

SHERMAN BOARD OF EDUCATION
SHERMAN, CONNECTICUT 06784
REGULAR MEETING, JUNE 3, 2020
MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM DUE TO COVID-19
7:00 PM

A regular meeting of the Sherman Board of Education was called to order by Mrs. Diotte at 7:07 PM on June 3, 2020 via Zoom.

1. PRESENT:

For the Board:	Dr. Alexander, Mr. Berlandi, Mrs. Diotte, Mrs. Lenihan, Mr. Neunzig and Mrs. Seeger
Absent:	Tim Laughlin
Administration:	Dr. Melendez, Ms. Edwards, Mr. Kalkreuth and Mrs. Snowden
Staff:	Ms. DePuy
Residents:	4 Residents

The Board and attendees recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. CELEBRATIONS:

2.1 Recognition of CABE Leadership Award

Dr. Melendez proudly announced Katie Devine and Francesco DiBlasi were awarded the CABE Leadership Award. Mr. Kalkreuth shared the criteria for the award: willingness to take on challenges, capability to meet difficult decisions, concern for others, ability to work with others, willingness to commit to a project, diplomacy, ability to understand issues clearly and ability to honor our commitment.

Mrs. Diotte congratulated both Katie and Francesco and shared how proud the Board is of them.

2.2 Superintendent's Student of the Year Award

Dr. Melendez proudly announced the Student of the Year recipients, Isabel Greene and Michael Hatcher. Mr. Kalkreuth shared the award criteria: community service and service to others, academic prowess, leadership, service to the school community.

Mrs. Diotte acknowledged the character traits of the students and noted they both represent the school and community so well.

2.3 Salutatorian of Shepaug Valley High School - Elizabeth Neunzig

Dr. Melendez proudly announced Elizabeth Neunzig, Salutatorian of Shepaug Valley High School. He also noted this is the fourth consecutive year that a Sherman student has emerged as valedictorian or salutatorian from one of the area high schools that the students attend.

The Board members all congratulated Elizabeth, including her Dad who expressed how proud he is of his daughter.

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

No public comment

4. ADDITIONS TO AGENDA:

No additions to the agenda

5. CONSENT AGENDA:

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

5.1 Review of Minutes:

Review of Minutes:

Minutes - Policy Meeting, May 5, 2020

Minutes - Regular Meeting, May 6, 2020

Minutes - Curriculum Meeting, May 13, 2020

Minutes - Policy Meeting, May 28, 2020

5.2 Personnel Actions - None

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. Neunzig 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

Mrs. Diotte noted the Final SPTO meeting will take place via Zoom on June 4, 2020.

7.2 Sub-Committee

Policy Committee

Mrs. Seeger tabled the following First Reading policies due to an editing glitch: Enclosures 9.2, 9.5, 9.6, 9.7, 9.10 and 9.11. She also noted Enclosure 9.8 is not a First Reading, but a recommendation to rescind Policy 4131.5. The correct policies will be presented at the next Board of Education meeting.

Curriculum Committee

Mrs. Lenihan provided an update from the last Curriculum Committee meeting. The committee discussed the revised homework guidelines (Policy 6154). They also discussed summer Professional Development that will be modified to address the ever-changing learning environment including blended learning and interdisciplinary project based learning.

Budget Committee

Mrs. Diotte shared the school budget passed in a Board of Selectmen vote 2:1. Mrs. Diotte noted Governor Lamont's Executive Orders gave the Board of Selectmen authority to act on the budget due to the Covid pandemic.

7.3 Chairperson

Mrs. Diotte briefly reflected on the level of change and amount of work involved in education due to the current crisis. She is aware of how hard the administration and faculty are working.

Mrs. Diotte shared that she is on a listserv for all Connecticut Board chairs through CABE. She noted all districts are facing the same uncertainties. She will provide updates when they are made available. Mrs. Diotte shared she is appreciative of the supportive Sherman community in comparison to what other districts are dealing with regarding public funding.

