer superintendent budgets are over 5% and there is a list of

Latimer FF&E
Spec Approval

Approval of
Peter T. Blake
Scholarship

Adoption of
2024-25 Budget

things we can do with a higher CNR budget. He stated he is fine with whichever increase the board moves forward, but suggested the board consider optics versus responsibility. Mr. Falco stated that an increase in CNR could do a lot of good, and he doesn't want to lessen the value. Ms. Willerup noted that CNR is about keeping town buildings safe and should be a priority.

Mr. Curtis stated we need to look at how we weigh a number versus the tax impact and net program impact. He suggested that a reduction of perhaps an additional couple of hundred thousand dollars would show an effort, but we need to analyze what that actually yields to solve the problem due to the lack of revenue, not expenditures.

Ms. Parise noted that there is a negligible difference to families between a 4.97% increase vs. a 5.15% increase. She stated that she appreciates the effort to lower the number, but suggested that perhaps we should increase CNR by even more. Ms. Thomas stated the board needs to be cognizant of the tax increase after last year's increase, noting that we no longer have tax revenue from The Hartford.

Ms. Tedone: MOVE that the Board of Education adopt the 2024-25 Public School budget in the amount of \$86,270,668 which represents an increase of \$4,088,533 or 4.97%.

Ms. Batchelar: Seconded. So moved.

INFORMATION AND REPORTS

A. Squadron Line School Report

Meg Evans, Principal, noted the school goals which are based on district goals and ultimately BOE goals. She noted the 3 areas of focus for Squadron Line in 2023-24: teaching & learning – student achievement and professional learning communities; sense of community & belonging – SHINE rebrand and the power of positive teams/leadership; and behavior – clear expectations for students and staff with all being held accountable for their actions.

Nancy Forsberg, Assistant Principal, discussed special ed service delivery. She stated that weekly planning sessions allow general ed and special ed teachers to collaborate and provide feedback that benefits all students. The ability for special ed students to be in general ed classes and professional development for teachers leads to better outcomes for students.

Ms. Evans stated that the SHINE program was rebranded in September after collective feedback. She discussed the service projects that took place during Squadron Line Kindness Day and the pay it forward challenge. Ms. Evans discussed the tiers of behavior intervention resource guide being created to address common expectations, positive reinforcement in classrooms, and a common discipline approach.

Ms. Evans addressed the challenges at Squadron Line which include space, the growth of the ILN program and funding implications for school building needs. She thanked the board for their support.

Squadron Line
Report

Ms. Thomas asked if, with the greater focus on SHINE, have behaviors changed as a result? Ms. Evans responded that behaviors are tracked and the administration is looking further at the behaviors. She stated that assemblies are now held every month, with some run by students, and work is being done with the faculty. Ms. Forsberg stated that the administration is learning how to look at the data differently and which students to focus on. Ms. Evans stated this is in conjunction with our SEL work. Ms. Thomas stated her appreciation for the service project program, showing students and letting them do.

Mr. Tindall noted that having a sense of belonging is important work and behaviors are a form of communication. He asked if the space issue is at a tipping point. Ms. Evans responded that space is a problem. Orchestra lessons rotate through spaces, programs are sharing space. Ms. Evans stated that they are doing the best they can with students at the center of the discussion. Mr. Falco noted that CNR funding is necessary to address drainage and electrical issues at the school. He pointed out that space for students to learn properly is another issue to be addressed.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

None.

Public Audience

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Thomas: MOVE to adjourn the meeting at 7:27 p.m.

Ms. Willerup: Seconded. So moved.

Adjournment

Sharon Thomas
Secretary

Katie Wilde
Recording Secretary

MEMORANDUM TO: Members of the Board of Education
FROM: Matthew T. Curtis
DATE: March 18, 2024
RE: Personnel Recommendations

I. Retirements

Paula Garza

Experience 20 years
Assignment School Counselor, Simsbury High School
Effective June 30, 2024

Elaine Kotler

Experience 8 years
Assignment Science Teacher, Simsbury High School
Effective June 30, 2024

BOARD MOTION:

“MOVE that the Board of Education accept the retirements of Elaine Kotler and Paula Garza effective June 30, 2024.”

MTC:cdf

TO: Members of the Board of Education
FROM: Matthew T. Curtis, Superintendent of Schools
DATE: March 18, 2024
RE: Simsbury Community Media Scholarship

The Board of Education approves all proposed scholarships available to Simsbury Public School students. Below are the guidelines for the Simsbury Community Music Scholarship. This has been reviewed by Maggie Seidel, Simsbury High School Principal, Greg Stillman, Director of School Counseling, and central office administrators. We recommend the approval of this scholarship.

