

**SHERMAN BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**SHERMAN, CONNECTICUT 06784**  
**REGULAR MEETING, FEBRUARY 5, 2020**  
**THE SHERMAN SCHOOL - MULTI PURPOSE ROOM**  
**7:00 PM**

A regular meeting of the Sherman Board of Education was called to order by Mrs. Diotte at 7:11 PM on February 5, 2020 in the Multi Purpose Room.

**1. PRESENT:**

For the Board:	Dr. Alexander, Mr. Berlandi, Mrs. Diotte, Mr. Laughlin, Mrs. Lenihan, Mr. Neunzig and Mrs. Seeger
Administration:	Dr. Melendez and Mrs. Snowden
Staff:	Dr. Corso, Ms. DePuy, Mrs. Linero, Mrs. Oricchio and Mr. Trinchillo
Residents:	12 Residents & 4 Students

The Board and attendees recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mrs. Diotte moved and Dr. Alexander seconded to move Agenda Item 8.1 Capstone Presentations and 10.2 Update on Climate and Culture Investment to above Agenda Item 3, and the motion passed unanimously, 7-0.

**2. CELEBRATIONS**

Dr. Melendez celebrated the recent accomplishment of alumni student Olivia Zeitler. Olivia is the Gold Key Award recipient of the Scholastic Art and Writing Contest for the Hudson-Housatonic Region, and ASAP Art Camp Scholarship. Dr. Melendez also shared a slide photo of Olivia's Capstone Project from last year. Olivia was not present, but all in attendance applauded her success.

**8.1 Capstone Award Recipients**

The Capstone Award Recipients for this year are Joseph Castaldo, Katie Devine, Haley Fuller and Morgan Gallagher. Dr. Melendez noted the recipients met certain criteria and benchmarks developed by their 8th grade advisors. Each student presented a slide presentation of their project to the Board and shared what they learned.

The students received a warm round of applause from all in attendance.

**10.2 Climate and Culture Investment**

At the request of the Board, Dr. Melendez provided an update on the Climate and Culture Investment. Dr. Melendez provided a slide outlining the time and funding invested in the Steering Committee thus far, totaling \$24,250.00. He also provided a slide detailing the faculty involvement in the three focused categories of the Steering Committee: Instructional Time Analysis, Social Emotional Learning and Climate & Culture.

Mr. Trinchillo, Steering Committee member, shared an overview of the nine-member committee and progress made thus far with Patrick Flynn. He spoke of the DiSC profile and the positive impact it has had on developing better working relationships between the teachers and

Administration. Mr. Trinchillo is also a member of the Climate and Culture sub-committee and provided progress as well.

Dr. Melendez provided a slide and explained detailed efforts made as a result of a survey administered to the faculty of what is going well and what may be contributing to cultural issues:

- Modification of the Strategic Plan to provide greater focus on ELA and Math
- Alleviation in some teachers' schedules to provide additional collaborative planning time
- Reduction of mandatory SPED meetings
- Greater options with Personalized PD Presentations

Climate & Culture subcommittee members were also in attendance and provided additional highlights of the committee:

- Motivational Mondays - Mrs. Oricchio shared motivational quotes are placed in all mailboxes on Mondays to get all faculty and staff in the right mindset. She shared a few samples with the Board.
- Knight Watch Initiative - Mrs. Linero explained a recently implemented program to foster school spirit among both students and faculty/staff. She introduced Sherman Knight Sir Roger Sherman and explained how he "hides" someplace new every Monday and the recognition and reward that follows. She also shared other efforts that take place to build a tighter community.
- Positive Recognitions at Meetings - Dr. Corso explained positive recognitions that are taking place at faculty meetings with "Woo Hoo & Lollipops" moments. She also shared upcoming plans to foster community with all in the building.

Dr. Melendez shared the next steps of the Climate and Culture Committee: Culture Survey for parents, students and paraprofessional, Continuation of efforts with Culture and Climate R&D Team and DiSC Training and further consultation with ReVision Learning for all faculty. He noted the DiSC Training request is valuable and will identify where strengths are and capitalize on them.

Mrs. Diotte asked the teachers presenting if there was anything they needed from the Board to support and ensure the success of the Climate & Culture endeavor?

Mrs. Linero shared her view and perception of what she saw from those who went through the DiSC survey. She sees the value and feels it would be beneficial for the teachers to connect with Administrators.