7.4 Superintendent Update - Dr. Jeff Melendez

- Update on Strategic Plan
- Update on Graduation and Awards Ceremonies

Covid Update

Dr. Melendez provided an update from the Connecticut municipal call with the Governor. Dr. Melendez noted the overall tone of the call was positive.

- Lowest number of positive COVID cases (even with increased testing)
- Local municipalities will be reimbursed for COVID expenses through middle of next year
- Updated guidance for graduations after July 6 (Sherman Graduation - June 12th)
- Contact tracing is critical to mitigate resurgence of COVID in fall
- Additional guidance on re-opening details will be forthcoming

Strategic Plan Update

Dr. Melendez presented the June Stoplight and noted that prior to Covid, he was optimistic that the action steps would be completed. The Admin team provided an update:

Action Step 1.5 - Mrs. Snowden recapped the process involved with the homework guidelines revisions. She noted the original policy was strong but required small changes to be in line with faculty and family handbook guidelines/expectations that will be launched in the fall.

Action Step 1.6 - Mrs. Snowden noted due to Distance Learning, many strides were made with the ISTE Standards. Time will be spent over the summer to incorporate the standards into the curriculum document. The initial plan to address the CSTA standards has been sidelined due to Covid and specific plans cannot be made due to the uncertainty of the fall. This action step will remain in progress.

Action Step 1.7 - Dr. Melendez shared the Conceptual Design study is in progress.

Action Step 5.1 - Mr. Kalkreuth noted distance learning has created an opportunity to learn more about incorporating both digital and in-person instruction to provide more tailored learning opportunities. He noted this has been a PD topic and will remain a topic of discussion for the fall. This action step will remain ongoing.

Action Step 6.1 - Mr. Kalkreuth shared that he and Dr. Melendez met with Ashleigh Blake from the Sherman Library to explore collaboration of after school activities with the library. This topic will be further explored when reopening plans have been established.

Action Step 12.2 - Mr. Kalkreuth - The Celebrations committee constructed a Heart of Thanks sign in the school library window to express their thanks for the community front line workers. Mr. Kalkreuth publicly acknowledged Ms. McDevitt and Dr. Corso for their work on the sign. The committee is currently working on an end of the year plan to safely connect with the students. He shared more to come on this topic.

Action Step 12.3 - Ms. Edwards noted the topic was discussed at length at the May Board of Education meeting. Social Emotional Learning program materials have arrived at school. Plans are currently underway to formally introduce the program to teachers on June 15th/16th as Professional Development (PD). Additional work will need to continue next year in terms of continuing PD and also actual implementation of the program.

Action Step 12.5 - Dr. Melendez noted this action step will not be completed since the student survey component regarding school climate could not be administered. Student surveys pertaining to distance learning were administered instead.

Mrs. Diotte shared that she is very pleased with the progress on the goals this year. She commended Dr. Melendez on refocusing efforts and prioritizing due to the current educational challenges. Mrs. Diotte thanked the entire admin team for their efforts.

Graduation and Award Ceremony

Mr. Kalkreuth acknowledged the planning process that has taken place in coordination with school faculty, staff and a group of seventh and eighth grade parents to plan an in-person graduation ceremony scheduled for June 12th at 6 PM. The plan has been approved by Town Hall, Park and Rec, Office of Emergency Management, Mr. Simpkins and Dr. Hack.

Ceremony Highlights

- Every family will be assigned a spot on a checkerboard style format across Veterans Field
- Students and Family remain in cars at all time, with the exception of anyone giving a speech
- Gazebo will be the focal point of the ceremony
- Photographer will be present
- Potential FM Transmitter to broadcast the ceremony over car radios
- The ceremony will potentially be live streamed

Award Ceremony

Mr. Kalkreuth shared the committee has developed a plan to recognize middle school students for their achievements. Mr. Luchsinger is working with the committee to record the Award Presentation and air on June 10th at 6:00 PM. A program link will be sent to all families of students receiving awards.

