

**TOWN OF SIMSBURY
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Record of Proceedings

Regular Meeting

January 23, 2024

Mr. Jeff Tindall called the meeting to order at 6:32 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 Infrastructure & Technology Jason Casey, BOE Student Representative Matthew Picoult and Recording Secretary Katie Wilde.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

None.

Public Audience

COMMITTEE REPORTS/BOE COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Picoult reported on activities at SHS. He stated that the second spirit rally will be held on Friday. He also noted that the girls basketball team is 12-1, the boys hockey team is 7-1, and the wrestling team is 10-0. Mr. Picoult stated that 20 girls from HJMS will be participating in the Girls in Engineering program this year, and he noted the CT school art award SHS recipients.

Communications

Ms. Tedone stated the legislature convenes on February 5 and the legislative breakfast will be held at the state capital on February 20. She noted the school priorities for the legislature: science of reading, special ed funding, mandates, construction, out of district transportation and magnet school grants. Ms. Tedone reported that she will be attending the NSBA annual meeting and equity symposium in Washington, D.C. Ms. Willerup reported on the Simsbury annual MLK day celebration and thanked all who participated.

Mr. Sullivan stated he participated in emergency preparedness meetings at Squadron Line, Tariffville and SHS. These 3 schools are potential shelter sites in town. The meeting included the fire department, school principal, head custodian and our facilities supervisor. Mr. Tindall urged everyone to attend Guys and Dolls with performances beginning February 2 at SHS.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- A. Approval of Minutes of January 9, 2024

Ms. Thomas: MOVE to approve the minutes of the January 9, 2024 meeting.

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

Approval of
Minutes of
January 9, 2024

INFORMATION AND REPORTS

A. 2024-25 Budget – Enrollment and Staffing

2024-25 Budget
Enrollment &
Staffing

Mr. Sullivan stated that the budget process begins in November as principals and directors build their budgets. He noted that 80% of the budget is related to personnel. Mr. Sullivan presented a 4 year history of K-12 enrollment, noting the number of elementary students increased by 159 while enrollment 7-12 remained stable.

Mr. Sullivan provided data on staffing over the past 4 years, noting the increase of 13.62 certified positions. He stated the increase in full time equivalent (FTE) staff is attributed to enrollment trends at the elementary level, mental health supports, and new special ed positions. Mr. Sullivan pointed out the very slight increase in non-certified positions and the decrease in administrative positions over these 4 years.

Mr. Sullivan provided data on elementary classroom teacher staffing. He noted that 2020-21 was a temporary bubble due to COVID and the need for social distancing in classrooms. Next year the staffing projection is flat with one additional teacher at Latimer Lane and one fewer teacher at Tootin' Hills.

Mr. Sullivan stated that the elementary staffing focus for next year is on special ed supports. These requests include (1) two elementary Intensive Learning Needs teachers, (2) an Intensive Learning Needs Program Coordinator, (3) a preschool special ed teacher, (4) a .5 reading teacher at Central School, and (5) a .2 strings teacher increase. The budget impact for these 4.7 FTE is \$482,563. Mr. Sullivan noted that the FTE cost is determined utilizing an average salary with a benefits package, the equivalent of \$101,609.

Mr. Sullivan addressed staffing at HJMS. He noted that next year's incoming 7th grade class is much larger than this year's outgoing 8th grade class. Three teams in 7th and 8th grade next year means an increase of .4 more sections for each core subject. The projected reduced enrollment at SHS will allow for a shift in staff to cover the needs at HJMS. Mr. Sullivan stated that HJMS has requested the addition of a reading teacher and the administration will look for ways to absorb these needs with existing staff. Mr. Curtis noted that the population with reading needs is mostly special ed students. He also noted that special ed teachers at the elementary level may not have the skill set or certification needed as a reading teacher.

Mr. Sullivan addressed staffing requests at SHS. These requests include the addition of a special ed teacher and a .2 ASL teacher as the American Sign Language program has become quite popular at SHS and will move from 4 to 5 classes next year. Mr. Sullivan stated that after course selection is completed, the administration can look at where we can shift teachers over to HJMS. Mr. Tindall questioned why, with a reduction of 50 students over 5 years, we have the same staffing at SHS. Mr. Sullivan responded that the class sizes have been good at SHS and there hasn't been a need to cut positions.