Dr. Corso shared that she went through the DiSC process and feels it opened relationships that did not exist. She also commented on the positive benefits of the Tri State Consortium.

Mr. Berlandi commented on the importance of enhancing relationships and thanked the teachers for embracing it.

Mr. Trinchillo noted the importance of Patrick Flynn's involvement in the process.

Mrs. Diotte thanked the teachers for sharing their insight.

**3. PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Mrs. Molly Garcia, 22 Church Road. Mrs. Garcia shared that she was pleased to receive the communication regarding the updated cell phone expectations in the building. However, she was upset to discover that expectations were never communicated to her child, or other children as indicated in the letter and requested an explanation.

Dr. Melendez shared Mr. Kalkreuth has met with students, paraprofessionals, substitutes and teachers to address cell phone expectations over the past several weeks. Dr. Melendez will investigate Mrs. Garcia's concerns and invited her to call or meet with him to discuss this topic.

**4. ADDITIONS TO AGENDA:**

No additions

**5. CONSENT AGENDA:**

Mrs. Diotte moved and Mrs. Seeger seconded the approval of Consent Agenda Items 5.1 to 5.4, and the motion passed unanimously, 7-0.

**5.1 Review of Minutes:**

Minutes - Curriculum Meeting, December 4, 2019  
Minutes - Regular Meeting, January 8, 2020  
Minutes - Executive Session, January 8, 2020  
Minutes - Curriculum Meeting, January 27, 2020  
Minutes - Executive Session, January 27, 2020  
Minutes - Budget Workshop, January 27, 2020

**5.2 Personnel Actions**

Appointment

Shayna Fielding, Paraprofessional, Effective January 21, 2020

Resignation

Amber Ruscoe, Paraprofessional, Effective January 13, 2020

Jackie Brown, Paraprofessional, Effective February 11, 2020

**5.3 Monthly Enrollment Report**

**5.4 Monthly Budget Report 2019-2020 Budget by Function & Summary of Funds**

**6. APPROVAL OF CURRENT BILLS:**

Mrs. Diotte moved and Mr. Laughlin seconded the approval of current bills, and the motion passed unanimously, 7-0.

**6.1 2019-2020 Current Bills**

**7. ORAL REPORTS:**

**7.1 SPTO Update**

No SPTO update

**7.2 Sub-Committee**

**Curriculum Committee**

Mrs. Lenihan provided an update from the Curriculum Committee Meeting. The committee reviewed the results from the Superintendent's survey on benchmarks. Mrs. Lenihan reported the results were mixed due to various evaluation methods. She shared the committee discussed at length and agreed to continue to focus on student growth. Mrs. Lenihan shared that since SBAC results are not available until the fall, the teachers/data teams are using data

from other testing methods to see where individual students need growth. The Curriculum Committee agreed they will review the finalized SBAC results in October 2020 and compare them with strategies that have been implemented and are hopeful they will see growth.

Committee tabled implementation review process, but will revisit at the next Curriculum meeting.

Mrs. Snowden also presented an update on Instructional Time Analysis which will be addressed under the Strategic Plan update.

### **Maintenance Committee**

Mr. Laughlin provided an update on the recent Maintenance Committee meetings:

- Food Service update and potential enhancements to the Food Service Physical Plan and Kitchen. This topic will be detailed during the Food Services update (11.3).
- Sprinkler System and potential repairs. Mr. Lombardozzi will share his findings with the Maintenance Committee after his discussion with the Fire Marshall.
- Extensive discussion about the Capital Planning process took place.
  - Continued oversight and engagement by the Maintenance Committee and Board
  - Discussed the importance of the planning process and programming needs of Town partners.
  - Security aspects of segregation
  - Plans to continue dialogue with the State regarding reimbursement shifts and changes

### **7.3 Chairperson**

Mrs. Diotte will share her feedback under Agenda Item 10.1

### **7.4 Superintendent Update - Dr. Jeff Melendez**

#### **● Strategic Plan Update**

Dr. Melendez reported recent progress made on the Strategic Plan. The Color Key has been altered with the addition of the color blue to represent “ongoing” progress. Strategic Plan 2.1 and 2.5 have changed their status to blue. Dr. Melendez noted both Action Steps have a consistent practice in place that will continue with no end date since the school will never stop reviewing data or their differentiating techniques.