Simsbury Community Media (SCM) is a non-profit local TV station dedicated to fostering community engagement and providing a platform for diverse voices through programming via multiple media platforms. SCM would like to recognize students and volunteers that have given their time and talents to ensuring relevant content is created, marketed, and edited that reflects the character of our town, community, and visibly represents the SHS Trojan Code.

AMOUNT: One scholarship in the amount of \$500 awarded to a graduating senior in the Class of 2024.

CRITERIA: An interest in pursuing communications; broadcast programming; audio/visual production; marketing; journalism; and other digital/technical fields related to a future in media.
Preference to be given to students who have interned, volunteered, created content, or completed their Capstone project at SCM.

SELECTION: SHS Scholarship Committee

DISBURSEMENT: A check will be presented directly to the recipient on Awards Night by a representative of SCM

CONTACT: Elizabeth Morgan
754 Hopmeadow St., Simsbury, CT 06070
Phone: 860-658-1720 / 860-218-0975
Email address: elimorgan@aol.com or simtv@yahoo.com

"MOVE that the Board of Education approve the Simsbury Community Media Scholarship, to be disbursed in 2024."

MTC:da

MEMORANDUM TO: Members of the Board of Education
FROM: Matthew T. Curtis
DATE: March 18, 2024
RE: Approval of Educator Diversity Plan

In January of 2023 we began the process of developing our Increasing Educator Diversity Plan as a tool to prioritize building a diverse teacher workforce. A team of 6 led by Neil Sullivan, Assistant Superintendent of Administration participated in a 5-session training program sponsored by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) to develop the Increasing Educator Diversity Plan shared with you this evening. The plan focuses on the recruitment, hiring and selection, and retention of a diverse educator workforce and outlines goals, strategies, and indicators of progress for success.

This initial plan is to be submitted to the CSDE by March 15, 2024 for their review and comments, and by May 15, 2024, the final plan is to be submitted. Beginning July 1, 2024, and each school year thereafter, approved plans must be implemented and made available on the Board of Education website. Additionally, the plan will be posted on the CSDE website.

BOARD MOTION:

“MOVE that the Board of Education approve the Increasing Educator Diversity Plan.”

MTC:cdf

MEMORANDUM TO: Members of the Board of Education

FROM: Matthew T. Curtis, Superintendent of Schools

DATE: March 18, 2024

RE: Adoption of Revised 2024-25 Public School Budget

At the March 5, 2024 Board of Finance meeting the Board provided direction to the Boards of Selectmen and Education regarding their operating and capital budgets. The Board of Finance has requested that the Board of Education reduce their budget to a 4.3% increase. This evening the administration will present a recommendation to reduce the operating budget.

MTC:kdw

MEMORANDUM TO: Members of the Board of Education

FROM: Matthew T. Curtis, Superintendent of Schools

DATE: March 18, 2024

RE: Next Generation Accountability Report

Connecticut's Next Generation Accountability System consists of a set of 12 indicators that assist districts in determining how well they are preparing students for post-secondary success. The intent of the system is to provide a holistic, multi indicator perspective of district and school performance. The Simsbury School District as a whole, as well as individual schools within Simsbury, earn performance points on a broad set of 12 indicators (achievement, growth, chronic absenteeism, college and career readiness, high school graduation, postsecondary entrance, physical fitness, and the arts) measured against state targets. In addition to these 12 indicators, standardized test participation rates and gaps that exist between non-high needs and high needs students are indicated. Certain student group performance receives additional weight in the system.

From Simsbury's performance, an accountability Index is derived. It has been some time (pre-pandemic) since the State has reported these indices. The district performance index (DPI) is the percentage of points earned across all available indicators. Individual school performance indices (SPI) are also calculated. For elementary schools, only 4 of the 12 indicators are assessed: student performance (SBA and NGSS), growth, chronic absenteeism and physical fitness. Schools can be noted as Schools of Distinction if they are in the top 10% for overall performance, growth (all student or high needs) and have no gaps nor a participation rate lower than 95%. Squadron Line, Tariffville and Tootin' Hills were noted as Schools of Distinction this year for their growth of students.

Tonight, Assistant Sue Homrok-Lemke will give an overview of the Next Generation Accountability System, Simsbury's district and school based results, and steps already taken to utilize this data for continuous improvement.