

SHERMAN BOARD OF EDUCATION
SHERMAN, CONNECTICUT 06784
REGULAR MEETING - JUNE 2, 2021
MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM
7:00 PM

A regular meeting of the Sherman Board of Education was called to order by Mr. Neunzig at 7:00 PM on June 2, 2021 via Zoom.

1. PRESENT:

For the Board:	Mr. Berlandi, Mr. Laughlin, Mr. Neunzig, Mrs. Seeger and Mr. Vogt
Absent:	Mrs. Diotte and Mrs. Lenihan
Administration:	Dr. Melendez, Mr. Dudics, Mr. Kalkreuth and Mrs. Snowden
Staff:	Ms. DePuy and Mr. Lombardozzi
SPTO:	Mrs. O'Neill
Residents:	7 Residents

The Board and attendees recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. CELEBRATIONS:

2.1 CSDE and RESC Alliance Impact Educators' Blended Learning Showcase

Mrs. Snowden proudly shared that she participated at the RESC showcase to represent the school for all of the work put forth through Blended Learning. As mentioned at last month's meeting, the school was one of two districts nominated by EdAdvance for the Impact Educator Award. Mrs. Snowden shared how proud she is of the teachers for navigating the Blended Learning process and improving all year long. She is thrilled that they were recognized for all of their efforts. The Sherman School's Blended Learning samples will be housed on the RESC Alliance website:

<https://sites.google.com/cestrumbull.org/blended-learning-courses/2021-impact-educators?authuser=0>

Mr. Neunzig expressed his gratitude to the teachers and the administration.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT:

4. ADDITIONS TO AGENDA

5. CONSENT AGENDA:

5.1 Review of Minutes:

Minutes - Budget Workshop, February 8, 2021
Minutes - Budget Workshop, February 17, 2021
Minutes - Special Committee on Capital Committee, April 19, 2021
Minutes - Executive Session, May 5, 2021
Minutes - Regular Meeting, May 5, 2021
Minutes - Executive Session, May 5, 2021
Minutes - Special Meeting, May 7, 2021

- 5.2 Personnel Actions
- 5.3 Monthly Enrollment Report
- 5.4 Monthly Budget Report 2020-2021 Budget by Function & Summary of Funds

Mr. Neunzig moved and Mr. Vogt seconded the approval of the consent agenda. Minutes: Budget Workshop - February 8, 2021, Budget Workshop - February 17, 2021, Special Committee on Capital Committee - April 19, 2021, Executive Session - May 5, 2021, Regular Meeting - May 5, 2021, Executive Session - May 5, 2021, Special Meeting - May 7, 2021, Personnel Actions, Monthly Enrollment Report, Monthly Budget Report 2020 - 2021 Budget by Function & Summary of Funds, and the motion passed, 4-1. (In favor: Mr. Berlandi, Mr. Laughlin, Mr. Neunzig and Mr. Vogt. Opposed: Mrs. Seeger).

6. APPROVAL OF CURRENT BILLS:

6.1 2020-2021 Current Bills

Mr. Neunzig moved and Mr. Vogt seconded to approve the 2020-2021 current bills and the motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

7. ORAL REPORTS:

7.1 SPTO Update

Mr. O'Neill shared that the SPTO had a successful 5K Color Run and plans to host another one in the Fall. The SPTO will be hosting an 8th grade graduation party.

7.2 Sub-Committee

Mr. Neunzig is hopeful to reconvene the Food Service Committee with Mrs. Lenihan.

7.3 Chair Report

7.4 Superintendent Update - Dr. Jeff Melendez

Budget Referendum Survey

Dr. Melendez noted a Budget Referendum Survey was administered to solicit feedback from the community to understand concerns as to why the budget did not pass on May 7th. The Board reviewed in great detail the results from the surveys received and developed the following action steps:

- Greater collaboration with town partners to raise awareness about the referendum date and the opportunity to vote.
- More detailed information about educational costs in an environment where there's declining student enrollment.
- Enhanced and more predictable Board level communication to the school Community through social media and newspaper channels.
- Addition of a regularly scheduled Board of Education workshop meeting each month to promote more efficient and consistent communication with the public.

