

SHERMAN BOARD OF EDUCATION
SHERMAN, CONNECTICUT 06784
REGULAR MEETING, MARCH 4, 2020
THE SHERMAN SCHOOL - LIBRARY MEDIA CENTER
7:00 PM

A regular meeting of the Sherman Board of Education was called to order by Mrs. Diotte at 7:02 PM on March 4, 2020 in the Multi Purpose Room.

1. PRESENT:

For the Board:	Dr. Alexander, Mr. Berlandi, Mrs. Diotte, Mrs. Lenihan, Mr. Neunzig and Mrs. Seeger
Absent:	Mr. Laughlin
Administration:	Dr. Melendez, Ms. Edward, Mr. Kalkreuth and Mrs. Snowden
Staff:	Ms. DePuy, Mrs. Scott and Mrs. Vermilyea
Residents:	6 Residents

The Board and attendees recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. CELEBRATIONS

2.1 Board of Education Appreciation Month

Dr. Melendez shared March is Board of Education Appreciation Month. He thanked the Board for their dedication to the school and community and noted the tremendous amount of responsibilities they have as elected officials. Each Board member received a piece of artwork made from 6th grade students as a token of appreciation. The Board received a warm round of applause from all in attendance.

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Jen Freed, Church Road. Mrs. Freed read an email that her husband sent to the Board of Education in October 2016 regarding high school selection. She stated it was promised that the Sherman Board of Education would discuss contract discussions with Brookfield as it was in place in years past. Mrs. Freed referenced a video of a Brookfield Board of Education meeting from January 2017 and indicated the Sherman Board sent an email to Brookfield without providing any history, cost or context to the volume of students. In the video Brookfield stated that they are not supposed to think about Sherman.

Mrs. Freed shared her viewpoint on how it should have been handled and requested a concerted effort be made to discuss opening the contract again with Brookfield and to let Sherman parents know so they can attend the meeting.

Sherman Board of Education Footnote - Follow up regarding this subject can be located on the Sherman School's website under Board of Education/Agenda and Minutes:

*Nov. 2, 2016 - Regular Meeting 8.2 Sub-Committee Policy Update and Policy Meeting Minutes
10-24-16 (6.1b)*

Dec. 7, 2016 - Regular Meeting 8.2 Discussion and Possible Action Regarding H.S. Tuition

Jan. 4, 2017 - Regular Meeting 6.4 Superintendent Update

Susan Zeitler, 8 Curtis Drive. Mrs. Zeitler expressed concern and spoke at length regarding the dangers of Wi-Fi 2.4 gigahertz (GHz). She referenced independent studies which support the negative health effects of wireless radiation for students in schools and noted she will be emailing the links to the Board.

Mrs. Zeitler surpassed the three minutes public comment maximum. Mrs. Diotte noted that Mrs. Zeitler was making inaccurate statements pertaining to the Sherman School. She requested that Mrs. Zeitler email her information to the Board.

4. ADDITIONS TO AGENDA:

None

5. CONSENT AGENDA:

Mrs. Diotte moved and Mr. Berlandi seconded the approval of Consent Agenda Items 5.1 to 5.4 and the motion passed unanimously, 6-0.

5.1 Review of Minutes:

Minutes - Maintenance Meeting, January 27, 2020

Minutes - Maintenance Meeting, January 29, 2020

Minutes - Regular Meeting, February 5, 2020

Minutes - Budget Workshop, February 12, 2020

Minutes - Budget Workshop, February 24, 2020

5.2 Personnel Actions

Appointment

Resignation

Hannah Dennison, Building Substitute, 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 Mrs. Seeger seconded the approval of current bills, and the motion passed unanimously, 6-0.

6.1 2019-2020 Current Bills

7. ORAL REPORTS:

7.1 SPTO Update

No update

7.2 Sub-Committee

Curriculum Committee

Mrs. Lenihan reported the committee met and discussed the curriculum writing process. The staff will be working on a new format.