Mrs. Snowden provided an update on Action Steps 1.4 Analysis of Instruction Time. Mrs. Snowden provided historical data on the topic which led to the Steering Committee taking on the project and assigning it to the R & D team. Jonathan Costa led the first plan of action by reviewing and taking an in-depth view of the school’s Vision statement with the faculty staff. Mrs. Snowden noted it was a transparent and collaborative process. The faculty centered on Critical Thinking and developed a list of skills and dispositions which should be the focus of instructional time of all content areas. The R&D team made a series of recommendations to the Steering Committee, both short and long term:

- Short term recommendations to improve next year’s schedule to provide more consistency
- Long term recommendations around Critical Thinking and expressed desire for further understanding and to embed in curriculum. Also examine where it is taking place and look for more opportunities to foster.

Mrs. Snowden shared simultaneously during this phase, many staff members were reading Heidi Hayes Jacobs book, Bold Moves and met with her to hear more about contemporizing the school. Some staff also have visited other schools to see multi grade/age classes and interdisciplinary courses in action. Mrs. Snowden shared this experience is opening minds to what can work while affording more time for content areas. She noted more research will be done on this topic.

Mr. Laughlin asked if there was a timeline to implement?

Mrs. Snowden shared that teachers who went are excited and may try something this Spring. She is hopeful to look for interdisciplinary and collaborative opportunities within a grade level through curriculum work over the summer months.

Dr. Melendez provided an update to Strategic Plan 7.1 - Identify, reduce and eliminate the barriers that impede parent attendance at school events. A parent survey focusing on low participation at Open House was administered and 61 responses were received. Both redundancies and childcare issues were evident factors that contributed to low participation at Open House. As a result, one of the Steering Committees has redesigned Open House and Dr. Melendez provided a preview, Knights of Excellence. The new format will include classroom presentations to provide useful tips to maximize online resources (ex. Newsletter, website presentation, homework strategies, supporting your child, etc.). As well as an elective class for all parents to choose to attend (Growth Mindset, Study Strategies, Nurturing Creativity, Thinking Beyond Middle School, Math is Everywhere, etc.). In addition, free childcare and dinner (for children) will be provided.

Dr. Melendez also shared another issue identified in the survey was Parent Teacher conferences. Both Cathy Davidson and Mr. Butler will be piloting Zoom Spring Parent/Teacher conferences.

## **8. PRESENTATIONS**

### **8.1 Capstone Presentations**

Moved prior to Agenda Item 3

## **9. NEW BUSINESS**

### **9.1 Discussion and Possible Approval of the 2020-2021 School Calendar**

Dr. Melendez presented the draft 2020-2021 school calendar. Dr. Melendez and Mrs. Snowden explained changes made in comparison to the current school calendar:

Knight of Excellence (Open House) on 9/17

- Knight of Excellence (Open House) on September 17th
- Moved Fall Conferences to later in October and reduced by 1 half-day based on data
- Full day off on Nov 25 (NMPS / NFPS)
- Full day off on Dec 23 (NMPS)
- Moved February Parent Conferences later to provide greater continuity in January for assessments
- PD on April 1 (Thursday)
- Overall reduction of 4 half-days
  - 1 PT Conference in Fall
  - 1 Day before Thanksgiving
  - 2 Strategic Planning half-days

The Board commented briefly on the calendar and tabled the approval in an effort to review in more detail.

Mr. Neunzig suggested investigating activities with Park and Rec for the students, in particular the middle school students during early dismissal days. Dr. Melendez will investigate.

## 10. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

### 10.1 Update and Discussion Regarding Conceptual Design Services Project

Mrs. Diotte noted the Board met with the Senior Center and Parks & Rec and commented on the great conversation and input. The architects also met with the groups and their conversation will contribute to meaningful designs for the community.