Budget Update

Ms. DePuy reported the expected surplus has increased and she anticipates the total to be \$212,000.00, which does not account for any surplus purchases. Ms. DePuy briefly touched on the third round of ESSR funds and feels there is some confusion regarding the release of funds. At this point, the assurance process has been completed and now the school can apply for the funds. She expects the school will be eligible for approximately \$170,000.00 and noted no discussions have taken place regarding what

the funds will be used for. Ms. DePuy also noted that 20% of funds received must be allocated for learning loss.

Mr. Berlandi requested an explanation regarding why there is another surplus this year.

Ms. DePuy provided some insights for the surplus:

- Sherman, unlike most Districts, has variability with high school enrollment. This year, the high school line accounts for \$20,000 of the surplus due to two seniors graduating early. Ms. DePuy noted that the upcoming budget line for high school is aggressive.
- Special Education budgeting is also a driving factor due to shifts that occur when students move in and out of the district.
- Due to COVID, many substitutes were not needed resulting in a surplus of \$40,000. Also, student activities were suspended this year resulting in a surplus of \$50,000.

Maintenance Committee Recommendations using Surplus Funds

Dr. Melendez presented a slide outlining Maintenance Committee requests that were finalized at the May 25 meeting. These items are not essential, but will improve the health of the building. The total estimated expense is \$75,464.00 which encompasses:

- Electrolyzed Water EBEOS-500
- Clean Classroom Ventilators
- Generator Breaker Switches
- Supplies/Labor to add/remove walls
- Painting
- Gym Refresh
- Well Pump Replacement

Mr. Laughlin briefly reviewed the list and feels it is an appropriate use of funds to ensure the building is operable in the fall and is hopeful many restrictions will be lifted.

Mrs. Seeger questioned the Electrolyzed Water for \$14,000. Dr. Melendez noted that the school spent approximately \$10,000 on wipes this year to disinfect the school. The electrolyzed water device converts water into a disinfecting solution.

Mr. Lombardozi explained the chemical process that occurs through electrolysis when adding salt brine to regular water. He compared the process to a saltwater swimming pool that makes chlorine. Mr. Lombardozi noted the natural process breaks down into water and mild salt. Mrs. Lombardozi also shared that the device has been approved by the FDA, EPA, USDA and CDC.

Mr. Laughlin questioned if Public Health Officers have endorsed the device.

Mr. Lombardozi shared that the device is on the State's "End List", which certifies products that kill the COVID 19 virus. He further shared that he contacted many schools that use the device, although manufactured by different companies. Mr. Lombardozi prefers the selected device because it makes two solutions, one for cleaning and the other for disinfecting.

Dr. Melendez added that he reached out to Dr. Hack, Mr. Simpkins and Mr. St. Louis regarding the device and shared that a particular device will not be endorsed, but as long as the solution produced meets the indicated specifications, then the product is safe and appropriate for school use.

Mr. Laughlin noted the school's current water concerns and questioned using the water in the new device.

Mr. Lombardozi confirmed the new system has its own water softening system that first softens the water before adding the salt, essentially cleaning the water prior to the process.

Mr. Neunzig looked to the Board for any objections and no objections were raised.

Dr. Melendez will move forward with the recommended purchases for the Maintenance Committee.

Strategic Plan Update

Mr. Kalkrueth provided an update on the Strategic Plan and shared progress made on Action Steps 11.1, 11.3, 12.2 and 12.4. These steps have progressed to completion with the exception of 11.3, due to COVID restrictions. Following are highlights of the steps:

- 11.1 Organize team building activities for faculty to participate in three times a year: Faculty Virtual Scavenger Hunt, Cahoot & DiSC Profile
- 11.3 Plan and implement student challenges two times per year to encourage teamwork within a grade level: SEL team building event for middle school (Feb). 8th grade events: Pizza/Dance party at Veteran field, Movie day, and Olympics event
- 12.2 Plan and organize special arrival and dismissal activities for the first and last day of school each year: Carnival of Knights for the entire school scheduled for June 8th.

Dr. Melendez touched on the action steps and noted how proud he is of the work of his colleagues and is appreciative of everyone's efforts.

