

Frank Todisco, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Stonington High School Commons. Members present were Faith Leitner, Secretary, Deborah Downie, Alexa Garvey, Terry Stefanski, Candace Anderson, and Craig Esposito.

Also present were Dr. Van Riley, Superintendent of Schools, Ana de Oliveira, Recording Secretary, Student Government Representative Cameron Dreher, members of the staff, and interested citizens.

Communications and Recognitions

Deborah Downie spoke of an art show at the new Mystic Seaport building that will feature work of the SHS pottery students and Fitch photography students; opening is from 5pm – 7:30 pm on February 2nd.

Terry Stefanski reported the SEF committee met and released Blue Monday Grants in the amount of \$7,900, which went to schools that put in an application for the grants, Stonington High School, West Vine Street School, Deans Mill School, Mystic Middle School, and Pawcatuck Middle School.

Faith Leitner commented she got wonderful comments about the assembly yesterday, in which alumni students came back to talk to the seniors, lots of positive feedback.

Comments from Citizens

Cindy Nadeau, reminded all Tuesday, April 4 is Light it Up Blue, and hopes to see you all there.

Consent Agenda

- A. Minutes: December 19, 2016 – Special Meeting
- B. Checks and Bills
- C. Personnel Report
- D. Transfers
- E. Memorial Day Bearathon Race

The following motion was made by Craig Esposito and seconded by Terry Stefanski:

Motion 1: To approve the Consent Agenda A-E as presented.

All: Aye

Report of the Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Van Riley reported the Pawcatuck Middle School roof is now fixed but the drainage problem is not completed and is still under the scrutiny of the Building Committee. Dr. Riley communicated there will be another PTO/Booster lunch next Wednesday, January 18 at Central Office. Dr. Riley also reminded the Board there would be a midyear update review of the Board Goals at the February meeting.

Approval of 2017-2018 School Calendar

Dr. Riley noted the 2017-18 school calendar is on the agenda for approval and students are scheduled to come back after Labor Day weekend on Tuesday. Dr. Riley explained the primary reason for this is that the construction management team will be doing work on the schools for the abatement and teaching staff would come back for professional development that Wednesday before. Dr. Riley recommended approval of the 2017-18 school calendar as presented.

The following motion was made by Faith Leitner and seconded by Candace Anderson:

Motion 2: To move to approve the 2017-2018 School Calendar as presented.

All: Aye

Snow Delayed Opening Discussion

Dr. Riley wanted to let the Board and public know that every other school district in our area, when there is a snow delay, they delay for two hours. Dr. Riley added we have always done a ninety-minute delay but it causes some confusion with parents so in the future we will be in sync with everyone else and, therefore, we will be going to a two hour delay starting with the next snow day.

Approval of New Stonington Public Schools Law Firm Zangari Cohn Cuthbertson Duhl & Grello P.C.

Frank Todisco explained that the district is staying with Nick Grello he is just moving into another firm now in addition, rates will be the same as in the past. Dr. Riley added that we have worked with Nick Grello for many years and he has done a wonderful job for us. The Board had no questions.

The following motion was made by Alexa Garvey and seconded by Candace Anderson:

Motion 3: To approve the use of New Stonington Public Schools Law Firm Zangari Cohn Cuthbertson Duhl & Grello P.C.
All: Aye

2017-2018 Budget

State Budget Update: Dr. Riley spoke on the governor's reduction of state funds to the town and education budgets. Dr. Riley will work with the BOF and BOS on the future impact of these reductions. Frank Todisco said we have invited Senator Somers and Representative Urban to come to our next Board meeting to provide an update.

Superintendent Proposed Budget: Dr. Riley passed out the 2017-2018 Proposed Budget books and had available the summary budget sheet for the community. Dr. Riley thanked principals, Gary Shettle and his office, Ana de Oliveira and district administrators for helping prepare the budget. Dr. Riley explained this budget is what we need to meet the needs of the students, the budget is transparent and includes budget breakdown by school and by department. Dr. Riley went through each section of the proposed budget book and noted that the budget format is the same as previous years and focuses on specific local challenges, future items, and strategies for keeping cost down while maintaining and improving programs. Dr. Riley noted Allison Van Etten and her staff has done an amazing job keeping on top of special education expenditures and with transportation. Dr. Riley explained each principal receives formula money and allocates as they see fit. Dr. Riley spoke briefly on the RFP for transportation. Dr. Riley distributed a memo and backup material to the Board regarding enrollment that compared certificated staff, special education, and support staff to enrollment numbers. Dr. Riley is proposing a 4.4 FTE reduction in the budget based on enrollment and staff changes. Dr. Riley also discussed some specific needs and requests from Deans Mill School and Stonington High School that are part of the proposed budget. Dr. Van Riley proposes an overall increase of 2.12%. (2017-2018 Proposed Budget and Enrollment Memo attached)

Gary Shettle, Director of Finance, distributed a pie graph to the Board members and noted that every district has two major areas salary and benefits, transportation, tuition and insurance from there the items become smaller in size of expenditure. Mr. Shettle explained line by line of the budget and highlighted some of the areas, such as teacher salaries, para salary and its increase, sub teachers, and insurance increase. Mr. Shettle explained the insurance expenditure, unemployment, police services, public utilities, and regular transportation where we are trying to reduce one bus by reconfiguring the routes, and the move of the bus depot. Special education transportation will have one extra van and may be able to consolidate routes to save money.

Frank Todisco acknowledged the administrators union who agreed to a reduction to help when the bonds come on line. The Board commented they need to digest and look at the proposed budget closer. Mr. Todisco recommended the Board put together questions and get them to Dr. Riley. Mr. Todisco noted Dr. Riley and him can review the questions and then use two of the workshop days for discussion based on the questions that come in. Mr. Todisco noted he did not feel the Board should meet individually but collectively. The Board agreed. Mr. Todisco spoke on a document regarding class size that has been around for a long time supposedly providing guidance on class sizes by grade level. Mr. Todisco also noted that since he has served on the Board there has been no rationale on how that document was created and suggested there be a workshop with Board members and administrative team to determine if we need that guidance going forward. Mr. Todisco suggested the Board meet in the near future, because decisions are being made based on those guidelines and no one knows where they came from. The Board agreed to meet regarding class sizes. Mr. Todisco noted the philosophy has changed over the years and since Mr. Shettle has joined us we are looking under every rock and nook and cranny to see if there is a better way to do something, the health care issue was not a small task removing from the town and thanked Mr. Shettle for all he has done.