

**SHERMAN BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**SHERMAN, CONNECTICUT 06784**  
**REGULAR MEETING - OCTOBER 7, 2020**  
**MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM FOR THE PUBLIC PARTICIPANTS**  
**7:00 PM**

A regular meeting of the Sherman Board of Education was called to order by Mrs. Diotte at 7:02 PM on October 7, 2020 at the Sherman School for the Board of Education and via Zoom.

**1. PRESENT:**

For the Board:	Mr. Berlandi, Mrs. Diotte, Mr. Laughlin, Mrs. Lenihan (via Zoom), Mr. Neunzig and Mrs. Seeger
Administration:	Dr. Melendez and via Zoom: Mr. Dudics, Mr. Kalkreuth and Mrs. Snowden
Staff:	Ms. DePuy (via Zoom)
Guest:	Dr. Alexander and Mr. Corbett
Residents:	2 Residents (via Zoom)

The Board and attendees recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

**2. CELEBRATIONS:**

**Recognition for Service to Board of Education - Dr. Missy Alexander**

Mrs. Diotte expressed her appreciation for Dr. Alexander and her service to the Board from January 2016 - September 2020. She reflected on Missy's approach, thoughtfulness, compassion and wisdom.

Mrs. Seeger echoed Mrs. Diotte's sentiments.

Dr. Alexander expressed her admiration for the Board and briefly reflected on the Board's approach to represent the Town and make this a great school regardless of political affiliation. She knows the school is in good hands with a Board that leads with their hearts and minds.

**Poem Publication - Catherine Flynn**

Dr. Melendez celebrated Catherine Flynn for the publication of her poem, Mental Floss. Mental Floss was presented on a slide for the Board and Zoom participants to view.

The Board congratulated Mrs. Flynn. Mr. Neunzig recognized Mrs. Flynn and thanked her for all that she does for the school

**National Custodians Day - October 2, 2020**

Dr. Melendez thanked and acknowledged Joe Lombardozi, Renato Ribeiro, Michelle Silva and Ariel Vargas for their incredible work maintaining the building.

Mr. Laughlin noted the positive feedback received during a site visit by the Head of School Construction regarding the maintenance of the school building. He noted the positive comments are indicative of the work performed by Joe Lombardozi and his team.

**3. PUBLIC COMMENT**

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:**

Minutes - Maintenance Committee, February 28, 2020  
Minutes - Maintenance Committee, April 6, 2020  
Minutes - Maintenance Committee, April 27, 2020  
Minutes - Maintenance Committee, May 4, 2020  
Minutes - Maintenance Committee, May 14, 2020  
Minutes - Maintenance Committee, May 18, 2020  
Minutes - Maintenance Committee, June 2, 2020  
Minutes - Maintenance Committee, June 4, 2020  
Minutes - Maintenance Committee - June 10, 2020  
Minutes - Maintenance Meeting - July 30, 2020  
Minutes - Monthly Meeting - September 2, 2020  
Minutes - Policy Meeting - September 22, 2020  
Minutes - Policy Meeting - September 29, 2020

**5.2 Personnel Actions**

Resignation

Linda Christie, School Secretary, Effective 1/1/2021  
Andy Shirk, Security Officer, Resignation Effective September 2, 2020

New Hire

Courtney Trainer, Teacher, Effective 9/4/20

**5.3 Monthly Enrollment Report**

**5.4 Monthly Budget Report 2020-2021 Budget by Function & Summary of Funds**

Dr. Melendez took the opportunity to publicly thanked Linda Christie for her partnership and noted how dearly she will be missed. The Administration is in the process of identifying a candidate to fill her position.

Mr. Neunzig and Mrs. Diotte spoke highly of Mrs. Christie as well.

**6. APPROVAL OF CURRENT BILLS:**

Mrs. Diotte moved and Mr. Berlandi seconded the approval of current bills, and the motion passed unanimously, 6-0.

