

SIMSBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION  
REGULAR MEETING  
June 23, 2020  
Virtual Meeting  
6:30 p.m.  
AGENDA

- I. CALL TO ORDER
- II. PUBLIC AUDIENCE
- III. BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS
- IV. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS
  - A. Approval of Minutes of June 9, 2020 Meeting EXHIBIT I
  - B. Approval of Minutes of June 16, 2020 Special Meeting EXHIBIT II
  - C. Personnel EXHIBIT III
- V. INFORMATION AND REPORTS
  - A. Equity Council Update EXHIBIT IV
- VI. PUBLIC AUDIENCE
- VII. FUTURE BUSINESS
  - A. Next Board Meeting, Tuesday, July 14, 2020,  
Board of Education Conference Room

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**TOWN OF SIMSBURY  
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Record of Proceedings

Regular Meeting

June 9, 2020

Ms. Susan Salina called the virtual meeting to order at 6:45 p.m.

Roll Call:

**Members present:** Mmes. Susan Salina, Tara Willerup, Lydia Tedone, Jen Batchelar and Sharon Thomas. Messrs. Todd Burrick, Jeff Tindall and Brian Watson.

**Also present:** Assistant Superintendent Erin Murray, Assistant Superintendent Sue Homrok-Lemke, Director of Personnel Neil Sullivan, Director of Finance Amy Meriwether, and Recording Secretary Katie Wilde.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

None

Public Audience

BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Thomas reported on last week's Equity Council meeting. She stated that the group identified the events of the week culminating with COVID-19 and George Floyd. During the meeting black minority members came together as one community. Ms. Thomas noted that the work of the council needs to move forward. She noted that there is a lot of good in our community, and the good will rise to the top.

Communications

Ms. Lemke stated that the Equity Council has developed an action plan for next steps. A statement with core beliefs, and a stance on the actions we need to take, will be brought before the board at the next meeting. The Equity Council will continue to meet over the summer. Data will be aggregated in different ways to inform future practices. Ms. Lemke noted that the town Spirit Council will hold a meeting on June 25. Ms. Thomas stated that the BOS is considering adding a banner to a walkway, similar to the pride banner.

Mr. Tindall thanked the administration and staff for getting through another school year. He noted the success of the HJMS virtual talent show. Ms. Tedone noted that there have been communications across the community on the equity front over the past week. She stated that calls and meetings with the commissioner regarding summer school and the fall continue to occur.

Ms. Willerup stated that members of the Equity Council are an amazing group and include community members, teachers and students, all who have a lot of hope. She congratulated the seniors in the Class of 2020. Ms. Willerup noted that a senior car parade will be held on Thursday at 5:00 p.m. Graduation Friday evening will be live-streamed by SCTV and available on radio station 103.5.

Ms. Batchelar stated that SHS seniors coordinated a well-attended protest on Friday. She noted that the speakers were impressive and the tone of the message was positive. Mr. Watson gave a big thank you to the administration, teachers, parents and students for hanging in there the past 3 months. He noted that things were not perfect, but he was impressed with how the district went about it.

Mr. Burrick stated he is proud of the Equity Council work in Simsbury and that it was already in place when the recent national conversation started. He noted it is an excellent forum to continue the conversation.

Ms. Lemke reported that we continue to plan for extended school year (ESY) summer programming. The governor's guidance has many stipulations and we are planning for small group face to face sessions.

Mr. Sullivan reported that we had 2 non-certified retirements in the office at Squadron Line School. Deb Pinkham and Donna Richardson both retired this spring. Ms. Murray echoed board member comments on the Equity Council, car parade and graduation. She stated that she has been collaborating with a dozen other Hartford area Assistant Superintendents where they share the work they are doing during the school closure. The next meeting is in 2 weeks and all are anxious to receive guidance from the state.

### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

#### A. Approval of Minutes of May 26, 2020 Meeting

Ms. Willerup: MOVE to approve the minutes of the May 26, 2020 meeting.

Ms. Batchelar: Seconded. So moved.

#### B. Personnel

Ms. Willerup: MOVE that the Board of Education regretfully accept the retirement of Kurt Dougan effective July 1, 2020.

