

**TOWN OF SIMSBURY
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Record of Proceedings

Regular Meeting

March 26, 2024

Mr. Jeff Tindall called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m. in the gymnasium at Central School.

Roll Call:

Members present: Mmes. Jen Batchelar, Lydia Tedone, and Sharon Thomas. Messrs. Jeff Tindall and Josh Falco.

Members absent: Mmes. Tara Willerup and Jessica Parise. Mr. Brian Watson.

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

RECOGNITIONS

Mr. Curtis recognized the SHS Girls Basketball Team for their 1st ever win of the state championship. He noted the team’s best 4 year winning percentage in school history, winning 77-15 or 84%. This was also the first team in school history to be ranked in the polls for the entire season. Mr. Curtis noted that both Amanda Gallagher and Olivia Jarvis are 1,000 point scorers. He pointed out how the level of teamwork, commitment to each other and their philosophy allowed them to produce at a high level. Girls Basketball Coach Sam Zullo stated he lets the girls be themselves and for the first time we had 2 players receive All State honors. Mr. Curtis noted that Mr. Zullo became the all-time winningest coach this year and is committed to the basketball youth in the community.

Recognitions

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

None.

Public Audience

COMMITTEE REPORTS/BOE COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Picoult reported that DEIB week will be held next week at SHS. On Monday a Spirit Rally will be held and include a steel drum performance, the Gertrude Banks Gospel Choir, and a celebration of winter sports teams. Mr. Picoult noted that the girls fencing team made it to the state tournament for the first time and the Robotics Team is competing in the New England Championship this weekend.

Communications

Ms. Tedone reported on the NSBA conference she will attend next week, stating that she will be involved in two presentations along with CREC. She stated the CT Education Committee of the legislature is done with their final bills. The deadline for bill submission is April 15.

Mr. Tindall thanked the board members for their budget discussion at last week’s meeting. He noted that the budget public hearing will be held on April 3.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

A. Approval of Central School Roof Plans & Project Manual

Approval of

Mr. Sullivan stated that the Central School and Tariffville roofs are summer projects and the process for state reimbursement requires a board vote.

Central School
Roof Plans &
Project Manual

Mr. Falco: MOVE to approve the final plans and project manual, dated March 4, 2024, prepared by Jacunski Humes Architects, LLC for the Central School reroofing and related work project.

Ms. Batchelar: Seconded. So moved.

Mr. Falco: MOVE to approve the Central School reroofing Project Budget Cost Estimate, dated March 15, 2024, prepared by Jacunski Humes Architects, LLC in the amount of \$369,983.

Ms. Batchelar: Seconded. So moved.

Mr. Falco: MOVE to approve the Superintendent, Matthew T. Curtis and Board Chair, Jeff Tindall to sign the Department of Administrative Services from SCG-042 to request a review of the final plans and project manual prepared by Jacunski Humes Architects, LLC for the Central School reroofing and related work project.

Ms. Batchelar: Seconded. So moved.

B. Approval of Tariffville School Roof Plans & Project Manual

Approval of
Tariffville School
Roof Plans &
Project Manual

Ms. Thomas: MOVE to approve the final plans and project manual, dated November 10, 2023, prepared by Jacunski Humes Architects, LLC for the Tariffville School reroofing and related work project.

Ms. Tedone: Seconded. So moved.

Ms. Thomas: MOVE to approve the Tariffville School reroofing Project Budget Cost Estimate, dated June 26, 2023, prepared by Jacunski Humes Architects, LLC in the amount of \$975,736.

Ms. Tedone: Seconded. So moved.

Ms. Thomas: MOVE to approve the Superintendent, Matthew T. Curtis and Board Chair, Jeff Tindall to sign the Department of Administrative Services from SCG-042 to request a review of the final plans and project manual prepared by Jacunski Humes Architects, LLC for the Tariffville School reroofing and related work project.

Ms. Tedone: Seconded. So moved.

C. Cancellation of April 9, 2024 Regular Meeting

Cancellation of
April 9, 2024
Meeting

Ms. Tedone: MOVE to cancel the Board of Education meeting scheduled on April 9, 2024.