**6.1 2020-2021 Current Bills**

**7. ORAL REPORTS:**

**7.1 SPTO Update**

SPTO representatives were not on the Zoom call, but Mrs. Diotte noted regular monthly meetings are held the second Wednesday of each month. Mrs. Diotte noted some SPTO members are working on the Playground Committee.

**7.2 Sub-Committee  
Negotiations Committee**

Mr. Berlandi briefly noted the Negotiations Committee met various times over the last several weeks with the Teachers' Union to discuss various issues regarding requested accommodations specific to COVID. He noted the meetings have been productive.

**7.3 Chair Report**

Mrs. Diotte noted no applications have been received for the BOE vacancy thus far. All interested candidates should submit their application by October 9th. The Democratic Town Committee may recommend one potential candidate. The Board will schedule interview(s) of all possible candidates during a Special Meeting in Executive Session and move out of the Executive Session to formally vote and appoint the new Board of Education member.

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

Budget Update

Dr. Melendez noted a high level overview of the current budget will be presented monthly by Carrie DePuy, Director of Finance and Operations.

Ms. DePuy highlighted three areas of potential savings in the current budget:

- Primary - \$15,000 approximate savings due to early teacher retirement
- Exceptional/Special Education - \$26,000 savings due to staffing and reduction of summer services due to COVID
- High School Expenditure - \$123,000 potential savings due to Special Education outplacement that has not been finalized and services not needed as anticipated. Ms. DePuy noted the conservative budget for high school tuition is on track, but could shift significantly if students move into the District.

Strategic Plan

Dr. Melendez presented the 2020-21 Action Steps and provided a brief update. He pointed out Action Step 1.6 & 1.7 are carried over from last year due to COVID. Action Step 1.8, Implement the 2020-21 Reopening Plan, has been added in response to COVID restrictions.

Mrs. Diotte commented that 11.1, 11.3 and 12.2 might be difficult to complete considering the current climate. Dr. Melendez noted that they were modified. Mrs. Snowden added most likely we will not be able to engage in the activities as intended, but will plan for them with an intended focus on the next school year.

Mr. Berlandi questioned how the remote students are doing.

Mrs. Snowden commented that overall it is going well. It took time, but not as much as anticipated for the students and families to acclimate, as well as teachers to navigate in person and remote learners. Remote students are joining live instruction everyday at every grade level. Both in person and remote learners use the same technology (Google Classroom and SeeSaw to manage assignments. Effort has been made over the last few weeks to help remote students make more connections (working in pairs, buddy reading, etc) with in person students. Mrs. Snowden noted there were some technology issues (connectivity, hot spots, etc) that Jim Luchsinger has been managing. She has been in touch with families who have additional issues and the Administration has received positive feedback from many families.

Dr. Melendez shared that the admin team was very strategic in developing the plan to insure the remote students would receive equivalent experiences as the in person students. Dr. Melendez attributed the success of the plan to the hard work of the teachers who have done a phenomenal job implementing the plan. He acknowledged the plan is not perfect and adjustments have been made and will continue to do so as needed, but he is very pleased thus far.

Mr. Belandi commented that it is a testament to the Administration and teachers. He sees the value in evaluating the plan to see what works and what can be better.

Mr. Laughlin inquired about the technology for the remote learners. Mrs. Snowden noted the Smart Boards have been an asset. There have been some technical issues, but they have been minimal and have been addressed.

## **8. PRESENTATION**

8.1 Dr. Melendez introduced Jason Corbett from Little Tykes, to provide the Board with an update on the latest playground draft schemes. Dr. Melendez noted the Playground committee consists of Board, parent and student representation. Mr. Corbett has been working with the committee to present drafts and make appropriate revisions based on feedback from the committee.

Mr. Corbett provided a very detailed potential playground scheme to the Board and highlighted many features which will appeal to a variety of students and their interests. The playground would be placed where the current lower playground resides. It will be ADA accessible and accommodate approximately 160 students. The playground will consist of two sections for 2 to 5 and 5 to 12 year old students.

Mr. Berlandi inquired about a general time frame. Mr. Corbett estimated approximately 8 weeks for the systems to be delivered and approximately 4 weeks to install.