Mrs. Diotte shared that the Board is aware of the many questions and concerns throughout the community regarding the conceptual design. In an effort to communicate factual information, the Board developed a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document. This document will be updated frequently and can be viewed on the Conceptual Design tab on the school's website as well as the official Sherman Board of Education Facebook page. Mrs. Diotte publicly stated the following concerns from the FAQ document:

#### **Will the safety and security of Sherman School students be jeopardized if the building is used for multiple purposes during the day?**

The safety and security of Sherman School students and staff are paramount in every decision made by the Board of Education. The Board of Education would not endorse any proposal that compromises security in any way. Fortunately, this non-negotiable standard for security is shared by the team at Tecton. Tecton has within its firm a Public Safety Department that specializes in the field of safety and security, and the team provides valuable input through the planning and design of all its school facilities. Exterior planning involves adherence to Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles, including natural surveillance of entry, secure and controlled site access, separation of bus/parent circulation and parking, and increased buffer or "safe zone." Interior planning principles include a secure entrance lobby with visual access, administration control of physical and visual access to the building, additional layers of security/access control within the building, separation of "public" areas from classroom space, and natural daylighting techniques throughout.

#### **If the Town of Sherman receives state reimbursement for a school building project, will the Sherman School be forced to accept students from neighboring cities in order to meet various state-mandated requirements?**

No. The requirement for state reimbursement is that the building operates as a school for a minimum of 20 years. *See Connecticut Education Laws, Title 10, Chapter 173: Public School Building Projects, as adopted by the Connecticut State Board of Education 2015.* The redistricting that occurs in other towns related to building renovations/new construction is typically related to redistricting within town borders. **Because Sherman only has one school, redistricting would not occur.** As currently permitted in Board of Education [policy 5118](#), the Board of Education could consider accepting additional students on a tuition-basis from other towns which would count as town revenue. We currently charge approximately \$14,000 per student for tuition. Employees who wish to have their child attend the Sherman School pay roughly 50% of this tuition cost per year.

**How will the Board and Administration communicate with members of the community regarding this matter?**

We have established a direct link called, "[Conceptual-Design](#)" on the homepage of our website, [www.shermanschool.com](http://www.shermanschool.com) to manage information. The public can find full reports, presentations, and several other archived letters that were written to the community to keep them informed. A written summary of the public forums will also be printed in local papers soon after the meetings. The Board has not made any determination on how to proceed and will not do so until after these important opportunities for community feedback have taken place. The Board has also established a dedicated email address to keep track of the community's questions and concerns: [feedback@shermanschool.com](mailto:feedback@shermanschool.com).

**Sherman School enrollment is declining, why renovate the building now?**

Like many other towns in CT, enrollment in our district is declining. However, an exhaustive study by Friar Architects in 2018/2019 has indicated that our building is rated in only "fair" condition and has a number of issues that need to be addressed - or *will need to be addressed* in the near future - in order to maintain the integrity of the building and bring the existing facility up to code. *If this work were to be done*, the cost is estimated to be approximately \$11 million.

**Why is the BOE discussing a larger renovation project that would potentially include the Senior Center and Parks & Rec if enrollment is declining? Why not just fix what we currently have and keep costs to a minimum?**

Based on the facility study report from Friar, we know that the estimated cost to fix the building in its entirety is approximately \$11 million. This does not include any educational enhancements or alterations to the existing footprint of the building nor address where to locate students during any construction/renovation that may take place. Given this significant cost to repair/maintain what we currently have, the Board of Education believed it was prudent to explore additional options that might address multiple needs in our community, remedy all existing issues, and function as an enhancement to academic programming for the next 30+ years. The 26-member Design and Innovation Committee agreed with this assessment and felt it was important to explore these options and the estimated cost associated with them before making a decision on how to move forward.

As of today, February 10th, 2020, this is precisely what the Board of Education is doing. We are working with Tecton Architects to solicit input from staff, students, various community groups and the greater community to develop options for our building and grounds that will best serve our town now and in the future. *To-date, the Board of Education has not endorsed a particular project or plan and therefore has not made a request to move anything to referendum.*

**Given the declining enrollment, has the Board of Education considered making the Sherman School PK-5?**

Yes. The Board of Education discussed this topic at length during our annual Board of Education Retreat in July 2019. Several different options were analyzed with respect to projected enrollment and its potential impact to the Sherman School and its students, the Board of Education budget, and the town as a whole. As part of its due diligence, the Board explored and evaluated the pros and cons of transitioning our district to a PK-5 school and sending our

students to outside districts for MS and HS. We also considered the reverse - bringing our HS students back to Sherman for their 9th-12th grade education.

After considering the academic, social, and financial impacts of these scenarios, the Board of Education agreed that Sherman would maintain a PK-8 school. Ultimately, this decision was shared with our Design and Innovation Committee, which affirmed our intent and has led us to commission a conceptual design study to inform any future recommendations. *The Board of Education genuinely wants your feedback, both positive and negative, to help us make the most informed decision to serve the interests of our school and broader community.* We hope you will get involved!

