

**TOWN OF SIMSBURY
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Record of Proceedings

Regular Meeting

December 10, 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, Lydia Tedone, Tara Willerup, Sharon Thomas and Jessica Parise. Messrs. Jeff Tindall and Josh Falco

Members absent: Mr. Brian Watson

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 Macy Goetz and Recording Secretary Katie Wilde.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

None.

Public Audience

COMMITTEE REPORTS/BOE COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Goetz reported on elementary concerts and musical theater taking place in December. December 13 is CCMC PJ day for all students to raise money for childhood cancer. SHS spirit week will be held on the week leading up to break. An awards ceremony was held at SHS on December 4. On December 12 an internet safety expert program will be held for HJMS and SHS families.

Communications

Ms. Tedone reported that there is a new co-chair for the CT Education Committee. She noted that it is an early legislative session this year, and noted some of the working groups. Ms. Tedone spoke about the NSBA advocacy efforts.

Ms. Willerup thanked Ms. Goetz for utilization of her Volunteens app to support the Simsbury Celebrates event. She reported on the Curriculum Committee meeting during which the work of the AI committee was discussed, as the group looks at resources that can be used by staff. Discussion also took place about how the Vision of a Graduate is assessed and incorporated into the curriculum.

Ms. Lemke noted that tomorrow is an early release day with professional development taking place at all levels of the organization. Mr. Sullivan reported on the Latimer Lane School Open House that took place on November 16. He stated that it was a resounding success, with almost 600 people attending. Ten stations were set up around the school where 6th graders were stationed to talk with those taking the tour. Ms. Meriwether stated that the tri-board meeting will be held tomorrow at 7:00 p.m. at the Simsbury Public Library.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

A. Approval of Minutes of November 12, 2024 Meeting

Approval of
Minutes of

<p>Ms. Batchelar: MOVE to approve the minutes of the November 12, 2024 meeting.</p> <p>Ms. Willerup: Seconded. So moved.</p>	<p>November 12, 2024</p>
<p>B. Approval of Collective Bargaining Unit Agreement Between the Simsbury Board of Education and the National Association of Government Employees Local RI-425</p> <p>Mr. Sullivan reviewed the contract, noting that this is a new union that was formed last spring and is under the same national organization as the custodial and maintenance workers union.</p>	<p>Approval of NAGE Bargaining Unit Agreement</p>
<p>Ms. Thomas: MOVE that the Board of Education ratify the proposed changes in the collective bargaining agreement between the Simsbury Board of Education and the National Association of Governmental Employees Local RI-245 for the period July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2027.</p>	
<p>Ms. Parise: Seconded. So moved.</p> <p>C. Approval of Capital Improvement Plan</p>	
<p>Mr. Curtis reviewed the recommended items that were discussed at the last meeting. This includes delaying the HJMS roof project and the practice field reconfiguration at SHS. He stated that the 2 items that remain on the plan are the bi-annual funding of security improvements and paving and line striping which has been moved to capital as a bi-annual expense. Mr. Curtis noted that the total for the plan is \$850,000 which is a reduction of \$3 million from what was originally proposed, in light of the coming year's budget pressures.</p>	<p>Approval of Capital Improvement Plan</p>
<p>Ms. Parise: MOVE that the Board of Education Capital Improvement Plan for 2025-26 be approved, as presented.</p>	
<p>Ms. Batchelar: Seconded. So moved.</p>	
<p>D. Acceptance of Gift from R&D Dynamics</p> <p>Ms. Willerup: MOVE that the proposed gift to the SHS Robotics Club at Simsbury High School from the R&D Dynamics Corporation totaling \$3,000 be approved.</p>	<p>Gift from R&D Dynamics</p>
<p>Ms. Parise: Seconded. So moved.</p>	
<p>E. Acceptance of Gift to Tariffville School</p> <p>Ms. Batchelar: MOVE that the proposed gift of \$2,000 from an anonymous donor to Tariffville School be approved.</p>	<p>Gift to Tariffville School</p>
<p>Ms. Willerup: Seconded. So moved.</p>	
<p>F. Acceptance of Gift from Simsbury Social Services</p> <p>Ms. Tedone: MOVE that the proposed gift of \$2,500 to Simsbury High School by</p>	<p>Gift from Simsbury Social Services</p>

Simsbury Community & Social Services be approved.