Carnival of Knights

Dr. Melendez provided highlights for the upcoming Carnival of Knights, scheduled for June 8th on Veterans Field. The theme is "Together We Can Do Virtually Anything". Each student received their own t-shirt with the theme logo which they have tie-dyed and will wear to the event. Dr. Melendez noted the level of planning involved to make it a well-deserved memorable day for the students. He is aware of the pending heat/humidity and shared strategies have been developed to keep the students cool and comfortable. 20 SPTO volunteers will be assisting with the day's events..

Mr. Kalkrueth thanked First Selectman Lowe and his team for their partnership and always having Veterans Field in great shape for the school's events.

Health Trends

Dr. Melendez provided a slide on the current health trends and was happy to report decreased positivity trends. Due to expected heat and humidity for the Carnival of Knights, students do not have to wear their masks outside, which aligns with Governor Lamonte's decree that masks do not need to be worn outdoors.

8. PRESENTATION

8.1 Playground Repair/Replacement Recommendations

Dr. Melendez shared the Playground committee reconvened and started meeting on May 13th and focused on the following goals:

- Assess functionality of the current Pirate Ship and Lower Playgrounds to determine if they are salvageable or need replacement, and determine appropriate next steps.
- If it is determined that one or both playgrounds cannot be salvaged, and require immediate replacement, the committee will recommend a final location for the playground to be installed.
- If it is determined that one or both playgrounds will be installed, the committee will recommend a final design(s)

Dr. Melendez noted robust discussions were had and the committee did not reach a consensus. In an effort to collect objective feedback, a survey was administered to the committee.

Dr. Melendez shared three lower playground scenarios with the Board: the original playground (for comparison), Option A and Option B. He shared the similarities, differences and associated costs. He reported the favorable survey indicated Playground as "Option A".

Dr. Melendez shared that the committee discussed updating the Pirate Ship playground (sanding, painting & minor repairs) as one Option A. Option B follows the same plan and includes a Clever Climber. The Survey results indicated Option B as the favorable choice.

8.2 2021-2022 Full-Time In-Person (Blended) Learning

Dr. Melendez looked forward to the upcoming school year as a new opportunity for a higher level of teaching and learning by using the newly developed skills to excel.

Mrs. Snowden shared slides of learning that has taken place over the past year of teachers and students navigating extremely successfully. At this point in time, the administration and staff are reflecting on what they learned and also celebrating their accomplishments. Highlights include: Resilience and Flexibility, Prioritizing Standards, Importance of Social Emotional Learning, and parent communication. They also recognized how small group instruction was deeply missed and the necessity of in person learning and the human connection for mental health and well being.

Mrs. Snowden shared slides of Blended Learning and explained specific examples of it in action with the intention to provide students with more choice to guide them to be more independent learners. Mrs. Snowden recapped that the teachers will move forward with their newly developed skills, tools and strategies and build upon them. She reviewed the plans for the new school year as well:

- 100% in person learning every day
- Co-created master schedule from 2019-2020
- Remapping classrooms spaces/adjacencies for optimal learning
- Co-teaching in K and 4th grades as well as small-group instruction
- Offering intramurals, athletics, XP and Enrichment
- Increased teacher to student ratio to accelerate learning
- Planning to build on Second Step and Blended Learning

Dr. Melendez presented revised floor plans with room changes and adjacency for enhanced learning environments for the upcoming school year. The new plans include:

- Preschool Grade 1 Suite
- Kindergarten Team in one large classroom
- Interventionist Classrooms
- Co Teaching Grade 4
- Return of STEAM in Grades PS - 5
- Fine Arts Suite to eliminate sound in academic areas
- Designated Health classroom
- Middle School Counselor & Interventionist in subdivided classroom

Mrs. Seeger questioned how the school will approach learning that was lost during the pandemic once all of the students return in the fall.

Mrs. Snowden explained the benchmark assessments have been completed and the school has identified students who have not met the end of the year benchmarks. Mrs. Snowden explained the rationale for the higher number due to interruptions in the school year and inability to meet in small group instruction due to restrictions. The administration is looking towards accelerating learning next year. Mrs. Snowden explained the school has enough staff and resources to provide as much needed individual and small group instructions to deliver skill and concepts to students.

Mrs. Seeger questioned what support will be provided to students who did not meet the benchmark regarding summer reading/math packets or summer programs?