Ms. Thomas: Seconded. So moved

#### C. Approval of Unaffiliated Salary Adjustments

Mr. Tindall: MOVE that the salary range for the unaffiliated Board of Education employees be increased by an average of 2.1% for the 2020-21 fiscal year with individual position increases being determined by the Superintendent of Schools.

Ms. Tedone: Seconded. So moved.

#### D. Approval of Purchasing Policy Revisions

Mr. Burrick: MOVE to adopt revised Board of Education purchasing policies, as noted, effective June 9, 2020.

Ms. Thomas: Seconded. So moved.

#### E. Approval of 2020-21 Textbooks

Ms. Thomas: MOVE that the Board approve the textbook adoption for the 2020-21 school year as submitted by the administration.

Ms. Batchelar: Seconded. So moved.

### INFORMATION AND REPORTS

#### A. Task Force Updates

Mr. Sullivan stated that the Return to Simsbury Schools (RSS) Task Force is

Approval of  
Minutes of May  
26, 2020

Personnel

Approval of  
Unaffiliated  
Salary  
Adjustments

Approval of  
Purchasing  
Policy Revisions

Approval of  
2020-21  
Textbooks

Task Force  
Updates

discussing the approach to opening Simsbury schools in the fall, relative to operations and safety challenges. The district is awaiting guidance from the state on the reopening of schools. Mr. Sullivan noted the format of the task force meetings. Each department leader provides a 5 minute update on what they're working on and then takes questions. At the forefront is the procurement of safety supplies and management of health screenings, which are being planned by our Director of Health Services, Sue Beardsley.

The maintenance/custodial staff are represented by senior custodians Luis Moquette (SHS) and Rodney Craft (Squadron Line School). Misting sanitizing machines have been purchased, as well as hand sanitizing machines for all schools. Cleaning protocols are being established as well as logs to track what has been done.

The state released guidelines for summer school transportation. They are very restrictive and it will be a challenge for Salter's Express should they remain in place in the fall. Jason Casey, Director of Systems Technology, is preparing for the likelihood of some distance learning in the fall. Kyra Sheehan, Accountant/Budget Analyst, is tracking expenses related to COVID for potential reimbursement.

Mark Critz, Director of Safety & Security, is planning protocols for student drop off and pick up, health screenings, signage, and other logistical challenges. Lorrie Lescarbeau, Director of Nutrition Services, is planning for non-typical cafeteria services that may include grab and go, eating outside or in classrooms, while brainstorming other options.

Cindi Freiling, Human Resources Coordinator, is addressing the employee challenges such as employees who cannot return to work, employees who may need to take on different roles, and return to work protocols. Mr. Sullivan noted that central office and school office staff will return to work on June 22. Ms. Lemke is working on mental health and student outreach when students return to school. She is also planning for medical fragile students who are unlikely to return to school.

Mr. Sullivan stated that building based members of the RSS Task Force include SHS Principal Steve Patrina, HJMS Principal Scott Baker, Latimer Lane Principal, Squadron Line Assistant Principal Jacqueline Petrella and St. Mary's Principal Margaret Williamson. Additional members include SEED Program Director Nikki Mahan, Director of Athletics Jeff Pinney, Director of School Counseling Jane Peregrin, SEA President Jamie Sepa, SFEP representative Susan Healey, elementary parent Jenna Caulfield and secondary parent Shawna Becene.

Mr. Burrick asked if the state can change the CIAC guidelines. Mr. Sullivan responded that the state could change the plan, but the CIAC guidelines only address athletics between July 6 and August 8 and limits groups to 10 students meeting outside with 3 one hour sessions per week.

Mr. Burrick questioned whether employees can opt out of returning to work on June 22. Mr. Sullivan stated that employees can reach out to Human Resources. He noted that he had individual conversations with everyone in central office, and asked principals to do the same with their staff, to discuss whether they were comfortable with returning to work

Mr. Tindall asked what we will do if a parent is not ready for their child to return to school in the fall. Mr. Sullivan stated that we will reach out to parents in July. He noted the possibility of those teachers who cannot return offering distance learning for students who do not return.