Mr. Sullivan reviewed additional considerations relative to district staffing. At SHS there has been a request for culinary program support as this program continues to grow. Also, additional adult support for the Writing Center so it can remain open more consistently. Mr. Sullivan stated that we continue to have a substitute shortage. We currently have 1-2 building substitutes and we would like to increase that to 2 in

each building. The administration would like to continue with increases in lower wage positions such that we stay slightly above minimum wage. We will also continue to examine non-certified resignations and retirements as we attempt to offset some spending on the certified side. Mr. Tindall asked if these additional considerations are included in the budget. Mr. Curtis responded that they have not been included in this evening's presentation numbers, and a decision will be made as to whether they are included in the superintendent's budget proposal.

Mr. Sullivan reviewed the personnel budget themes, noting that new staffing requests represent 6.9 FTE with special ed services a clear priority. Mr. Tindall asked if we are near an enrollment tipping point. Mr. Sullivan responded that if NESDEC's projections are close, we are okay for next year but we are always monitoring enrollment. Mr. Tindall asked about space in the schools. Mr. Sullivan stated that at Squadron Line School space is stressed and there is the possibility of space needs at Tariffville School. He noted that the Latimer Lane School renovation will help to relieve some of the stress.

B. Capital Improvement Plan

Mr. Curtis stated that Mr. Casey will review the capital improvement projects included in the 2024-25 fiscal year. Mr. Casey addressed the roof replacement project at Tootin' Hills School. He noted that sections of the roof have reached the end of their 20 year life expectancy. Mr. Casey reviewed the SHS auditorium and amphitheater improvements. In the amphitheater replacement of the flooring and seating are needed. Mr. Casey noted that during COVID the amphitheater was utilized as a makeshift cafeteria for students. The auditorium's theater lighting and sound systems need to be replaced. Mr. Casey noted that most of the theater lighting is the original incandescent equipment from 1968 and is very inefficient.

Mr. Casey addressed the district network infrastructure which is a biennial capital project that provides for upgrades and improvements to the district's network infrastructure. This project will consolidate the server that controls fob access to all of the schools into a single system. Currently there are 3 separate systems in use.

Mr. Casey discussed flooring improvements. He noted that many of the schools have areas where the flooring is beyond its life expectancy and visibly worn out. Mr. Casey stated that we have tried to address these projects through CNR but with the purchase of 2 buses per year through CNR there are not enough remaining funds to cover these costs. In response to Mr. Tindall, Mr. Casey stated that the amount of CNR funding has not changed in 30 years. Mr. Casey suggested that flooring improvements become part of the biennial capital fund to catch up and get into a regular replacement schedule.

Ms. Parise asked if the Tootin' Hills roof project could be pushed out. Mr. Casey responded that these sections are from 1995 and if pushed out the project would be pushed into a crowded location on the capital improvement plan. Mr. Curtis noted that it is not a dollar for dollar savings with capital as it is with the operating budget. Ms. Batchelar questioned the type of flooring that will be installed. Mr. Casey responded that we are installing only non-carpet floors.

Ms. Thomas asked about the request for Writing Center support. Ms. Lemke responded that currently there are some certified teachers in this role, but it is

Capital Improvement Plan

dependent on when they have free time. The addition of a non-certified staff member would allow the center to be open all day. Mr. Picoult stated that he is a writing tutor and teachers are available for support during periods 1, 5 and 7. He expressed concern that the student body doesn't always know when the center is open.

C. Quarterly Budget Analysis

Mr. Curtis stated that year end projections will be discussed at the budget workshop. He noted that grant revenue is stable outside of the Excess Cost Grant. Mr. Curtis stated that the biggest challenge is third party special ed transportation costs and the increase in tuition for out of district student placements. Ms. Thomas requested that the costs for out of district transportation be provided to the board.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Willerup: MOVE to adjourn the meeting at 7:55 p.m.

Mr. Watson: Seconded. So moved.

Sharon Thomas
Secretary

Katie Wilde
Recording Secretary

Quarterly
Budget Analysis

Public Audience

Adjournment