

SHERMAN BOARD OF EDUCATION
SHERMAN, CONNECTICUT 06784
REGULAR MEETING - JANUARY 6, 2021
MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM
7:00 PM

A regular meeting of the Sherman Board of Education was called to order by Mrs. Diotte at 7:01 PM on January 6, 2021 via Zoom.

1. PRESENT:

For the Board: Mr. Berlandi, Mrs. Diotte, Mr. Laughlin, Mrs. Lenihan, Mr. Neunzig
(7:27 PM), Mrs. Seeger and Mr. Vogt
Administration: Dr. Melendez, Mr. Dudics, Mr. Kalkreuth and Mrs. Snowden
Staff: Ms. DePuy
Residents: 8 Residents

The Board and attendees recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. CELEBRATIONS:

2.1 National Honor Society Inductees

Dr. Melendez proudly announced the National Honor Society inductees:

New Milford High School

Maya Clancy

Kayla Fierko

Susan Hackett

Brandon Rey

Shepaug High School

Eilish Foy

Dr. Melendez reflected on the criteria of the National Honor Society, Character, Scholarship, Service and Leadership and noted how well deserved the students are to receive the honors.

Mrs. Diotte congratulated the students and families.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment

4. ADDITIONS TO AGENDA

No additions to the agenda

5. CONSENT AGENDA:

5.1 Review of Minutes:

Minutes - Communication Committee, November 10, 2020

Minutes - Monthly Meeting, December 2, 2020

Minutes - Policy Committee, December 18, 2020

5.2 Personnel Actions

5.3 Monthly Enrollment Report

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

5.5 2020-2021 Transfer Report

Mrs. Diotte moved and Mr. Berlandi seconded the approval of items 5.1 through 5.5, and the motion passed unanimously, 6-0.

6. APPROVAL OF CURRENT BILLS:

6.1 2020-2021 Current Bills

Mrs. Diotte moved and Mr. Berlandi second to approve the 2020-2021 current bills and the motion passed unanimously, 6-0.

7. ORAL REPORTS:

7.1 SPTO Update

Mr. Vogt briefly noted the SPTO has a committee assigned to work on their Spring fundraiser which will be different from the Boots and Bowties fundraiser. He noted more information to follow.

7.2 Sub-Committee

Policy Committee

Mrs. Seeger noted two first readings will take place under New Business and one second reading.

Negotiations

Mr. Berlandi questions the status of the high school negotiations. Dr. Melendez noted that he is in the process of scheduling a meeting with Region 12. Ms. DePuy noted a meeting with New Milford High School will take place next week to start the process.

Maintenance Committee

Mr. Laughlin provided the following Maintenance Committee update:

- Awaiting final report from local and state Fire Marshalls
- Discussions regarding a variety of repairs and how to structure
- Playground RFP - components, timing and septic site work. Mr. Laughlin noted septic analysis should be completed before the release of the RFP.

7.3 Chair Report

7.4 Superintendent Update - Dr. Jeff Melendez

Dr. Melendez provided the Board with a response to their inquiry from the December BOE meeting. A question was raised regarding the expiration of the enrollment report as it relates to the potential state grant application for a building project. Dr. Melendez responded no more than two years and noted the latest enrollment report was completed by Dr. Prowda in February 2020.

Dr. Melendez also noted that no teacher expressed interest in the Early Retirement Incentive package that was offered.

Budget Update

Ms. DePuy presented a snapshot of the current budget. She noted no significant changes since last month. Ms. DePuy shared that the school's CRF request has been approved and she will use the funds to offset the technology line. Total amount approved is \$38,000.00 which the school expects to receive in February.

Mrs. Diotte questioned if the funds are related to COVID. Ms. DePuy confirmed and noted she identified the isolation room, air conditioning units, social distancing apparatuses, standing desks, etc for CRF reimbursement.

Strategic Plan Update

Dr. Melendez noted slight modifications to the Action Steps have been made to accommodate for the blended learning that the school has been immersed in due to the COVID environment.

Mr. Kalkrueth and Mrs. Snowden touched on the following action steps and briefly explained how they have been enhanced through blended learning, primarily through the use of digital tools and implementation of strategies which has provided more student choice throughout the day:

- 2.2 Foster student independence, a foundational strategy of differentiated instruction
- 3.5 Ensure multiple opportunities for student choice across the curriculum through Blended Learning
- 1.6 Implement ISTE Standards through Blended Learning

Mrs. Diotte complemented the admin team and noted her appreciation for their creative thinking to improve student learning for the foreseeable future. She feels the District is not just surviving, but growing.

