

**TOWN OF SIMSBURY  
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Record of Proceedings

Regular Meeting

November 12, 2024

Mr. Jeff Tindall called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. in the gymnasium at Latimer Lane School.

Roll Call:

**Members present:** Mmes. Jen Batchelar, Lydia Tedone, Tara Willerup and Jessica Parise. Messrs. Jeff Tindall, Brian Watson and Josh Falco. Sharon Thomas arrived at 6:36 p.m.

**Also present:** Superintendent Matt Curtis, Assistant Superintendent Sue Homrok-Lemke, Assistant Superintendent Neil Sullivan, Director of Infrastructure & Technology Jason Casey, and Recording Secretary Katie Wilde.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

None.

Public Audience

COMMITTEE REPORTS/BOE COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Parise reported on the completion of the Latimer Lane School renovation project and the incredible facility and use of resources. Mr. Watson echoed her comments. Ms. Tedone noted her children attended Latimer Lane School in the 1990s and it will be heartwarming and nostalgic for her kids to see the school. She stated that she is attending the CABE/CAPSS convention this week. Ms. Tedone stated at the delegate assembly their platform for the legislative session will be discussed. She noted her work with NSBA and the Department of Education’s legislative priorities at the federal level.

Communications

Ms. Lemke reported on the November 5 full day of professional development with inspirational keynote speaker Deacon Art Miller. The day gave teachers the opportunity to work on their individual professional growth plans. Mr. Sullivan stated that the Latimer Lane School Open House will be held on Saturday, 10:00-1:00 and is open to all members of the public.

Ms. Thomas reported that the last couple of Policy Committee meetings have been cancelled, and noted that policy is important work for the board. Mr. Tindall expressed immense gratitude to the town at large for their support of the school project and education in town. He reported that the Finance Committee has met twice discussing the work of the budget season. Mr. Curtis noted that the SHS field hockey team is playing in the state quarterfinals this evening.

RECOGNITION

Ms. Lemke introduced Melanie Meehan, Lisa Jacobs, Kristin Fitch and Frank Zuliani. She noted that Beth Scudder and Rebecca Warchut are unable to attend. Ms. Lemke stated that this outstanding group of educators has worked to create a strategy to ignite the passion of student writers. Their proposal to present to the National Counsel of Teachers of English was accepted and they will be presenting in Boston next week. Challenged by shortened time for writing instruction, this group has met monthly for the past 3 years to brainstorm ideas and create writing initiatives

Recognition

for students.

### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

#### A. Approval of Minutes of October 22, 2024 Meeting

Mr. Watson: MOVE to approve the minutes of the October 22, 2024 meeting.

Ms. Parise: Seconded. So moved.

#### B. Approval of Policy Revisions

Ms. Thomas: MOVE to adopt the revised policy, 4209 – Prohibition of Sex Discrimination, Including Sex-Based Harassment, effective November 12, 2024.

Mr. Falco: Seconded. So moved.

Ms. Thomas: MOVE to adopt the revised policy 5145.51 – Prohibition of Sex Discrimination, Including Sex-Based Harassment, effective November 12, 2024.

Ms. Parise: Seconded. So moved.

#### C. Acceptance of Gift from Central School PTO

Ms. Tedone: MOVE that the proposed gift of \$3,400 to Central School by the Central School Parent-Teacher Organization be approved.

Ms. Parise: Seconded. So moved.

#### D. Cancellation of November 26, 2024 Regular Meeting

Ms. Batchelar: MOVE to cancel the Board of Education meeting scheduled on November 26, 2024.

Ms. Willerup: Seconded. So moved.

### INFORMATION AND REPORTS

#### A. Sustainability Committee Report

Mr. Curtis introduced Mark Scully, Chair of the Simsbury Sustainability Committee. Mr. Scully stated the primary role of the committee is to advise the BOS and BOE on sustainability policy for the town and public schools. He noted the members of the committee. Mr. Scully discussed the success of the Sustainability Fair held in May and pointed out the monthly Sustainability Newsletter.

Mr. Scully addressed the Sustainability Committee's vision to integrate sustainability into every aspect of town life. Currently they are focused on energy and waste. The committee has developed 4 steps to address energy usage in town: (1) promoting energy efficiency in new and existing buildings, (2) encouraging the deployment of

Approval of  
Minutes of  
October 22,  
2024

Approval of  
Policy Revisions

Gift from Central  
School PTO

Cancellation of  
Nov. 26, 2025  
meeting

Sustainability  
Committee  
Report

solar energy in town, (3) transitioning heating and cooling to electric heat pumps, and (4) transitioning transportation to electric vehicles. Mr. Scully stated that the greatest opportunity for energy conservation is the addition of solar when doing roof replacements.

Mr. Scully addressed waste in Simsbury, noting that the majority of waste in town is shipped out of state. He stated that he has been working with Principal Evans at Squadron Line School to address this issue, and asked that all schools educate their students about waste. The committee's goal is to meet the statewide goal of recycling 60% of waste.

Mr. Scully addressed the committee's next steps. These include support from the BOS and BOE on their plan, approval of the plan and implementation of the areas addressed in the plan. Ms. Thomas asked if committee members have gotten inside of the schools to talk with students. Mr. Scully responded that they are only involved with Squadron Line, but are working on setting up a conversation with the Nutrition Services Director. Mr. Curtis stated that the committee's priorities will be a focus point in the development of the new strategic plan. Mr. Scully stated the committee will be asking for support again in the upcoming budget process.