Mrs. Snowden confirmed summer packets for math and reading will be distributed. She further shared that the interventionists are reaching out individually to families of students who are receiving intervention support and making special suggestions and providing extra resources. Mrs. Snowden believes more students will need support compared to a typical year and feels it is understandable. The school will have the students' needs identified and be prepared to address them with additional support and resources.

Mrs. Seeger expressed appreciation to Mrs. Snowden for her feedback and being on top of the issue/concerns.

XP and Enrichment Catalog 2021-2022

Dr. Melendez presented the XP and Enrichment Catalog 2021-2022. The catalog lists an extensive offering of 35 programs to provide students with opportunities to explore areas of interest in more depth. Dr. Melendez briefly reviewed the programs. He pointed out that every 6th grader must complete a "Rock your Presentation" and every 8th grader must complete their Capstone project during one of the trimesters. At the end

of each trimester the students will be able to showcase their new skills & what they have accomplished at the XP Expo.

Regarding Enrichment opportunities, students can choose from ELT, Band, Chorus, Advanced Art and Comp-Sci (not available for the 1st Trimester).

Dr. Melendez added the entire school will engage in the Social Emotional Learning curriculum on Day 6 of the school schedule.

9. NEW BUSINESS

9.1 Discussion and Possible Action to Approve RFPs for Capital Projects

Mr. Neunzig expressed appreciation for the amount of work involved in developing the RFPs and thanked Mr. Lombardozzi and Ms. DePuy for their efforts.

Mr. Vogt noted one area on the lower level of the 90s wing that was not identified. Mr. Lombardozzi suggested on the mandatory walk through with the vendors that each location be labeled with a number. He also suggested that Mr. Vogt and/or Mr. Laughlin meet to confirm locations prior to the vendor walkthrough.

Mr. Neunzig moved and Mr. Vogt seconded the motion to authorize the Superintendent to release the RFPs for the capital projects and the motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

9.2 Discussion and Possible Action to Approve Playground Design

Mr. Neunzig reflected on the long process and noted the consensus that was derived in the end. He expressed concern regarding the site and septic issues and anticipates they will be addressed by Dr. Melendez, Mr. Lombardozzi or the contractors.

Mr. Vogt touched on the process and his involvement through various committees. He is pleased with the design of the playground and feels it will provide a great update.

The Board briefly discussed the funds to request from the Town and agreed \$300,000.00 would suffice.

Mr. Neunzig moved and Mr. Vogt seconded the motion to approve the committee's recommendation playground design and authorize the Superintendent to initiate a request for funding from the Town leadership, not to exceed \$300,000 for replacement/repair of both the lower playground and Pirate Ship playground, and the motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

10. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

11. COMMUNICATION

12. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Rosemarie D'Ostilio, 41 Cozier Hill Road. Ms. D'Ostilio thanked Mr. Berlandi and Ms. DePuy for explaining the budget surplus. She suggested having the surplus explanation documented for the public to view as there has been much discussion about the topic. Ms. D'Ostilio also commented positively on Mrs. Snowden's presentation and feels it would be great to have this information available for the public as well. Ms. D'Ostilio praised the administration for their involvement with providing teachers with new skills/resources.

Kerry Merkel, 14 Locust Lane. Ms. Merkel agreed with Ms. D'Ostilio's comments. She expressed appreciation to the Town and school for getting the community through this past year.

13. BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMENTS

Mr. Neunzig expressed appreciation to his fellow Board members for everything they do, as well as everyone working at the school for their incredible efforts this year.

Mr. Berlandi also noted his appreciation for the efforts and flexibility of the administration. He appreciates the Board working together throughout the challenging year.

Mr. Vogt echoed similar sentiments and commented on the quality of education and creativity efforts put forth by the teachers and administration. He also expressed appreciation for Mr. Lombardozzi.

Mrs. Seeger noted the incredible year and feels what Dr. Melendez has accomplished is remarkable. She also added that she did not vote to approve the consent agenda since there were minutes that she disagreed with. She shared that she is a stickler for process, transparency and consistency and hopes the Board will all be on the same page moving forward.

14. FUTURE MEETINGS AND TOPICS

14.1 Board of Education Meeting - June 23, 2021 at 7:00 PM

j 15. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Neunzig moved and Mr. Vogt seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:55 and the motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

James Neunzig
Vice Chair, Sherman Board of Education

Prepared by Recording Secretary: Nancy Winkler