Extended Summer School (ESY)

Ms. Edward noted due to health and safety concerns, ESY will be provided in a distance learning format this summer. Letters have been sent to all student families who will be participating in the program. The letter outlined the decision-making process, program format, ESY staff and specific individual student schedules.

Ms. Edwards added the SPED team continues to implement IEP and associated services to the greatest extent possible during distance learning.

Budget Update

Budget Update

Ms. DePuy reported there were significant Covid related savings as well as savings in SPED lines, but also significant costs as unknown expenses which are all related to Covid. Ms. DePuy shared she is in constant contact with Business Officials in an effort to be prepared when information is available regarding the CARES Act and reimbursements, as some Covid related expenses will be reimbursed through the State.

Mrs. Diotte questioned if the school expends funds prior to the end of June in preparation for the new school year and is reimbursed, then what is the impact on next year's budget? Is there a potential bubble for the next few years?

Mrs. DePuy believes there will be an impact over the next few years, but noted it depends on the guidelines which at this point are vague. Mrs. DePuy noted CARES Act funds can be spent in 2021.

8. PRESENTATIONS

Blended Learning and Future Distance Learning

Dr. Melendez shared reflection and feedback slides from parent and student surveys regarding Distance Learning. He noted three similar themes from the feedback:

- Need more interaction between teacher/student/peers. Live lessons are preferred to recorded lessons 2:1 by both parent and student groups.
- Both parents and students find it difficult to complete assignments in special areas, even though they value these subjects very much.
- There is opportunity for greater coordination of assignments

He also shared a sample of narrative feedback from students and parents, both positive and negative. Dr. Melendez noted all of the feedback received is helpful for the administration and faculty to make improvements and modifications to the plan.

Mrs. Snowden shared that Heidi Jacob Hayes has developed a step by step process for determining what to teach and what should be consolidated or eliminated to make room for content that was missed this spring. Ms. Jacob Hayes will share her suggested process for guidance with the staff on June 5th.

Mrs. Snowden shared she is working with the area Assistant Superintendents and Curriculum Directors to insure Districts are aligned. This committee is considering a Blended Learning Model as one option. Mrs. Snowden noted the school will be able to utilize recently obtained digital tools, as they are adaptive to individualize student needs in the fall and noted teachers are seeing the advantage of the tools as well. Mrs. Snowden presented a short video which explains how Student Centered Learning/Blended Learning can prepare students for the 21st Century.

Mrs. Diotte questioned if Blended Learning will take place regardless if we are in school, or distance learning. Mrs. Snowden agreed and noted blending digital tools with traditional teaching will meet student needs in both traditional and alternative classroom environments.

Mrs. Lenihan questioned if Blended Learning will also challenge higher learning students? Mrs. Snowden agreed adaptive digital tools can gauge student's progress and challenge when needed, as well as offer remediation.

Dr. Melendez is a member of a school opening committee composed of Superintendents, Curriculum Directs and Business Officials. The committee met last week for two days. He shared one exercise was to review a list of potential school opening scenarios and rate them based on the composition of individual Districts. Due to the size of Sherman, the best scenario would be the Social Distance Model - which maximizes facility use while maintaining social distance. Dr. Melendez noted the size of the building, size of student population, 1:1 K-8 devices, robust learning platforms, etc. support the rationale for this being the best model. He further presented slides of the upper and lower levels of the building that support social distancing in a blended learning environment. Dr. Melendez also noted the admin team is developing a detailed protocol manual to address the reopening of the school. He further shared there are many factors that must be considered and more guidance is needed from the state.

Mrs. Snowden added the Assistant Superintendent/Director of Curriculum committee that she is serving on is focusing on four major areas to address re-opening: re-establishing the learning community, assessing cognitive and non-cognitive factors in our students, Curriculum and Instructional Framework and Professional Development.

Mr. Berlandi questioned how much of what must be done to re-open will be mandated by the state as opposed to guidance.

Dr. Melendez's interpretation is that there will be flexibility for Districts to decide and he is prepared to petition the State if needed. He is moving forward to develop a reopening plan that is both safe and educationally sound.