Mr. Berlandi echoed Mrs. Diotte sentiments. He appreciates that the Strategic Plan was not lost during this unprecedented time, but pushed forward as much as possible.

Dr. Melendez appreciated the comments and gave credit to the admin team, teachers, students and families.

Health Trends

Dr. Melendez provided an update on the Health Trends which included the data that prompted 100% Remote Learning in December (45 cases per 100,000 with 6% positivity rate). He also shared current data which is trending in the right direction. Dr. Melendez remains hopeful to maintain full time in person learning.

8. PRESENTATION

8.1 Remote

Mrs. Snowden and Mr. Kalkreuth presented slides of Remote Learning in action with photos of students. The admin team joined many Zoom classes and both Mrs. Snowden and Mr. Kalkreuth shared some experiences.

Mrs. Snowden commented that Day 1 was an amazing transition and complimented the teachers and students for being so prepared.

Mr. Kalkrueth gave credit to the Paras for their efforts and assistance during Distance Learning.

Mr. Vogt provided positive feedback from his children's experience.

9. NEW BUSINESS

9.1 Review and Possible Approval of an RFQ/P for Playground Site Work and Installation

Mrs. Diotte recapped the actions that led to the decision to replace the playground:

- 2018 Facility Study by Friar confirmed the playground needed to be replaced.
- The Playground Committee was formed, but paused because it became evident that a comprehensive capital facility plan was needed.
- Board discussed and reviewed the Friar Report at multiple public meetings.
- The Design and Innovation Committee was formed to guide next steps which led to the engagement of services with Tecton architects. Funding for the development of the Conceptual Design scheme to address the capital needs listed in the Friar report were approved.
- At the June 6th Special Meeting, the Board endorsed Conceptual Design Option 3, but they were mindful that the project, if approved, would take years.
- At the July 21 Special Meeting, the Board agreed to move forward with plans for a safe, functioning playground for the Sherman students.
- The Board of Education brought to the Board of Selectmen a request for funding not to exceed \$400,000 for a new playground. The Selectmen unanimously approved the motion to bring to Town meeting.
- Dr. Melendez formed a Playground Committee to engage a vendor and develop schemes to engage students in PreK through 8th grade. Additional subcommittees were formed to address fundraising, grants, etc.
- Jason Corbett from Little Tykes presented the final design to the Board at the December 2 Board meeting with two options. The Board approved the design and opted to contract with Little Tykes for equipment only. The Playground Committee recommended savings to contract the site work and installation through RFP bidding to save taxpayers funds.
- The playground will be placed where the lower playground currently resides.
- Mr. Simpkins viewed the site to confirm the location and leaching fields/septic. Recommendation was made to do a dig of septic fields.

Mrs. Diotte noted questions remain to authorize additional septic analysis/dig prior to the release of RFP or have it included in RFP to have vendors include with their proposal.

Mr. Laughlin added that the Maintenance Committee feels that an independent engineering analysis of the site would be beneficial prior to the release of the RFP.

Mr. Vogt agreed and added that analysis could save money by avoiding unexpected costs. All information should be included in the RFP.

Mrs. Diotte questioned the timeframe for the septic work.

Dr. Melendez noted that calls to contractors have been placed and he does not envision the analysis to take too long. He anticipates a cost range of \$1600 to \$1800 for the analysis which will be covered in the operating budget. Dr. Melendez referenced the draft RFP and noted once it is finalized and released, a vendor would be awarded within 60 days.

Mr. Laughlin anticipates a late spring, early summer timeframe.

Mrs. Diotte recapped the discussion that Dr. Melendez and Mr. Lombardozi will move forward with the septic analysis and include results in the RFP prior to release.

9.2 Discussion Regarding Possible Addition of a Student Member of the Board of Education

The Board discussed student government participation on the Board of Education for the middle school and potentially at the high school levels.

Mrs. Seeger has reached out to CAFE for sample policies and will include a review at the next policy meeting for Board consideration.

9.3 Review and Discussion of Sub-Committee Assignments

The Board reviewed current sub committee assignments and made the following revisions:

- Communication Committee - Susan Seeger, Chair
- Maintenance Committee - Matt Vogt, Committee Member

Mrs. Diotte remains the ex-officio member of all committees.