Mr. Laughlin requested confirmation that the schemes are based on an actual site visit. Mr. Corbett confirmed.

Dr. Melendez provided a slide detailing the formation of sub committees to handle Grants, Financial Donations and Labor Donations. Dr. Melendez noted the Board has requested an amount not to exceed \$400,000.00, where a large portion of funds fall under the labor.

Dr. Melendez introduced committee member Ryan Peburn to provide an update on community donations for site work. Mr. Peburn shared the subcommittee has been working on securing local contractors to donate their services to remove the old equipment, footings and excavation of the site in preparation for installation. Mr. Peburn noted one volunteer has been secured to do a bulk of the work, and the subcommittee is working on securing another contractor. He noted the significant amount of money that can be saved.

Dr. Melendez thanked Mr. Peburn and looks forward to working with potential contractors in the town to offset the costs that will be requested from the Town for the playground. He feels it will bring the community together. He noted the recommendation was to bid for the remainder of the labor cost for installation to eliminate any potential liability to the Board and Town.

The Playground Committee will continue to refine the playground design and present to the Board in the future. Dr. Melendez welcomed feedback from the Board.

The Board commented positively on the parent, teacher and community involvement on the Playground project.

## **8.2 Update on Reopening Plan**

### Health Data Status

Dr. Melendez provided a Health Status Update and provided the results from the last three health reports. He continues to meet weekly with Dr. Hack, Mr. Simpkins, Mrs. Spinetti and Selectman Don Lowe to review data and discuss questions and concerns raised by parents and staff to make the best recommendation for the upcoming week. Sherman's current status at 0% for both the leading and secondary indicators on the past three health reports.

Dr. Melendez recently sent a note to the staff and community acknowledging everyone's cooperation and support. He commented that the student cooperation with mask wearing has been outstanding.

### Classroom Update

Mrs. Snowden recapped the two different learning environments: Blended Learning and Remote Learning. She discussed both the overlap and differences.

Mrs. Snowden shared a selection of class photos which captured

- Remote and in person learning and the interaction between students and teacher
- Technology used by teachers - ViewSonic & ViewBoard
- High Tech/Low Tech
- Socially distant PE class
- Socially distance independent reading with mask breaks
- Modeling of digital tools in the event of movement to remote learning
- Two band students, one in person and one remote, performing a musical piece together

Mrs. Snowden noted the positive impact of digital tools which allow for more personalization and individualized pacing. She also commented positively on how the teachers have adapted to teaching their classes with in person as well as remote students in such a short period of time.

### Middle School Schedule

Mr. Kalkreuth provided an update on the Middle School schedule. Based on feedback from families, teachers and students, the initial middle school schedule has been revised since it limited the ability for teachers to interact with students and did not allow enough time for teachers to provide feedback to students who may be struggling. A new model was introduced two weeks ago and is working well thus far. The instructional blocks have increased from 32 minutes to 37 minutes, and 64 minutes to 74 minutes, The schedule is staggered and it allows for an Advisory period which is beneficial for those who need additional support (SPED, Intervention, etc). Mr. Kalkrueth noted unfortunately, Science and Social Studies are offered on alternating days. Feedback received thus far has been positive.

Mrs. Diotte questioned if the students are getting outside since the schedule does not allow for PE everyday. Mr. Kalkrueth noted the schedule allows for it, but it's challenging to deliver instruction outside for many classes. He shared they are continuing to strategize and are open to all ideas.

Mrs. Diotte encouraged the admin team to continue to make adjustments as needed for which they have the Board's support.

Mrs. Seeger questioned if students go outside during their lunch.

Yes, Mr. Kalkrueth noted the favorable weather has allowed for some classes to eat outside. The school lunch program is going well and is being delivered to the classrooms accurately.

Mr. Berlandi questioned team sports and asked if there will be a sports season.

Dr. Melendez shared there will not be a fall sports season because the risk outweighs the reward of playing. Sports is an issue that will continue to be discussed at the weekly health data meetings and decisions will be made one season at a time. Dr. Melendez noted the main goal is to continue in person learning everyday.