The committee also reviewed in detail the State's Accountability Report. The State rated the school on 12 different indicators and noted the school is penalized in one area due to low participation rate. Mrs. Lenihan found Mrs. Snowden's report very informative and is looking forward to hearing it again later in the agenda.

Maintenance Committee

Mrs. Diotte shared the Maintenance Committee has been focusing on the ongoing work with the Conceptual Design project which will be discussed later in the agenda.

7.3 Chairperson

7.4 Superintendent Update - Dr. Jeff Melendez

- **Coronavirus**

Dr. Melendez provided a brief update on Coronavirus and recent communication to the staff, families and community. He also noted the Admin team will be developing an alternate school session plan should a need arise.

- **Strategic Plan Update**

Action Step 1.1 - Mrs. Snowden provided an update on Action Step 1.1. The Curriculum Committee has revised the curriculum approval process and has received the Board's stamp of approval. Mrs. Snowden briefly reviewed the new five step process and noted all curriculum from last summer and this summer will be presented to the Board for approval in the fall, with unit overviews posted to the website. She also noted this Action Step will remain Blue as it will always be ongoing.

6.1 Clubs - Mr. Kalkreuth has been working with a team of teachers to determine what extra-curricular offerings students may be interested in. A survey was administered to students in grades 2 through 8 and Mr. Kalkreuth shared a slide with the results. Mr. Kalkreuth reported that he and Dr. Melendez will be meeting with Mr. Wrenn, Park and Rec, to determine areas of collaboration.

8. PRESENTATIONS

8.1 2018-19 Accountability Report

Mrs. Snowden presented the 2018-19 Accountability Report. She shared slides outlining the purpose and benefits of the report. She also presented the 12 indicators that the school's score is based on and noted the complicated calculation. The scores are broken into five categories. Category 1, 2 and 3 have two caveats: at least 95% participation rate in standardized tests, and the gap between the performance of your high needs students and your general population needs to be smaller than the state average.

Mrs. Snowden reviewed with the Board the indicator scores from the past three years and emphasized the focus of the report is tracking growth targets. She is pleased to see a steady increase. Overall, the school Accountability Index remained in Category 3:

2016-17: 77.2

2017-18: 67.9

2018-19: 77.1

Mrs. Snowden explained the school would have been considered Category 2 in the 2018-19 years if the participation rate was higher (The Math & ELA categories would have increased from 93.8 to 95 if 3 additional students did not opt out. Science would have increased from 91.7 to 95 if 2 students took the NGSS assessment).

Overall, Mrs. Snowden feels the report represents a picture of growth in all areas over the past three years.

Mr. Berlandi questioned where the data comes from. Mrs. Snowden shared directly from the Smarter Balanced and NGSS reporting, and the ED-165 report which the school completes.

Mrs. Seeger questioned if the State inquires why the school does not have 100% participation. Mrs. Snowden noted in the past yes, but since she has started, she has not been asked.

Mrs. Diotte commented on the aspect of measuring growth and referred to accountability reports from years past where it was not emphasized. She noted proficiencies have been consistent over the years. She is encouraged to see drilling down to uncover where needs exist, specifically in math, and see the return on investment.

Mrs. Snowden agreed and noted the staff has completed a deep dive into every student to see if they grew or not, and analyze what is behind that and what can we do to improve it.

Regarding participation, Mrs. Lenihan acknowledged striking a balance between doing your best without heightened anxiety

Mrs. Snowden presented a final slide with steps to improve Accountability Index Scores moving forward.

