

Alexa Garvey, Chairwoman called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the District Office Board Room, Pawcatuck, CT. Members present were Jack Morehouse, Farouk Rajab, Craig Esposito and Heidi Simmons. Also present were Dr. Van Riley, Superintendent, Ana de Oliveira, Recording Secretary, Alexandra Kapell, Student Government Representative, members of the staff, and interested citizens. Member Absent: Candace Anderson, Board Secretary and Alisa Morrison

Presentations

Elaine Temel a teacher at West Vine Street School introduced student Kylie Nachin who shared a video of her program called Ditch the Game to Build Your Brain. She was a final candidate for the Connecticut's Kid Governor Campaign, her campaign focused on Kids and Technology Addiction. Chairwoman Alexa Garvey asked Kylie Nachin how often the cabinet sessions occurred. Kylie said they meet every other month and they talk about what they have done with their platforms and how they can help with other people's platforms. Dr. Riley said the presentation was wonderful and says she is right on with her message and thanked her.

Dr. Riley noted March is Board Appreciation month. He said the students, staff and community appreciate all the Board members do. He added there are cards and a bag with gifts that the students have put together to show we appreciate all that you do for our community. Chairwoman Garvey thanked everyone and added the cards are one of her favorite things to get every year.

Communications and Recognitions

Jack Morehouse communicated that the SEF event has been cancelled. He also reported he attended the Board of Finance meeting and while at the meeting realized how much time is spent by the administrators attending monthly Board meetings and answering the Boards questions, he then thanked them for the time they spend at Board meetings.

Farouk Rajab spoke of an incident on February 18th that he felt required Dr. Riley's attention while he was away, but was still able to reach him. He thanked Dr. Riley, Mrs. Butler and Mr. Frieze for their quick response regardless of where they are at the time and their care for the community.

Comments from Citizens

There were no comments from citizens.

Consent Agenda

- A. Minutes February 6, 2020
February 13, 2020
February 26, 2020
- B. Checks and Bills - February
- C. Personnel Report
- D. Transfers
- E. 12th Annual Bearathon Road Race
- F. Field Trip - SHS Choir - April 24-26, 2020

Dr. Riley noted that with the recent changes from the state in regards to the Coronavirus he recommended approving the 12th Annual Bearathon since it is only for May and removing item Field Trip - SHS Choir - April 24-26, 2020 from the consent agenda because it will fall in the timeline that the district will not allow field trips.

The following motion was made by Craig Esposito and seconded by Farouk Rajab:

Motion 1: To remove item Field Trip – SHS Choir – April 24-26, 2020 from the consent agenda.

All: Aye

The following motion was made by Jack Morehouse and seconded by Farouk Rajab:

Motion 2: To approve the Consent Agenda minus the Personnel Report and the Field Trip – SHS Choir – April 24-26, 2020.

All: Aye

Jack Morehouse had questions regarding the personnel report. He noticed there were six new paraprofessionals hired. He asked if this is normal and why so many are we hiring more or did many quit. Dr. Riley explained these are all replacements, we have a lot of turnover this is typical.

The following motion was made by Jack Morehouse and seconded by Farouk Rajab:

Motion 3: To approve the Personnel Report.

All: Aye

Report of the Superintendent of Schools

A. Coronavirus Update – Dr. Riley shared with the Board two letters that went out to both employees and parents/guardians regarding the COVID-19 and steps that we will be taking. There is also information on how parents can prepare and a hotline number they can call. He added we will keep our parents and staff informed as to where we are with this issue. He will be meeting at LEARN tomorrow morning with area superintendents to see where they are as a group with this issue. Dr. Riley added will be updating the district. He shared a list of cancelled events in the district that are scheduled to occur on or before April 20th and may need to extend this once we see where we are. He also reviewed where the district stands and the steps that will be taken in response to this issue. He communicated any events over 100 people are cancelled, non-essential visitors are not allowed in the buildings. He summarized how the district will handle outside visitors, sporting events, and school clubs before and after school, staff conferences, hourly employees and their pay. He spoke on how meals will be provided to families during this time with the help of our Food Service department, Human Services, Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center and Town Selectwoman. He shared if we had a closure we will have a list of things and activities for students that can be done at home under the direction of their parents. The district is also looking at additional opportunities if we need to close for an extended time. The district is using foggers and constantly cleaning doors and surfaces, along with disinfecting student Chromebooks. He spoke on how the district will act upon staff or student exposure to the virus per the recommendations from Ledge Light. There will be a separate page on the website with information on this issue. Dr. Riley commented he had a question from a senior if they will be able to graduate, he said yes. He will be communicating with parents and students on this. Jack Morehouse asked about distant learning, through Web X or other means and are we going to be able to provide something like that. Dr. Riley explained a couple of options including one from the state and will gather more information at the upcoming LEARN meeting. Mr. Morehouse asked how far we can extend the school year out. Dr. Riley answered to June 30th the state is waiving the 180 day requirement. Alexandra Kapell asked if that meant graduation would be on June 30th. Dr. Riley answered the date could change, we don't want that to happen might this year it might need to. Farouk Rajab asked if we will be able to provide Chromebooks to students. Dr. Riley noted we have Chromebooks available for elementary and middle school students. Principal Mark Friesse will be working with teachers on how to communicate assignments to high school students.