Ms. Batchelar: Seconded. So moved.

INFORMATION AND REPORTS

A. Fine Arts Program Report

Fine Arts Program Report

Ms. Lemke introduced Shannon Gagne, Visual Art K-12 Department Supervisor, and noted there are many things to celebrate as a result of the robust and rigorous K-12 art curriculum.

Ms. Gagne addressed her leadership priorities. (1) K-12: Vision of the Graduate/ Capstone. She stated that capstone projects are possible in all 2-D, 3-D, or technology strands with 10 choices of media and processes. Ms. Gagne noted that next year 48 students are enrolled in the AP/Capstone Mastery Based Credit program. (2) Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging. DEIB week sessions being presented by 7 art teachers and 10 art students, with teachers supporting student led sessions. (3) Continuous Improvement. Student developed digital portfolios take you through the process and product, and allows students to share their art portfolios with others through the Artsonia digital gallery.

Ms. Gagne discussed staff achievements. Simsbury art teachers participated in the CAEA conference. Central School art teacher Tara Harrison is a committee member of Adding Voices. Megan Lavoie, Shannon Gagne and student Hannah Granger led professional development for administrators across the state on mastery-based learning in the arts. SHS unified art teacher, Kristie Arbesman received the 2023 CT Outstanding Special Needs Educator of the Year award. Stephanie Lauretano was accepted to participate in a 2 week assistant training residency this summer with renowned glass artist Rose Hawley. Many of the art teachers have exhibited their work.

Ms. Gagne noted student achievements. 9 SHS and 4 HJMS student were recognized for their achievements during the annual CT Regional Scholastic Art Awards, garnering a total of 18 awards. Three students received 4 year Scholastic Art Award Scholarships from the University of Hartford ranging between \$92,000 and \$124,000. 5 art students' artwork was selected for awards during the Simsbury Public Library and Simsbury Cameral Club Teen Photo contest. Ms. Gagne noted the students who were CT Association of Schools (CAS) art award recipients. She pointed out the national recognition received by Nana-Poku Boakye whose photo "Silenced" hangs in the halls of the U.S. Capitol. Ms. Gagne noted the teachers and students who are exhibiting together at the 31st Annual National Arts Program at Artspace Gallery in Hartford during the month of March.

Ms. Gagne addressed the challenges for her department. She expressed concern with the SHS schedule, such that students are able to get into the classes they want so they can be in a mastery class senior year. She noted that currently there are 51 students enrolled in 10 different media strands next year at SHS. Ms. Gagne also addressed the challenges with elementary scheduling and giving teachers enough prep time to teach 7 different grade levels.

With regard to financial implications for the department, Ms. Gagne noted that art is a project based discipline and costs have increased for materials and shipping. She stated their commitment to offering choice and voice, fostering innovation, and designing student-centered lessons. Ms. Lemke stated that the art department takes

a student's passion and makes it work broadly and deeply so that students have the ability to compete at the state and federal level. Ms. Gagne noted that the art department staff are lifelong learners along with the students.

Ms. Gagne discussed the support needed for the department. This includes retention of the top talent we have in place, sustained administrative support, dedicated professional development (PD) time and preserving Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). She noted the art shows held at each of the schools.

Ms. Thomas asked how often the department has PD and holds PLCs. Ms. Gagne responded that PLCs are held once per week and PD is throughout the year. Ms. Batchelar asked if the department needs help with board support at the elementary level. Ms. Gagne stated that it is a challenge and hard work due to the amount of preps and sequence of preps with so many age groups. Ms. Lemke noted that teachers work with principals regarding scheduling.

Ms. Batchelar asked if elementary and secondary teachers meet vertically. Ms. Gagne responded that they have the opportunity to meet vertically through EduPlanet, shared artifacts and shared Google docs. Ms. Lemke noted that they also work vertically on PD days.

Ms. Thomas questioned how the art shows are publicized. Ms. Gagne stated they publicize via social media, principals' listserv, posting on the website and posters at local businesses.