Ms. Parise: Seconded. So moved.

G. Acceptance of Tariffville and Central School Roof Projects

Ms. Thomas: MOVE that the Simsbury Board of Education accepts as complete the reroofing and related work at Tariffville Elementary School project (128-0112 RR) and authorizes the acceptance of the school building grants.

Ms. Parise: Seconded. So moved.

Ms. Thomas: MOVE that the Simsbury Board of Education accepts as complete the reroofing and related work at Central Elementary School project (128-0113 RR) and authorized the acceptance of the school building grants.

Ms. Parise: Seconded. So moved.

H. Approval of 2025 BOE Meeting Schedule

Ms. Willerup: MOVE that the Board of Education set their 2025 meeting schedule as outlined in the December 10, 2024 board exhibit.

Ms. Thomas: Seconded. So moved.

INFORMATION AND REPORTS

A. SPS In-District Pupil Services Program

Mr. Tindall stated that this proposal is to assist in addressing the rapidly escalating costs of special education. Mr. Curtis stated that this evening Katie Krasula, Director of Pupil Services will present her vision for the program and Ms. Meriwether will address the financials. He noted that several properties for this program were looked at and Farms Village Road was chosen. Mr. Curtis stated that the BOS needs to approve the purchase, and then the BOF. The sale is in negotiations and a presentation to the BOS is anticipated in January, with a BOF public hearing in February. Mr. Curtis pointed out the CT BOE will potentially incentivize districts to move in this direction as out of district costs are rising rapidly.

Ms. Krasula stated the district has a significant cohort of students with complex emotional disabilities. Nine grade K-8 students are currently enrolled in the same local therapeutic day school servicing high needs behaviors with a tuition of \$96,200 per student. Three high school students are placed in programs across the greater Hartford area and three students are placed at the diagnostic center with behavioral needs.

Ms. Krasula addressed the Pathways program at SHS which is an in-district behavioral program that addresses their needs and gives these students a sense of community in their own town. She discussed why supporting our own in-district program is best. It allows for more financial control and budget planning, and allows the district to train our own staff and build our own capacity/experts.

Acceptance of
Tariffville and
Central School
Roof Projects

Approval of
2025 BOE
Meeting
Schedule

SPS In-District
Pupil Services
Program

Ms. Krasula addressed phases of the proposed program, noting that it is dependent on when we acquire the space. In Phase 1 of the proposal one of the current Pathways classrooms at SHS moves to the new space and we use current staffing for most needs. During this phase we will work to expand the vision to include K-8 students while creating criteria for student entrance and exit. In year 2 we will work to selectively market to area districts and bring some out of district students back through the PPT process. Ms. Meriwether addressed the anticipated cost in the first year, noting that the price of the building is still under negotiation. Ms. Thomas asked if we would bring back all 15 students. Ms. Krasula responded that it would be an individual decision through the PPT process.

Ms. Krasula addressed Phase 2 of the project which would include a 2 classroom build out, one for elementary and one for high school/middle school. The initial thinking is to utilize current Pathways staffing for one classroom. Additional staffing would include 1 teacher, 1 clinician, 3 paras and a contracted psychiatrist. Ms. Krasula stated that in this phase they would plan to bring back up to 4 elementary students and take 1-2 tuition paying students.

Ms. Meriwether reviewed the budgetary impact in the second year. The offset between bringing 4 students back in-district and 1 tuition paying student versus hiring new staff is a deficit of \$11,090. Ms. Krasula noted that with neighboring towns in a similar situation there is the possibility to bring in 1-2 tuition students in the second year. In response to Ms. Parise, Ms. Krasula stated that tuition in the amount of \$70,000 is competitive for the valley and will make our program more desirable.