B. Den Update – Dr. Riley communicated the child care program for our employees is back up and running to start in August. He shared an outline describing the program with the Board. He explained this will give our employees an opportunity to have their children enrolled at a reduced cost and we are looking to put up to 20 children age's two to five. This will be housed in the old preschool room at the high school.

C. BOF Follow up – Chairwoman Garvey noted we are having Dr. Riley work with some of the administrators following up with the questions that the Board of Finance had. Jack Morehouse had questions on the budget to actual report. He noted people have asked him about a couple of items, such as public tuition we took in \$297,000, how was that disbursed. He asked if there is a way this can be easily shown. He also had a question about the administrative salary, which was over by \$120,000, and how that was funded, what accounts did that money come out of. He had questions on how the money is being moved between accounts and how accounts are being funded in the budget. He asked that someone get back to him on these two questions. Chairwoman Garvey suggested Mr. Morehouse meet with Gary Shettle, Director of Finance to go over his budget questions. Mr. Morehouse also had questions regarding the funding for the bobcat out of the operating budget. He did not recall a discussion of the item being funded out of the operating budget. He spoke that it is not easy to understand how large amounts of money is moved between accounts and if we are moving large amounts of money at what point should the Board be aware of this. Chairwoman Garvey explained it is practice at the end of a year a Board take extra funds and use those for items that are needed. She also noted she has initiated the conversation for better communication regarding this issue. Mr. Morehouse asked for a discussion on this matter.

Independent Investigation Engagement Approval

Chairwoman Garvey noted that Attorney Chinni reached out to her with the intent after reviewing all the audios from all the Board's meetings and has covered all the Boards requests in the engagement letter. Heidi Simmons noted the letter is very comprehensive but feels that periodic reports should be shared with the entire Board not just the Chairwoman. Chairwoman Garvey noted she will forward all reports as soon as she receives them to the Board. Mrs. Simmons asked when those will be discussed. Chairwoman Garvey said they would be discussed at the next Board meeting. She also asked have we decided how we are going to share this with the public. Chairwoman Garvey gave different options on how they can share this information. Mrs. Simmons also asked what the result was of our Attorney Nick Grello's review of the engagement letter. Chairwoman Garvey explained she wanted Attorney Grello to review it under his stand point and said it was the standard engagement letter with no legal complications. She added she was not having him put judgement but wanted him to make sure it was ok for the Board to sign and he said yes.

The following motion was made by Farouk Rajab and seconded by Craig Esposito:

Motion 4: To approve the engagement letter.

All Aye

Chairwoman Garvey noted we now have our engagement letter. She will get it signed and to Attorney Chinni in the morning.

Monthly Reports

The Board had no comments on the monthly reports.

Discussion Regarding Athletic Committee

Chairwoman Garvey noted that Alisa Morrison could not attend the meeting tonight and felt it is really important she be present to discuss the Athletic Sub-Committee.

The following motion was made by Farouk Rajab and seconded by Craig Esposito:

Motion 5: To approve item number ten (X) for next Board meeting.

All Aye

Committee Reports

Chairwoman Garvey explained the Health Insurance MOU is moving along very nicely and are moving along to having an agreement that all are comfortable in signing. The group is working on meeting again at the end of March. She added all are working very well together from the Board of Finance, the Town and we have Mr. Sylvestre who was the original creator of the original health MOU has been very helpful in guiding some information.

Comments from Citizens Relative to Board Action on this Agenda

There were no comments from citizens relative to Board action on this agenda.

Items for Future Agendas

Later School Start Date

Sub Committees

Board Comments/Concerns

Farouk Rajab appreciated Dr. Riley's sending him the legal fees related to the Chokas situation and asked for information on exact costs of all the FOI requests as a portion of the legal fees. Dr. Riley will get the information and pass it along.

Chairwoman Garvey noted there will be a Board of Finance discussion at the District Office on March 18th and 19th starting at 5pm and the budget hearing will be at the high school on April 9th.

Closed Session - Strategies with Respect to Collective Bargaining The Stonington Schools Administrators' and Supervisors' Association

The following motion was made by Craig Esposito and seconded by Farouk Rajab:

Motion 6: To enter into closed session and invite Dr. Van Riley, Mrs. Butler and Mr. Friese.

All Aye

Board Entered Into Closed Session at: 7:54 p.m.

Board Exited Closed Session at: 8:48 p.m.

Adjournment

The following motion was made by Craig Esposito and seconded by Farouk Rajab:

Motion 7: To adjourn at 8:49 p.m.

Alexa Garvey, Chairwoman