

SHERMAN BOARD OF EDUCATION
SHERMAN, CONNECTICUT 06784
REGULAR MEETING - JUNE 23, 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 7:06 PM on June 2, 2021 via Zoom.

1. PRESENT:

For the Board:	Mr. Berlandi, Mrs. Diotte, Mr. Laughlin, Mrs. Lenihan, Mrs. Seeger and Mr. Vogt
Absent:	Mr. Neunzig
Administration:	Dr. Melendez, Mr. Dudics, Mr. Kalkreuth and Mrs. Snowden
Staff:	Ms. DePuy, Mrs. Flynn, Mrs. Hillmann, Mr. Lombardozzi and Mrs. Shook
Town Officials:	First Selectman Lowe and Mr. Holub
SPTO:	Mrs. O'Neill
Residents:	21 Residents (in person & Zoom)

The Board and attendees recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. CELEBRATIONS:

2.1 Sherman School Awards

Mr. Kalkreuth shared that the Sherman Awards ceremony was held on June 11th. He presented slides showcasing the award recipients of the 8th grade graduating class, as well as receipts from grades 6th and 7th. He noted how incredibly proud everyone is for their achievements. He gave special thanks to all of the organizations for their partnership with the event.

2.2 High School Awards

Mr. Kalkreuth also presented post graduate plans, awards and scholarships of the Sherman graduating seniors. On behalf of the school community, he congratulated the students and expressed how proud the community is for their hard work and accomplishments.

2.3 Teacher of the Year

Mr. Kalkreuth explained the process by which the Teacher of the Year committee identifies the most deserving candidate. Due to the overwhelming scope of this school year, the committee opted to recognize all Sherman School teachers for this award.

2.4 Friend of Education Award

Mr. Kalkreuth shared that SEA has selected Bernadette Schopfer as the Friend of Education award recipient. Mr. Kalkreuth concurred that Mrs. Schopfer is so deserving of the recognition for her incredible efforts.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Pam Bonner, 44 Anderson Road. Mrs. Bonner expressed interest regarding agenda item 9.2 Discussion and Possible Action Regarding Administration Reorganization. She expressed concern regarding the increased administration costs as it relates to the current enrollment and feels it should be taken into consideration when the Board addresses item 9.2.

4. ADDITIONS TO AGENDA

5. CONSENT AGENDA:

5.1 Review of Minutes:

Minutes - Monthly Board Meeting, June 2, 2021

5.2 Personnel Actions

5.3 Personnel Actions

Resignations

Carrie DePuy, Director of Finance & Operations - 7/9/21

Keri Snowden, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Innovation - 6/30/21

Contracts

Administration Contract Approval

Non-Affiliated Contract Approval

5.4 Monthly Enrollment Report

5.5 Monthly Budget Report 2020-2021 Prior to Transfer Budget by Function & Summary of Funds

5.6 Budget Transfer Report

Mrs. Diotte moved and Mrs. Seeger seconded the approval Monthly Board Minutes of June 2, 2021, Personnel Actions, Monthly Enrollment Report, Monthly Budget Report 2020 - 2021 Budget by Function & Summary of Funds, and the motion passed, 6-0.

6. APPROVAL OF CURRENT BILLS:

6.1 2020-2021 Current Bills

Mrs. Diotte moved and Mrs. Seeger seconded to approve the 2020-2021 current bills and the motion passed unanimously, 6-0.

7. ORAL REPORTS:

7.1 SPTO Update

Mrs. O'Neill reported the 8th grade Graduation party was successful and they plan to continue in the future.

Mrs. O'Neill announced Kerry Merkel will be joining the SPTO as the Vice President. She further shared the SPTO Board and new members will meet next week to plan for the upcoming year. Mrs. O'Neill will also meet with Dr. Melendez to discuss activities where the school and SPTO can partner again.

7.2 Sub-Committee

7.3 Chair Report

Mrs. Diotte expressed her gratitude to the Administration, teachers, staff and families for all efforts this year.