The Board briefly discussed sports/intramural and requested for it to be evaluated if the health reports remain in Sherman's favor.

Mr. Kalkrueth added that during the weekly Health calls he continually brings up the topic of basketball/kickball at recess. Dr. Melendez and Mr. Kalkrueth will explore options with the health team.

## **9. NEW BUSINESS**

### **9.1 Discussion and Possible Action to Approve Playground Design Presentation**

Mrs. Diotte noted that she appreciated the playground presentation and updates. She requested the Board be updated with progress if needed prior to the November meeting.

Mrs. Diotte moved and Mrs. Seeger tabled the approval of the Playground Design, and the motion passed unanimously, 6-0.

### **9.2 Discussion and Possible Action to Contract with Vendor for Regionalization Study**

Dr. Melendez noted at the September Board Retreat, he was tasked with gathering information regarding the development of a regionalization study to inform the Boards future planning. Dr.

Melendez reported his finding to the Board which included two firms, general scope and associated consultancy costs. He also presented Survey & Data collection options to the Board as well.

For information purposes, Mrs. Diotte noted the work the Board has been engaged in over the last several years and endorsement of a conceptual design for the long term planning of the District. At the Board Retreat in September, the Board directed Dr. Melendez to research firms and cost estimates to inform various alternative options for the district should a comprehensive capital project not receive public support. Mrs. Diotte noted the Board's responsibility is to provide a good public elementary and secondary school for Sherman students and the Board's goal is ideally to keep preschool through 8th grade in Sherman.

The Board members discussed this topic at length. Discussion included:

- Important data to guide decisions and solicitation of surveys
- Acknowledgement of various paths forward
- Desire to remain K-8 District in Sherman
- Encouragement of community to express their support or objection to idea of regionalization
- Need for direction from Town leaders
- Current ability to have high school choice

At this point in time, the Board has not received any feedback or direction from the Board of Selectmen on the letter that was shared with them on July 24. The Board agreed the next step was to reach out to the Board of Selectmen again and request a meeting to discuss the future planning of the school building. No action was taken to move forward with a Regionalization Study at this point in time.

**9.3 Discussion and Possible Approval of the 2021 Board of Education Meeting Dates**

The Board reviewed the upcoming meeting dates and will decide on the Retreat dates once the new Board Member has been selected.

Mrs. Diotte moved and Mr. Berlandi seconded the approval of the 2021 Board of Education Meeting Dates, and the motion passed unanimously, 6-0.

**9.4 First Reading Policy 4131 - Certified Staff Development**

**9.5 First Reading Policy 5131.911 - Student Bullying**

**9.6 First Reading Policy 5141.6 - Students Emergency Preparedness Policy**

**9.7 First Reading Policy 5145.12 - Student Searches/Desks and Lockers**

**9.8 First Reading Policy 4118.237/4218.237/5141.8 Face Mask/Coverings**

**10. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**10.1 Discussion and Possible Action Regarding Conceptual Design Services Project Covered under presentation**

Mrs. Diotte noted this issue was discussed during the Working Session. She will send an email to the Board of Selectmen and request a meeting to address the building and determine next steps.

**11. COMMUNICATION**

Mrs. Diotte noted one thank you note received from Beth Scott and distributed to the Board.

**12. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

No public comment

**13. BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMENTS**

Mr. Neunzig extended his thanks to the Administration and teachers for the incredible job they have done.

**14. FUTURE MEETINGS AND TOPICS**

14.1 Board of Education Meeting, November 4, 2020 at 7:00 PM

14.2 Policy Meeting, October 21 at 10:00 AM

**15. ADJOURNMENT**

Mrs. Diotte moved and Susan Seeger seconded the Board adjourn at 9:05 PM and the motion passed unanimously, 6-0.

Respectfully submitted,

James Neunzig  
Vice Chair, Sherman Board of Education

Prepared by Recording Secretary: Nancy Winkler