Ms. Thomas asked if we have identified a timeframe for surveying our families, and if we are considering in-school instruction for the primary grades and distance learning for the secondary grades. Mr. Sullivan responded that we will be surveying parents as to whether they will have their children return to school. Once we receive guidance from the state we expect the most important group to return to school will be the younger students, with possibly a hybrid model for older students. Mr. Sullivan stated that we hope guidance will come by the end of June so that we have July and August to plan.

Mr. Watson asked if there has been any talk about starting school earlier. Mr. Sullivan noted that this is popular with colleges, but for public schools changing the calendar would require talking to unions as the work year is defined in their contracts. Ms. Thomas asked if the unions have offered solutions or are open to changes. Mr. Sullivan stated that he and Mr. Curtis meet with the SEA presidents weekly, and until state guidelines are released this has not been an item for discussion. Ms. Salina pointed out that without guidelines from the state these things are theoretical.

Ms. Murray reported on the Reopen Simsbury Public Schools Teaching & Learning Team. The team is planning for what learning will look like for students in August. The focus is on curriculum, instruction and assessment, and most importantly the social and emotional wellbeing of our students and faculty. The design for curriculum, instruction and assessment needs to be flexible in case we need to move into a distance learning model. The team will discuss and review the feedback from teachers, students and families to make the best decisions we can moving forward. The team will use lessons learned over the past 3 months to improve instruction. Coming behind the RSS Task Force, not knowing what the models might be, makes it difficult to speak in definitive ways at this point. It will be critical for the team to outline the steps and actions necessary to plan for various models.

Ms. Murray stated that the team will address the learning gaps and plan ways we can emphasize support students on a social/emotional level. The focus will be on teaching and learning, but we want to know where students are at the point when they return. We want to re-acclimate them to school so they can receive the most appropriate and engaging instruction possible.

Ms. Murray reviewed the membership of the committee. There is a 3 tiered approach. District administrators are in Tier 1, department supervisors, coaches and resource teachers are in Tier 2, and teacher leaders and parent representatives are in Tier 3. Three meetings have been held with district administrators, a Tier 2 meeting is scheduled next week, and a Tier 3 meeting will be scheduled the following week. Ms. Murray reviewed the role of each school administrator in the work of the team. She noted that the Curriculum Committee will hold meetings to keep updated on the progress of the team.

Ms. Murray discussed the plan for teaching and learning: Assess student impact, plan for change and uncertainty, keep teachers focused on what matters, increase student engagement without sacrificing alignment. She stated that in assessing student impact we need to know where students stand socially, emotionally and academically as we realize there will be learning losses along the way. Planning for change and uncertainty includes the need to be flexible, as we are uncertain of what the timeframe will look like.

Ms. Murray noted the importance of keeping our teachers focused on what matters: Relationships, instruction, and feedback from stakeholders to continuously focus on

the work we are doing. We must increase student engagement without sacrificing alignment, by making sure we capture the competencies and skills they learned so they are able to re-engage in student learning as they move onto the next grade during the entry period. She stated that it is important that proper supports are in place for all students as move forward into the fall of 2020.

Ms. Murray discussed the goals of the team's work. Identifying essential curriculum and immediate prerequisite skills students are going to need. Identifying initial units and learning targets that go along with them. Talking about what schedules will look like, depending on which grade levels come back, and what that instruction will look like. Additionally, what specials will look like with all of the restrictions in place.

Over the summer, distance learning activities will be provided on our website for students. We will not collect technology from those who borrowed from the district until August 3. We will also continue to offer ongoing professional learning for teachers over the summer. We have purchased more technology so that every student in the classroom will have the ability to take a device home, if needed. These include iPads for grades K and 1<sup>st</sup>, Chromebooks for grades 2-6. We want to make sure we are using the most efficient technology and applications. We need to be certain that if we start with distance learning, or start school and switch to distance learning, that learning is not interrupted.

Ms. Murray stated that the team will focus on data in the decision making process. We know that students need more face to face instruction and for teachers to be more readily available to answer student questions. Professional learning on technology will continue to be available to teachers in the fall.