Mr. Tindall asked if the administration would like to share anything relative to communications. Ms. Lemke noted that April 2 is a full day of PD. Mr. Sullivan reported on Latimer Lane School, stating that 11 classrooms will be returned to the school over April vacation and 6 rooms will be given to the contractor for completion through June. Ms. Meriwether reported that she presented the BOF with various scenarios to reduce taxes. She stated that the CNR proposal was taken favorably by the BOF.

B. Central School Report

Beth Hennessy, Central School Principal, reviewed the schools vision statement that was 2 years in the making. It focuses on student growth and success, a compassionate and connected school culture, and our premier workforce. She noted that the vision statement guides the school community and is based on the board's strategic plan.

Ms. Hennessy addressed student growth and success. She noted that PLCs were pushed aside as a result of the pandemic, but are now up and running with one grade level meeting per week as well as special ed and specials PLCs. Ms. Hennessy stated that collaboration with the special ed department has put systems and structures together, noting the addition of a third special ed teacher resulted in smaller caseloads.

Ms. Hennessy addressed professional learning at Central School. The faculty did some reading on best practices for small group instruction in reading. As a school community they set the expectations and created charts so they have a common understanding around the standards for reading and small group instruction. This

Central School
Report

strategy has been shared with all of the elementary schools so we have a common practice about what the expectations are for small group instructions. This has been a game changer for special ed students in the classroom. Ms. Hennessy noted that at the beginning of the year the reading data was at 75% and mid-year went up to 81%.

Ms. Hennessy stated that the Think! Math program is being piloted in grades 1 and 3 this year at Central School. These teachers are creating the guide for implementation next year. Ms. Hennessy noted that there is an increased level of engagement with this math program.

Ms. Hennessy addressed a compassionate and connected school culture at Central School. She stated that feedback was collected after the pandemic and parents wanted more time to be in school, students wanted more activities, and teachers were missing connections with kids. Ms. Hennessy provided examples of how the feedback is being addressed.

Ms. Hennessy discussed the concept of "Buildership" which encompasses enlisting the support of teachers, students and families as key players in the school improvement process. She stated that last year she worked with faculty to build the practices for the school. Ms. Hennessy reviewed the student leadership opportunities at the school. She noted the importance of the professional learning opportunities and the value of the ELA and math coaches as we continue to keep a premier workforce in place.

Ms. Hennessy addressed current and future challenges. She noted that the special education service delivery model is constantly being tweaked. Building teacher capacity to respond to student needs is being addressed through PD days. The new SEL curriculum and the Think! Math program will both be implemented next year. Ms. Hennessy thanked the board for investing in Central School by adding social workers, a Special Ed department supervisor and a Special Ed teacher. She noted that many parts of the building are outdated which presents challenges.

Mr. Tindall asked if space is an issue at the school. Ms. Hennessy responded that they have enough space, but would not be able to add another classroom. Ms. Thomas stated that it is nice to hear that decisions by the board have had an impact on the school.

B. 2022-23 Audit Report

Ms. Meriwether reported that the final budget for 2022-23 ended with a \$3,189 surplus. This was after transfers out. The general fund balance is at 16%, which is within the policy of 15%-17% to stay inline with AAA rated communities. Any overage goes into the capital fund. Ms. Meriwether stated that again this year the auditor has recommended the development of a comprehensive accounting procedures manual for the town and BOE finance offices. It is anticipated that this manual will be completed by the end of the year. Ms. Meriwether stated the auditor has also recommended that the town and BOE have a Fraud Risk Assessment performed. The plan is to send out a request for proposals post budget season in May or June. Ms. Meriwether noted that the auditors also audit our grants.

Mr. Falco asked if the town has ever had any fraud issues. Ms. Meriwether

2022-23 Audit Report

responded that there have been no issues during her tenure. She noted that the auditors do fraud procedures in areas unknown to us during their audit.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Tedone: MOVE to adjourn the meeting at 7:56 p.m.

Ms. Thomas: Seconded. So moved.

Sharon Thomas
Secretary

Katie Wilde
Recording Secretary

Public Audience

Adjournment