9.4 First Reading Policy 9325 Meeting Conduct

No action taken

9.5 First Reading Policy 5111 Admission and Placement of Students: Attendance Ages

No action taken

9.6 Discussion of Formal Charge of Special Sub-Committee for Capital Planning

Mrs. Diotte referenced the motion made at the December 2020 meeting to form the Capital Planning Committee. At the meeting, it was questioned if the committee formation was legal in terms of the bylaws. For the record, Mrs. Diotte confirmed in consultation with legal counsel that the committee was formed in compliance with the bylaws.

Mrs. Diotte requested the Board review the charges of the subcommittee to ensure all members understand what the charge of the committee entails. She noted once an action is taken and a vote takes place, the Board is obligated to support the decision.

Mr. Vogt stated the formal charge is a more effective means of communication and community outreach, specifically in relation to capital improvements. To further investigate options for Project concepts if support is inadequate. Engage local and state stakeholders about Project parameters reimbursement and funding. To bring those discoveries and options to the Board for further action when necessary. The Board discussed having all subcommittee meetings recorded and the history inconsistency of past practices.

Mrs. Diotte requested the Policy committee review and report back to the Board..

9.7 Discussion and Possible Action to approve letter to Board of Selectmen as recommended by Capital Planning Committee

Mr. Vogt stated the committee has drafted a letter to the Board of Selectmen acknowledging their feedback and setting framework to work together to move forward with a plan for the school and town.

The Board discussed the letter at length and expressed their opinion in either support or opposition of the letter. They reflected on the December Board meeting as well as the last Board of Selectmen meeting. The general consensus of members against the letter felt that the letter was premature. In lieu of sending the letter, they encouraged an invitation to the Board of Selectmen to sit down for a workshop style meeting to move forward.

Mr. Laughlin moved and Mr. Vogt seconded the motion to approve the recommendation of the Committee for approval of the letter as stated, and the motion did not pass 3-3 (In favor Mr. Berlandi, Mr. Laughlin and Mr. Vogt. Opposed: Mrs. Diotte, Mrs. Lenihan and Mrs. Seeger).

9.8 Discussion and Possible Action on Recommendation from the Capital Planning Committee to Authorize the Superintendent to solicit cost estimates from Tecton Architects for Adjustments or Alternatives to the Conceptual Design Options that were previously presented

Mr. Vogt shared the committee would like Dr. Melendez to contact Tecton to inquire about associated costs if adjustments were needed to the plan to prepare for discussions with the Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Laughlin added the request is similar to the previous Tecton request to expand the scope to analyze the capital plan phase details. He noted this is not a request to engage, but an estimate to further analyze options.

Mrs. Seeger feels the step is premature as the whole Board adopted Option 3 and have not heard a collective no from the Board of Selectmen.

Mrs. Diotte clarified that the agenda is not to authorize funds, but to direct Dr. Melendez to engage with Tecton regarding any scope that might be required to update the existing plans. She noted that she would give great pause to expend any further taxpayer funds to any plan/revision, unless the Board has a very thorough dialogue with the Board of Selectmen and that they are also on board with investigating/developing further alternative options. She feels the Board of Education has done their due diligence to review and revise the plans and utilize every square foot of building space possible. She credits fellow Board members and the Maintenance Committee for fine tuning the plan which has been collectively endorsed.

10. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

10.1 Second Reading Policy 9221 Vacancies of the Board of Education

Mrs. Seeger moved and Mrs. Diotte seconded the adoption of Policy 9221 Vacancies of the Board of Education, and the motion passed unanimously, 6-0.

11. COMMUNICATION

Mrs. Diotte acknowledged one thank you note received which has been distributed to the Board.

12. PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comment

13. BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMENTS

Mr. Laughlin requested the full Board be included on the Board of Selectmen meeting communication. Mrs. Diotte agreed and noted it will most likely be an invitation. Both the Board of Education and Board of Selectmen will publicly warn the meeting.

Mr. Vogt requested the meeting be in person if possible. Mrs. Diotte agreed and will look into the possibility.

Mrs. Lenihan shared that she appreciates the passion of fellow Board members and although not agreeing on certain paths, she is hopeful to move forward. She appreciates the hard work that everyone is putting in.

14. FUTURE MEETINGS AND TOPICS

- 14.1 Board of Education Meeting, February 3, 2021 at 7:00 PM
- 14.2 Budget Workshop, January 13, 2021 at 6:00 PM
- 14.3 Board of Education Retreat, January 15, 2021
- 14.4 Policy Meeting, January 21, 2021 at 10:00 AM

15. ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Diotte moved and Mrs. Lenihan seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:16 PM and the motion passed unanimously, 6-0.

Respectfully submitted,

James Neunzig
Vice Chair, Sherman Board of Education

Prepared by Recording Secretary: Nancy Winkler