9. NEW BUSINESS

9.1 Discussion and Possible Approval of the 2020-2021 Budget

Dr. Melendez provided a high-level overview of the budget. He presented a slide detailing the Strategic Plan Driving Budget - Goals

- Universal Preschool Proposal which represents -\$27,000 loss of revenue to the Town.
- Internal Professional Development for teachers to work with consultants to contemporize programs
- External Professional Development through Tri-State Consortium
- Summer Curriculum Writing on ELA & Math Differentiation
- Continued Investment on Culture and Climate Work
- 6th & 8th Grade Social Studies Text Subscriptions
- Social Emotional Learning Curriculum (ongoing maintenance)
- Physical Education Resource
- Grade 6 Boot Camp
- Additional Fine Arts Materials

Dr. Melendez noted funding for after school enrichment was eliminated, but the school will work with Park and Rec to find other ways to support the programs.

The proposed 2020-2021 budget is \$9,380,589.00, which represents a 0% increase as with the last 4 years

Dr. Melendez also presented:

- An Executive Summary which summarizes the five-page budget document. This document included an explanation of any change 10% or \$10,000.
- Comparison of current enrollment with the anticipated 2020-21 enrollment and explained that although enrollment is decreasing, the same number of teaching sections are required, but shifting for the new school year. The projected high school enrollment and tuition costs were also presented.
- Historical and anticipated 2020-21 staffing headcounts as well as a slide depicting the cost distribution of all staff. The historical slide also noted reinvests that have been made to address student needs. Four paraprofessional positions will be eliminated for the upcoming school year.

Tracy Edwards, Director of Special Education provided an overview of the Special Education Budget and briefly shared the areas where most of the costs are allocated to:

- Staffing - Contractual increases. Decreasing the overall net paraeducator position by 3 within Special Education (please see Curriculum & Instruction update for clarification on the paraeducator positions).
- Extended School Year - Services and transportation for students who qualify
- Special Education High School Services - Supplemental costs for our area high school programs, Tuition and transportation. Excess Cost reimbursement rate conservatively budgeted between 68% - 70%. Ms. Edwards reminded the Board that exact placement for some students are still unknown. Funds allocated in the lines are based on the best information available on student needs, but there is a wide variability in program costs and could be significantly over or under dependent upon services.
- Post Secondary - obligation to service SPED from ages 3 to Age 21. The District has multiple students in postsecondary programs next year (ages 18 to 21).

Ms. Edward shared the Special Education budget is based solely on known students' needs which do change overtime and the school must be responsive.

Ker Snowden, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Innovation provided an overview of the budget drivers:

- Shifts in paraeducator positions - Special Education is decreasing 3 para positions, but the positions are not eliminated, just shifting to general education positions.
- Budget accounts for Supplies and Equipment (classroom supplies, furniture, microscopes, etc.) spanning all curricular areas.
- Professional Development - Conferences and workshops. Consultant to work internally. Also purchase professional books and allow teachers for online training.
- Curriculum Development - Teachers write curriculum and the school sometimes purchases curriculum as well. This line includes the purchase of assessment services which is a State requirement. Also, purchase of text, workbooks and online subscriptions.
- Intervention Program Support - SRBI, Reading Intervention, etc.
- TEAM Program - State required program
- Climate and Culture - SEL Program (yearly subscription)
- XP Fund - Purchase of new supplies

Dr. Melendez added the K-5 school supply was eliminated.

Dr. Melendez questioned the Board on Universal Preschool and felt it should be discussed. The Board discussed Universal Preschool at length. The discussion included:

- Anticipated fall enrollment and maximum enrollment for two PreK classes
- Discussions with the Board of Selectmen
- Subsidizing the program as an option
- Reasons for offering Universal Preschool
- If it is a Board of Education or Board of Selectmen decision
- Early identification of needs is critical

Mrs. Diotte acknowledged this is a conversation to have with BOS since it affects their budget and does not impact school's budget.

Mrs. Diotte thanked Dr. Melendez and his Team for the work on the budget. She noted there are a lot of contractual increases that had to be absorbed while presenting a 0% increase through careful budgeting around different needs that are known and unknown. She realizes the budget is close and reflected on years past when often things would break in our favor, but acknowledged it could be different this year and important to note. Mrs. Diotte commended all for their work. The Board will meet with the Board of Selectmen on March 9, 2020 to present the budget.