7.4 Superintendent Update - Dr. Jeff Melendez

Playground Update

Dr. Melendez provided an update on the proposed playgrounds. The plans include a full replacement of the lower playground and repair & improvement of the Pirate Ship playground. Dr. Melendez will provide the Board of Selectmen with a full Playground presentation on June 24th, with a town vote scheduled for July 10th at 10:00 AM.

Re-Opening Plan

Mr. Kalkrueth noted that the State has requested all schools document their reopening plan on their website. The plan that has been posted, but a complete comprehensive revised plan will be updated over the summer months.

8. PRESENTATION

8.1 AESOP Substitute Teacher Report

Dr. Melendez presented the AESOP report and noted due to COVID he was anticipating excessive absences, but attendance has been better than in years past.

8.2 Surplus Analysis

Ms. DePuy reported on the budget surplus and anticipates a surplus of \$250,000.00.

Dr. Melendez presented a slide outlining recommended surplus expenditures in the following categories: Furniture, Technology, Programs & Building Improvements. The request total is approximately \$130,000.00. Dr. Melendez provided multiple slides to the Board detailing the need for enhancements for the students, staff and school.

The Board asked clarifying questions and discussed the surplus. Mrs. Diotte explained past practices of surplus spending on educational items. She touched on the significant surplus returns to the Town and noted that all funds have been accounted for. Mrs. Diotte noted no vote is necessary since the Superintendent has the authority to expend funds on operating the school and educational needs. She noted her appreciation for the administration's transparency.

9. NEW BUSINESS

9.1 Discussion and Possible Action to Amend Policy 5118 - Nonresident Students

Dr. Melendez recommended the Board continue the practice of allowing staff to bring their children to school at no cost for one additional year. He further recommended extending this to all full-time staff. Dr. Melendez noted this will not have a financial impact on the district.

The Board discussed the topic.

Mrs. Diotte moved and moved and Mrs. Lenihan seconded the motion to Amend Policy 5118 - Nonresident Students and the motion passed unanimously 6-0.

9.2 Discussion and Possible Action Regarding Administration Reorganization

Mrs. Diotte explained the rationale for the potential reorganization of the District due to the resignation of Mrs. Snowden, Director of Curriculum and Instruction. The administration can refill the position, or look to reorganize the administration model and redistribute roles and responsibilities.

Dr. Melendez presented detailed slides outlining the function of the Administration and each Administrator provided an overview of their role and responsibilities and provided examples of their daily functions.

Dr. Melendez presented options to address the Director of Curriculum position and presented the following options:

- Eliminate Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Innovation position
- Refill Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Innovation position
- Eliminate Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Innovation position, separate Superintendent-Principal role, and hire new Assistant Principal

Dr. Melendez shared Pros and Cons for each category and noted that the most favorable option is the last option which would lead to a reorganization of the administration model. He presented a slide illustration of the redistribution of the role of the Director of Curriculum and Instruction between the Superintendent, Principal & Director of Special Education. He noted the new hire Assistant Principal would be a 10 month employee.

Dr. Melendez noted that Regionalization is an option, but would require a significant study and is not recommended at this time. He briefly noted the advantages and disadvantages. If this option warrants exploration, Dr. Melendez recommended hiring a consultant.

Dr. Melendez also presented a slide comparing the salaries of the Administration and Directors to sounding towns and Sherman fell below averages. He also presented a slide with recommended increases for the new Administration model. With modest increases for certain roles due to increased responsibilities, an estimated savings of \$16,287.00 was noted. To conclude his presentation, Dr. Melendez highlighted the benefits of a revised model in comparison to the current one.

The Board shared their opinions on the current model and recommended model. They discussed surveying the community/hiring a consultant, the next phase of the Strategic Plan and the impact on the current and/or proposed model and the benefits of a full time Superintendent. The Board did not take any action to move forward at this point in time, therefore the current Administration model will remain intact.

10. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

11. COMMUNICATION

12. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Tara Clancy, Oriole Drive. Ms. Clancy noted under the Administration model discussion, there was not line item for the Superintendent and feels it is an essential piece of Information. Ms. Clancy agreed with Mr. Berlandi's comment that the community should be surveyed. She also agreed with the suggestion to hire an impartial consultant. Ms. Clancy was pleased to hear much discussion focused on the students. She expressed concern regarding children's mask wearing and the negative impacts and referenced recent research. She questioned if the school will be proactive on this topic and seek out current research?

Carol Muska, 18 Orchard Rest Road. Ms. Muska noted that the Superintendent's salary was not included on the slide with the changing job descriptions and would like to hear thoughts on

the topic in the future. She also commented that she has been a teacher for 39 years and noted the position of Curriculum Director is imperative for the effective learning process. She feels dividing the position would be a tremendous loss and huge error.

Molly Garcia, 22 Church Road. Ms. Garcia thanked Mrs. Snowden and expressed her appreciation for her and her commitment. Ms. Garcia questioned if school supplies will be supplied by the Board of Education for the upcoming school year? Dr. Melendez clarified it will be each family's responsibility, but noted the SPTO will be putting school supply packs together.

Kristin Grasseler 66 Route 39 N. Ms. Grasseler expressed concern over funding for an intercom system with no server, as well as decorations for the school, but no school supplies. Regarding Administration costs, Mrs. Grasseler also noted concern regarding the Superintendent/Principal role and was pleased that no decisions were made. She also noted that salaries should be reviewed and adjustments should be made for under as well as over compensated positions.

Mr. Zeisler noted his background in school construction and shared that he has been researching school playgrounds recently. He expressed concern regarding the proposed playground and questioned the usage in relation to the student population and feels the price is too high with an estimated cost of \$6,000.00 per student. Mr. Zeisler shared that he supports the need for a playground, but feels that the optimum price can be achieved through a bidding process. Mr. Zeisler also expressed his viewpoint on optimizing the price and the reflection on the school's image.

Mrs. Diotte briefly reviewed the steps that have been taken by the Board of Education to request funding from the Board of Selectman for the playground. The Board of Selectmen voted to bring it to the taxpayers to vote on the playground. A second playground presentation will take place at the BOS meeting on June 24 which will give taxpayers the opportunity to ask questions. The Town will vote on the playground on July 10th at 10 AM.

Ms. Clancy commented that feedback from stakeholders in the community are based on finances. She feels leaving the Superintendent's salary off of the slide creates questions and feels the presentation should be more upfront.

Mrs. Diotte commented that each administrator's salaries are budget line items and available on the websites for the public

Mrs. Bonner questioned if the Superintendent's salary of .5 would be doubled?
Mrs. Diotte clarified that it's a combination of the Superintendent's line and the Principal's line.

Danielle Shook reflected on the Administration reorganization process that took place six years ago and pointed out the Union' involvement. Mrs. Shook expressed concern that no information was shared with the teachers in the event they had feedback on the proposed reorganization.

Dr. Melendez shared that an email was sent to staff once the action item was added to the agenda. He further shared the recent resignation of Mrs. Snowden prompted the quick turnaround of a potential reorganization and should not be misconstrued as secretive.

David Silvay, 39 Route 39 South. Mr. Silvay questioned if the Administration reorganization plan

did change, did move forward, if Dr. Melendez would accept only the Superintendent salary and drop the Principal salary?

Ms. Diotte and Dr. Melendez confirmed the salary would remain the same.

13. BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMENTS

Mrs. Diotte recognized both Mrs. Snowden and Ms. DePuy and expressed her deep appreciations for all they have done for the District.

Mr. Vogt echoed Mrs. Diotte sentiments as well. He also recognized Bernadette Schopfer as well.

14. FUTURE MEETINGS AND TOPICS

14.1 Board of Education Meeting - September 1, 2021 at 7:00 PM

14.2 Board Retreat - July 28, 2021 at 5:00 PM

15. ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Diotte moved and moved and Mr. Vogt seconded to adjourn the meeting at 10:04 PM and the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

James Neunzig
Vice Chair, Sherman Board of Education

Prepared by Recording Secretary: Nancy Winkler