Mrs. Diotte questioned how the school will handle high risk individuals?

Ms. Edwards shared the school will communicate with families to develop an individual plan for any student in this category, as well as any student hospitalized for an extended period of time. Compared to past practices, new tools (Google, Zoom, SeeSaw, etc) can be utilized.

Mrs. Lenihan questions how the teachers are holding up? Mrs. Snowden shared that the teachers have been through quite a lot over the last few months learning new tools, delivering instructions and going above and beyond to engage students. Many teachers will be at school next week and she predicts that it will be extremely emotional for them to pack up their classrooms. Mrs. Snowden is thinking of a creative way to take a collective breath with the teachers at the end of the year meetings.

9. NEW BUSINESS

9.1 Discussion and Possible Action based on a Recommendation from the Maintenance Committee Regarding Conceptual Design Project

Mrs. Diotte briefly recapped the recent charge of Tecton to review the Friar report and update costs, which they presented to the Maintenance Committee. The committee is considering three options and plans to recommend one to the Board:

1. Maintenance overtime
2. Leave the building as is, but upgrade and update the existing footprint of the building
3. Combination renovation - a partial demolition of K-Wing and 60s building and new addition (18000 square foot) for new classrooms

The Maintenance Committee met with the Office of School Construction to understand what the State reimbursement would be for each option. The Maintenance Committee will meet on June 4th at 2:30 for a final review prior to making a formal recommendation to the Board. Mrs. Diotte

encouraged fellow Board members to participate if possible. Once the formal recommendation is made, the Board must move quickly as grant applications are due June 30th.

Mrs. Diotte noted it is the role of the Board to fully understand each option and the impact on the community and learning for Sherman students for decades to come. Once the Maintenance Committee has a formal recommendation, a Special Meeting will be warned for the Board to deliberate. Tecton will be present to answer any questions.

Mr. Neunzig added that the Board of Selectmen should attend the Special Meeting to understand the Boards reasoning and deliberation.

9.2	First Readings of Policy 4111.1 Equal Employment Opportunity	Enc 9.2
9.3	First Reading of Policy 4112.5/4212.5 Security/Credit Check	Enc 9.3
9.4	First Reading of Policy 4112.51/4212.51 Reference Checks	Enc 9.4
9.5	First Reading of Policy 4115 Evaluation/supervision	Enc 9.5
9.6	First Reading of Policy 4117 Separation/disciplinary/4117.4 Dis./suspens	Enc 9.6
9.7	First Reading of Policy 4121 Substitute Teachers	Enc 9.7
9.8	First Reading of Policy 4131.5 Continuing Education Units	Enc 9.8
9.9	First Reading of Policy 5000 Concept and Roles in Student Policies	Enc 9.9
9.10	First Reading of Policy 5113 Attendance and excuses	Enc 9.10
9.11	First Reading of Policy 5141.4 Reporting of child abuse and neglect	Enc 9.11
9.12	First Reading of Policy 5145.52 Harassment	Enc 9.12
9.13	First Reading of Policy 6154 Homework/Make-up work	Enc 9.13

Mrs. Diotte tabled First Reading 9.2, 9.5, 9.6, 9.7, 9.10 and 9.11. She noted 9.8 is not a First Reading, but a recommendation to rescind the policy. All remaining First Readings are accurate.

10. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

10.1	Second Reading of Policy 3231 Medical Reimbursement for Special Ed Students	Enc 10.1
10.2	Second Reading of Policy 0200 Goals for the Public Schools	Enc 10.2
10.3	Second Reading of Policy 5111 Admission and Placement of Students	Enc 10.3
10.4	Second Reading of Policy 5118.1 Homeless Students	Enc 10.4
10.5	Second Reading of Policy 7211 Architect Selection	Enc 10.5
10.6	Second Reading of Policy 7454 Consultant Services/Construction Management	Enc 10.6
10.7	Second Reading of Policy 7100 Building Committees	Enc 10.7
10.8	Second Reading of Policy 3516 Safety	Enc 10.8
10.9	Second Reading of Policy 3517 Security of Building and Grounds	Enc 10.9
10.10	Food Service Update	

Mrs. Diotte moved and Mrs. Seeger second to approve Policy 3231, Policy 0200, Policy 5111, Policy 5118.1, Policy 7211, Policy 7454, Policy 7100, Policy 3516 and Policy 3517, and the motion passed unanimously, 6-0.