Ms. Batchelar questioned how many students are in the Pathways program at SHS. Ms. Krasula responded that there are currently 12 students, but that number fluctuates as some students go back into general ed classrooms. Mr. Falco asked if we would continue the Pathways program at SHS. Ms. Krasula stated that we need to look at individual students, noting we do have other programs at SHS.

Ms. Krasula addressed Phase 3 of the project when 2 more classrooms would come online for a total of 4 classrooms: 2 elementary, 1 middle and 1 high school. Projected total enrollment would be 20-25 students, including 10 tuition paying students. The target is to bring back an additional 6 out-of-district students. Full staffing would include 1 supervisor, 3 teachers, 1 speech & learning pathologist, 2 clinicians, 10 paras and a contracted psychiatrist. Ms. Meriwether stated the budgetary impact in the third year would be an overall cost containment of \$515,771. She noted the full return on investment, including property, would be realized in 5 years.

Ms. Parise asked if the building allows for expansion. Ms. Krasula responded that it does. She reviewed the space in the building and noted its proximity to the high school. Ms. Krasula reviewed the successful program at the Farmington Valley Transitional Academy (FVTA), noting that it is a similarly modeled program for students aged 18-21. Mr. Curtis pointed out that Glastonbury runs a similar program to what we're proposing and they currently have a waitlist of 27 students. Ms. Meriwether reviewed the FVTA budget and the cost containment that has resulted over the past 6 years.

Board members spoke in favor of the proposal. In response to Ms. Thomas, Ms. Krasula stated that there is no similar program in the Farmington Valley and West

Hartford that take tuition paying students.

B. NESDEC Enrollment Projections

Mr. Sullivan stated the enrollment data is very static. He reviewed the past 5 years of historical enrollment. The projected enrollment for next year is a decrease of 21 students. Over the next 5 years enrollment is expected to increase by 110 students. Mr. Sullivan stated that next year the decrease of 24 K-6 students could bring the district a realized savings of classroom teachers. Grades 7-8 are projected to decrease by 5 students and grades 9-12 to increase by 8 students. Mr. Sullivan noted that the elementary projections remain flat through 2029-30, and the decrease at Latimer Lane could allow some space opportunities.

Mr. Sullivan presented a comparison of births to Kindergarten enrollment which remains stable with the exception of the 2021-22 covid year. He concluded that K-12 enrollment will increase by an average of approximately 27 students per year for the next 5 years. Kindergarten enrollment will be important to monitor over the next few years. HJMS will be the most significant pressure point in the next 5 year. Space concerns continue at Squadron Line and we hope to give them relief with space opening up in other buildings.

Mr. Tindall asked about the effect if 500 more units are built in the south end of town. Mr. Sullivan responded that Latimer Lane has the most capacity to take additional students. He noted the potential 110 units on Iron Horse Boulevard would be zoned for Central School where class sizes should be able to support incoming students.

C. HVAC Inspection Reports

Mr. Sullivan stated that there are new CT statutory indoor air quality (IAQ) and HVAC requirements. These result in increased frequency/costs of assessments and corrective actions, as well as an increased emphasis on government submissions and public disclosure. Mr. Sullivan stated that districts now must use the EPA Tools for Schools and an IAQ self-assessment must be conducted annually, not every 5 years as it was in the past. An HVAC inspection must be completed every 5 year and all schools must be completed by January 1, 2030. Mr. Sullivan noted that Simsbury completed 2 inspections last summer, at Tariffville and Tootin' Hills schools.

Mr. Sullivan stated that the school safety teams are taking on the function of Tools for Schools teams. All of the inspection forms must be submitted to the CT Department of Administrative Services (DAS) and must be made available on the BOE and school websites. He noted the reports have been posted on our website.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

Ms. Willerup thanked the students of Squadron Line School for the holiday cards they made for board members.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Willerup: MOVE to adjourn the meeting at 8:24 p.m.

Ms. Batchelar: Seconded. So moved.

NESDEC
Enrollment
Projections

HVAC
Inspection
Reports

Public Audience

Adjournment

Sharon Thomas
Secretary

Katie Wilde
Recording Secretary