Mrs. Diotte moved and Mr. Neunzig seconded to approve the Town of Sherman Board of Education 2020-2021 Budget in the amount of \$9,380,589.00, and the motion passed unanimously 6-0.

For the record, Mrs. Diotte read the following statement from Board Member, Mr. Laughlin. Mr. Laughlin had a work conflict and could not attend the Board meeting.

My wife and I have submitted an intent to register our son in the PK program next year.

As there is a likely policy outcome related to approval of next year's budget proposal and the potential for no cost PK, the appearance of a conflict could exist as I would potentially receive a direct financial benefit.

Therefore, out of an abundance of caution, I am recusing myself from voting on the 2020-2021 budget proposal.

10. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

10.1 Update and Discussion Regarding Conceptual Design Services Project

Mrs. Diotte provided an update on the second Public Forum held on February 25, 2020. The forum was very well attended. Regarding the Conceptual Design, Mrs. Diotte stated that it is a process and their focus is to gather information from the community to help guide their decision on the future of this building. Mrs. Diotte reiterated that the Board is not deciding on anything at this time. She requests if anyone is hearing anything to the contrary to please reach out to a Board of Education member.

Mrs. Diotte noted that the Board did receive emails from community members. Some emails expressed concern about not feeling comfortable speaking up at the Forum. Mrs. Diotte is hopeful that all members will reach out to any Board member to share their viewpoint.

Mrs. Diotte shared she has met with individuals and will continue to do so.

This topic will be discussed at the Board Retreat on Saturday, March 7, 2020. Based on the feedback received, they will talk with the Architects and guide the direction of what the next concepts will be presented at the upcoming Public Forum on March 25th. After that point, the Board will then have to deliberate and decide on an option to move forward.

Mrs. Seeger shared that since this process started, there is a sense that the school is not maintaining the building which is completely untrue.

Mr. Neunzig has heard a lot of questions concerning why the school is not budgeting for certain maintenance costs year after year which he briefly noted major improvements (ie roof, air conditioning, etc) fall under Capital Improvement.. Mrs. Diotte added that since the school hired a technician, there are cost savings in the budget. She further explained the difference between budgeted maintenance vs. Capital Improvement which do not go in the school's operating budget.

Mrs. Seeger added at the end of the budget year, the school returns all budget surplus back to the Town. Mrs. Diotte added that all funds must be spent by June 30th and cannot be held over for the next budget year. If there are funds left, the Superintendent can propose a budget transfer which must be approved by the Board. Over the last several years, the Board has not used the surplus, but returned it to the Town since they are aware of the need for the K-Wing area renovation which will require a large capital improvement to reinvest into the building.

Mr. Neunzig added that when the design process started, they were asked to bring in Town partners to explore options. When a decision has to be made, the Board of Education can only support the school portion, and the Town will have to determine if they support the other portion. The Board of Education has no control and it is a Board of Selectmen's decision and must have a vote.

Mrs. Diotte encouraged all to view the Conceptual Design tabs on the school's website to view reports and presentations. Dr. Melendez added the school's newsletter has a link to the Youtube screen recording of the Tecton presentation.

10.2 Food Service Update

Mr. Neunzig provided an update on the proposed Food Services upgrades. He shared slides comparing the current prices to the new prices and a breakdown of the meal bundles vs a la carte items. He also provided justification for the increase in prices as well (labor, additional transportation, etc). At the Board's request, a representative from Aramark can attend the April Board meeting to discuss the prices in more detail.

Aramark plans to roll out the improved program after Spring Break as a Pilot Program, and then the Food Service Committee will reevaluate and plan for the fall accordingly.