10.10 Food Service Update

Mr. Neunzig noted that he has been in recent contact with Casey from Aramark and received an email regarding equipment, which includes the addition of an ice machine. He will forward to Dr. Melendez and Mr. Lombardozzi and include his rationale to support the ice machine.

11. COMMUNICATION

Mrs. Diotte received two communications from 8th grade parents regarding the Boston trip. The trip vendor, Global Endeavors only refunded 25% of their \$200 deposit. Mrs. Diotte read a portion of an email from Mr. Fazzone outlining his disappointment with Global Endeavors for not acting in good faith.

Ms. DePuy stated the school did not make a deposit to Global Endeavors for the 4th grade trip. She requested and is awaiting copies of both contracts. All deposits made by current 4th grade parents will be rolled over as the trip is expected to be rescheduled.

On behalf of the Board, Dr. Melendez sent a formal letter to Mr. Pacheco, Global Endeavors President, requesting they reconsider their position and refund families and advised their relationship with the school is in jeopardy. Mr. Pacheco responded and is unwilling to reconsider. He did grant that deposits can be rolled over to future trips, but that does not help the 8th grade students. Dr. Melendez added in speaking with other Superintendents, this is a common problem. Dr. Melendez is seeking legal counsel on this matter.

Mr. Neunzig looked for clarification as to what deposits were made for the 4th grade D.C. trip. Mrs. Diotte shared parents made deposits and entered into individual contracts with Global Endeavors.

Mr. Neunzig suggested a review to consider a policy around this topic. He is disappointed with Global Endeavors and feels their stance is unacceptable and cannot see a future relationship with them. Mrs. Seeger and Mrs. Lenihan both agreed with Mr. Neunzig.

In the future, Mrs. Seeger suggested inquiring about insurance on trips. Dr. Melendez cautioned that due to fine print, refunds on pandemic cancellations are not granted.

Mr. Neunzig acknowledged the contract is between parents and the company, but the school has sanctioned and vetted the company and the Board needs to accept a level of responsibility.

Mrs. Diotte noted that she will contact Mr. Fazzone to inform him that the topic was discussed and he can listen to the audio posted on the school's website.

12. PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comment

13. BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMENTS

Mrs. Diotte noted that she received a message from Mrs. Fitzpatrick at 8:02 PM requesting that the BOE join the Town Nickle system to alert residents of public school meetings and noted it would have been helpful when the school meeting ID was changed from the BOE agenda that was initially posted..

Mr. Neunzig noted that all our publicly warned meetings in the Zoom environment need to be easily accessible on the school's website.

Mrs. Lenihan requested one recurring link for all Board of Education meetings. Dr. Melendez appreciated the feedback of Mrs. Fitzpatrick and Mr. Neunzig and will make improvements.

Mrs. Seeger spoke highly of all of the work that has taken place and impressed with how it is being handled.

Mr. Neunzig acknowledged the teachers, Administration, Mr. Lombardozi and the paras for their work.

Mrs. Diotte thanked everyone at the meeting, and all that work in the school for doing the “good” in this community. She is proud and honored to work with everyone.

14. FUTURE MEETINGS AND TOPICS

14.1 Board of Education Meeting, June 24, 2020 at 7:00 PM

14.3 Policy Committee Meeting, June 9, 2020 at 10:00 AM

15. ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Diotte moved and Mr. Neunzig seconded the Board adjourned at 9:22 PM and the motion passed unanimously, 6-0.

Respectfully submitted,

James Neunzig
Vice Chair, Sherman Board of Education

Prepared by Recording Secretary: Nancy Winkler