Dr. Melendez noted the Conceptual Design tab on the school's website contains all of the presentations, reports, enrollment studies, meeting dates, etc. Also, he reiterated all questions and concerns can be emailed to: [feedback@shemanschool.com](mailto:feedback@shemanschool.com).

The Board discussed hosting Board/Administration informal coffees to discuss concerns and issues regarding conceptual design plans.

Mr. Laughlin briefly touched on the series of conversations that were discussed with the State prior to obtaining Architectural services. Additional conversation about reimbursement, standards and how a district of this size operates will potentially inform some of the next steps. Mr. Laughlin shared the difference between school and community reimbursement and feels the school must engage in a meaningful way on behalf of the broader community.

## **10.2 Update on Climate and Culture Investment**

Moved prior to Agenda Item 3

## **10.3 Food Service Update**

Mr. Neunzig provided an update on potential improvement plans to the school Food Services program. He provided slide photos of the current state and food selections offered at the Sherman School and compared it to the design, offerings and atmosphere of the Chappaqua Middle School. Aramark is the provider in both Districts.

Chappaqua selections included: large selection of hot and cold offerings (homemade soup and sauce, whole wheat pasta, Bell and Evans baked chicken tenders, oven baked fries, Grab and Go options, fresh fruit, better salad bar. In addition, there are recreational activities available in the cafeteria.

The Food Service Committee met with Aramark to discuss a full reset after Spring Break. The committee is requesting a smaller version of what Chappaqua offers their students.

Mr. Neunzig shared potential future photos and plans for improvement totaling approximately \$4500.00. In addition, he also shared potential long terms goals which could incorporate XP projects and serving meals for the Senior Center.

Mr. Neunzig looked to the Board for feedback and asked if they supported the improvements.

Mrs. Diotte noted the Board does not have to authorize an investment of \$4500.00. If Dr.



Melendez has the funds in the budget, he can make this happen. She commented positively on the research that has been done and supports it. She feels that changes are not major but will have a huge impact.

Mr. Berlandi suggested if food options are going to change, then communicate plans sooner than later. Mr. Neunzig agreed and noted that Aramark suggested a roll out campaign as well.

Dr. Melendez expressed concern regarding the price differential and would like to collect data first. He will work with the Board on next steps.

Mr. Neunzig requested the Board email him any questions or concerns. He also noted that the potential improvement will benefit the teachers and feels they deserve better options than what is currently offered.

**11. COMMUNICATION**

Mrs. Diotte noted two emails were received at [feedback@shermanschool.com](mailto:feedback@shermanschool.com).

**12. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Matt Vogt, 12 Leach Hollow Road. In an effort to get ahead of rumors, Mr. Vogt suggested reinforcing, as much as possible, the message of the school's intention to figure out the potential design together. He agreed with the suggestion of the Board hosting "Coffees" to answer questions and get the community involved. He too will spread the message as much as possible.

The Board agreed. The next public forum will be held on February 25th and childcare will be provided.

**13. BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMENTS**

No additional comments

**14. FUTURE MEETINGS AND TOPICS**

- 14.1 Maintenance Meeting, February 7, 2020 at 3:30 PM - Superintendent's Office
- 14.2 Curriculum Committee, February 12, 2020 at 5:00 PM - Library Media Center
- 14.3 Budget Workshop #2, February 12, 2020 at 6:00 PM - Library Media Center
- 14.4 Policy Meeting, February 20, 2020 at 9:00 AM - Superintendent's Office
- 14.5 Budget Workshop #3, February 24, 2020 at 6:00 PM - Library Media Center
- 14.6 Public Forum with Tecton, February 25 at 6:00 PM - Multi Purpose Room
- 14.7 Board of Education Meeting, March 4, 2020 at 7:00 PM - Library Media Center
- 14.8 *TENTATIVE Board of Education Retreat*, March 7, 2020 at 9:00 AM - Library Media Center

**15. ADJOURNMENT**

Mrs. Diotte moved and Mrs. Seeger seconded the Board adjourned at 9:42 PM and the motion passed unanimously, 7-0.

Respectfully submitted,

James Neunzig  
Vice Chair, Sherman Board of Education

Prepared by Recording Secretary: Nancy Winkler