Ms. Murray stated that the team is focused on resilience, rebuilding relationships, ongoing student learning, and communication with all stakeholders. She stated that our wish is to get guidance and direction so we can be clearer about what our model will be and work with our teachers. We also need to get our teachers re-acclimated. Many teachers and parents have indicated that want to part of the team's summer work, and we will have those conversations once we have more clarity in moving forward.

Ms. Willerup stated that she is glad to see the importance of the social/emotional piece that addresses all of our students. Ms. Lemke noted that incorporation of the social/emotional piece into our curriculum is part of our strategic plan in years 3-5, but the pandemic has spawned it earlier as it needs to be embedded into our culture.

Mr. Tindall asked if the secondary level goes back in the fall, would teachers move between classes rather than students. Ms. Murray responded that as part of the entry process we are looking more at adults moving rather than students. We will need to look at a schedule that accommodates this type of instruction. Mr. Sullivan noted that there will be potential schedule changes, possibly with students taking less classes or juniors and seniors having more of a college like experience with shorter time in class and more independent work.

Ms. Thomas asked what we are seeing with new enrollment. Mr. Sullivan responded that new registrations are slow. Ms. Thomas asked the status of increasing our bandwidth for technology. Ms. Murray stated that the work is underway and the need for use of webcams is part of the solution.

Ms. Batchelar asked if there is any hope of a regular start to the next school year. Ms. Murray replied that the expectation is that school will open in some model in

August. Mr. Sullivan noted that if the 6' social distancing rule is in place, we can fit approximately 12 individuals per classroom. Ms. Thomas asked about the results of the student survey on distance learning. Ms. Murray stated that the results are being shared with principals and students.

Ms. Meriwether reported that the preliminary town and BOE audit started this week. The school district is anticipated to receive approximately \$97,000 from the CARES Act. Ms. Thomas requested that Ms. Meriwether report monthly on the school district's COVID expenses.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

None

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Willerup: MOVE to adjourn the meeting at 8:29 p.m.

Ms. Batchelar: Seconded. So moved.

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Jen Batchelar  
Secretary

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Katie Wilde  
Recording Secretary

Public Audience

Adjournment

**TOWN OF SIMSBURY  
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Record of Proceedings

Special Meeting

June 16, 2020

Ms. Susan Salina called the virtual meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

Roll Call:

**Members present:** Mmes. Susan Salina, Tara Willerup, Lydia Tedone and Sharon Thomas. Messrs. Todd Burrick, Jeff Tindall and Brian Watson.

**Members absent:** Mrs. Jen Batchelar

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Ms. Thomas: **MOVE** that the Board of Education enter executive session to discuss the evaluation of the superintendent.

Ms. Willerup: Seconded. So moved.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Burrick: **MOVE** to adjourn the meeting at 7:05 p.m.

Mr. Thomas: Seconded. So moved.

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Jennifer Batchelar  
Secretary

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Katie Wilde  
Recording Secretary

Executive  
Session

Adjournment



MEMORANDUM TO: Members of the Board of Education  
FROM: Matthew T. Curtis  
DATE: June 23, 2020  
RE: Personnel Recommendations

**I. Resignation**

**Nicole Levesque**

Assignment Math Teacher, Simsbury High School  
Simsbury Exp 4 years  
Effective June 30, 2020

**Allison Woodruff**

Assignment Elementary Teacher, Squadron Line  
Simsbury Exp 2 years  
Effective June 30, 2020

**BOARD MOTION:**

“MOVE that the Board of Education accept the resignations of Nicole Levesque and Allison Woodruff effective June 30, 2020.”

MTC:cdf

MEMORANDUM TO: Members of the Board of Education

FROM: Matthew T. Curtis  
Superintendent of Schools

DATE: June 23, 2020

RE: Equity Update

Equity continues to be at the forefront of our district strategic planning and action steps, especially in light of our national landscape. Tonight, Ms. Sue Homrok-Lemke will provide an update from the Equity Council's most recent meeting and considerations for the coming months. Specifically, Ms. Homrok-Lemke will share the:

- proposed district equity statement, inclusive of definition, stance and core beliefs
- process by which the statement was derived
- description of how the definition, stance and core beliefs will be used in our strategic planning
- recommended next steps for the Summer of 2020 and the 2020-2021 school year

There will be opportunity for your questions and feedback.