Mr. Neunzig questioned if there are funds in the budget to make improvements and purchase two pieces of equipment and smallwares. Dr. Melendez agreed that the school is in position to allocate funds for the food services improvements.

Mrs. Diotte questioned how the new prices will be communicated to families. Mr. Neunzig shared that Aramark will communicate the increase from now until Spring Break. Dr. Melendez added that the school will assist with the distribution of information. He noted that the Board

has nothing to do with the revenue generated from the cafeteria. Aramark is an independent contractor and it is their decision to set meal prices, as well as their responsibility to make sure parents are aware of the increased rates.

The Board briefly discussed Aramark surveying the student and teachers once the new program has been implemented. Also, they discussed ways to invite the parents in to see the new improvements and sample some of the new food options.

Mr. Neunzig also noted that Aramark did express concern regarding students running up balances. He does not want a child to be turned away from receiving lunch due to lack of funds and would like to discuss further at a future meeting.

Dr. Melendez noted the school has a Free and Reduced Lunch program for families who qualify. Each year supporting documentation must be submitted and reviewed.

10.3 Discussion and Possible Approval of the 2020-2021 School Calendar Shifts from last year to this year

The Board discussed the 2020-2021 School Calendar. Dr. Melendez noted the 2020-21 calendar represents a reduction of 4 half-days in comparison to the current school calendar. The Board would like more time to review the calendar and tabled the approval.

11. COMMUNICATION

Mrs. Diotte received one formal communication from the Commission on Aging dated March 2, 2020. The commission thanked the Board of Education for their work and dedication, but voted not to pursue a Senior Center at the Sherman School at this time.

12. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mrs. Zeitler continued to share information about the harmful effects of 5G.

Mrs. Seeger called Point of Order and stated that Public Comment must be directed towards items on the agenda item. Mrs. Seeger noted 5 G is not on the agenda.

Mrs. Diotte added that she is aware of Mrs. Zeitler concerns regarding 5G, WiFi, etc. but would like her to email her concerns to the Board instead of reading articles at a meeting.

Mrs. Zeitler stated that she has been asking for years to be added to the agenda. Mrs. Diotte informed her that the Superintendent and Board Chair set the agenda with input from fellow Board members.

Mrs. Lindquist, 5 Rose Lane, expressed concern regarding the Coronavirus and the Washington trip.

Dr. Alexander shared that the CDC has put out guidelines regarding K-12 education and higher education about trips. They are updating the guidelines regularly.

13. BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMENTS

Mrs. Lenihan encouraged fellow Board members to wear red to the Board retreat to honor Julia Malsin, Julia's Wings.

Mrs. Lenihan spoke passionately about the hard work and dedication of all of the Board members. She shared it was the Board's intention to get all stakeholders involved to have thoughtful discussion to address a school building that is not serving the students or Town in the best way possible. She is disheartened by the false information that has been spread and she encouraged anyone with any questions or concerns to reach out to a Board member to hear factual information. She noted the Board strives for transparency and weighs their options for the benefit of the District. Mrs. Lenihan is very proud and honored to serve as a Board member and to work with this Board.

14. FUTURE MEETINGS AND TOPICS

- 14.1 Board of Education Retreat, March 7, 2020 at 9:00 AM - Library Media Center
- 14.2 Curriculum Committee, March 9, 2020 at 3:45 PM - Library Media Center
- 14.3 Policy Meeting, March 16 at 8:30 AM - Superintendent's Office
- 14.4 Public Forum with Tecton, March 25 at 6:00 PM - Multi Purpose Room
- 14.5 Board of Education Meeting, April 1, 2020 at 7:00 PM - Library Media Center
- 14.6 Negotiations, March TBD

15. ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Diotte moved and Mr. Neunzig seconded the Board adjourned at 9:18 PM and the motion passed unanimously, 6-0.

Respectfully submitted,

James Neunzig
Vice Chair, Sherman Board of Education

Prepared by Recording Secretary: Nancy Winkler