#### B. Elementary Curriculum Report

Ms. Lemke introduced Director of Elementary Curriculum, Betsy Gunsalus and Math Coach, Lisa Smith. Ms. Gunsalus addressed SBA ELA performance for grades 3-6, stating that 78% of students met or exceeded goal. There was significant improvement in grade 3 and cohort growth in grades 4 and 5. Ms. Gunsalus discussed the team approach in using data to look at strengths and where we need to grow.

Ms. Smith addressed SBA Math scores for grades 3-6, stating that 76% of students met or exceeded goal. She noted the 2% growth in the past 3 years and the addition of spiral review, coming back to skills learned earlier in the year, that has improved assessment performance. Ms. Smith stated that those students who piloted Think!Math last year demonstrated increased performance.

Ms. Gunsalus addressed SBA Science, noting the slight drop in grade 5 performance. She stated that 71% of 5<sup>th</sup> graders met or exceeded goal. Ms. Gunsalus stated that we are working to calibrate instruction, provide more NGSS practice and enhance science lessons so they are better aligned with NGSS.

Ms. Gunsalus discussed elementary priorities for the school year: Think!Mathematics, Science of Reading aligned curriculum, Special Education Collaboration, and Everyday Speech K-6. Ms. Smith stated that the math coaches met in the spring and developed the goals for math this year: ensuring lesson structure is evident in all classrooms; plan and coach consistently with grade level teams including special education teacher partners; refine assessment practices; communicate and partner with families; and monitor student achievement and respond accordingly.

Ms. Gunsalus addressed the Science of Reading, stating the guidelines are based on research and the Vision of a Graduate. The new requirements from the state resulted in forming a district committee to vet the programs recommended by the

Elementary  
Curriculum  
Report

state. The next step is to pilot a unit in classrooms before making a final determination on the curriculum.

Ms. Gunsalus stated that Everyday Speech includes 2 SEL lessons per week in grades K-5, utilizing the five Casel competencies. Special Education collaboration is more systemic with classroom teachers and special education teachers looking at data for all students and planning collaboratively. Ms. Gunsalus noted that managing the pace of change for teachers, students and families is a challenge. She stated there may a budgetary impact due to the new materials needed for the Science of Reading curriculum.

Mr. Tindall asked if we are reaching out to parents as to what they're seeing at home relative to the Science of Reading. Ms. Gunsalus responded that changes to curriculum are shared in the Back to School slides and there are discussions about talking at parent nights on how to support literacy at home. Mr. Tindall asked about the transition in math from grade 6 to grade 7. Ms. Gunsalus stated that there was a grade 6 teacher on the math committee, and 6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers spend time with 5<sup>th</sup> grade teachers to coordinate the transition.

Ms. Thomas asked what measures are used to assess against our goals. Ms. Gunsalus responded that she provides written goals to Mr. Curtis and Ms. Lemke and performance is measured against these goals. In assessing students, teachers look at patterns, bands of students, mastery of grade level standards and hold meetings with the principal. Ms. Thomas asked how we are addressing the science performance. Ms. Gunsalus stated it is being addressed through professional development, noting that multiple years of content could appear on an assessment. Ms. Lemke pointed out that as our students move through middle school and high school we continue to rank #1 and #2 on NGSS.

Ms. Parise asked whether we have reached out to other districts as to what they have chosen for their Science of Reading curriculum. Ms. Gunsalus stated that through her network and Ms. Lemke's network they have reached out to many districts and they are using a lot of different things.

C. Capital Improvement Plan

Mr. Curtis stated that the Finance Committee discussed the first year of the capital plan. With revaluation and a significant tax increase to residents, the decision was made to adjust our capital dollars and push some projects out a year.

Mr. Casey stated that the HJMS roof replacement has been postponed to a later date. The intention is to replace the roof in sections over the course of 3 years. The SHS grass field reallocation project received updated quotes and due to ADA access and the level of wetland work, the cost is significantly higher than anticipated so we will reevaluate looking at other field choices. Mr. Curtis stated that the goal was to maximize practice space, but the cost to develop these fields is equivalent to building a turf field. He noted that we need to look at the capital work done by Tecton and come back next year with a fresh plan.

Mr. Casey addressed security improvements, noting that this is funded in the capital budget every other year. The focus for next year would be updating security cameras. Mr. Casey stated that paving and line striping was moved into the capital

Capital Improvement Plan

budget on an every other year funding basis. These funds will allow us to maintain sidewalks, curbs, parking lots, and paved playground areas throughout the district. Mr. Curtis noted that with the small CNR allocation we can't get these projects done.

Ms. Thomas asked if security is up to date across the district. Mr. Casey responded yes, that these funds will be used for enhancements and improvements to further security.

D. 2025-26 Budget Calendar

Mr. Curtis noted that the timing of the budget workshop has been changed until after he presents the superintendent's budget.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

**Lori Boyko**, 15 Oakhurst Road, noted the comment by the Chair at the last meeting relative to welcoming public comment. She stated that parent participation is not appreciated at committee meetings. Ms. Boyko noted the concerns she has stated to the board during public audience and the fact that the board does not discuss controversial issues. She stated that board policies infringe on students, and the board exhibits indifference. Ms. Boyko urged the board to address concerns thoroughly and openly.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Willerup: MOVE to adjourn the meeting at 9:04 p.m.

Ms. Tedone: Seconded. So moved.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sharon Thomas  
Secretary

\_\_\_\_\_  
Katie Wilde  
Recording Secretary

2025-26 Budget  
Calendar

Public Audience

Adjournment