

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, Sarah Hinckley filled in for Student Government Representative Cameron Dreher, members of the staff, and interested citizens.

### **Communications and Recognitions**

Deborah Downie communicated she attended the opening of the art show at the Mystic Seaport which displayed art from our high school students and Fitch students and will be displayed for the remainder of the week.

Candace Anderson noted she attended the high school band concert and added the students did a great job. Mrs. Anderson also commended the teachers for their dedication.

### **Comments from Citizens**

There were no comments at this time.

### **Presentation and Discussion on Animal Farm**

Dr. Riley shared a packet of information regarding curriculum as it relates to the book *Animal Farm*. Dr. Riley presented information regarding a list of items included in his packet: BOE Questions/Answers regarding Curriculum, Timeline – ELA Curriculum Revision, Curriculum Standards – Connecticut Department of Education, Curriculum Standards – SPS 8<sup>th</sup> Grade ELA, SPS Grade 7 and 8 Anchor Texts, SPS Grades 9-12 Text Lists, SHS Dystopia Readings, SPS 8<sup>th</sup> Grade ELA Curriculum – Unit 1, SPS 8<sup>th</sup> Grade ELA Curriculum – Unit 2, SPS 8<sup>th</sup> Grade ELA Curriculum – Unit 3, and a SPS Sample Professional Development Day Schedule. Dr. Riley spoke on the changes to curriculum during his tenure, the need for consistency throughout grade levels, funding, and change in budget decentralization to make sure there is no duplication or gaps in curriculum throughout the district. Dr. Riley thanked teachers for spending many hours making sure our students are getting what they need and noted that administration does not dictate what the teachers teach in the classroom but support them. Dr. Riley noted that the teacher involved with the Animal Farm issue was not suspended or reprimanded. Dr. Riley added in the future he suggested that questions like Animal Farm or any curriculum issues be first answered through the Board's Teaching and Learning Committee. Dr. Riley added the Communications Committee understands and will be working on improving communication through our website.

Alexa Garvey commented that she would of liked to receive the Q&A document sooner to have more time to look at them before making decisions. Dr. Riley noted he will try to get information to the Board a couple of days before a meeting in the future. Faith Leitner also commented it's important to get information as soon as possible and would of liked the whole packet delivered to have time to go over it.

### **Consent Agenda**

- A. Minutes: January 12, 2017 (Regular)  
January 26, 2017 (Special)  
February 2, 2017 (Special)
- B. Checks and Bills
- C. Personnel Report
- D. Transfers

The following motion was made by Craig Esposito and seconded by Faith Leitner:

**Motion 1:** To approve the Consent Agenda A-D as presented.  
All: Aye

### **Report of the Superintendent of Schools**

Dr. Van Riley commented he appreciated Gary Shettle sharing his document on budget code explanation and Bill King for his annual SPS Infrastructure Analysis.

Curriculum, Instruction Assessment Department - Dr. Riley explained he had planned to make a proposal to the Board of the restructuring of the Curriculum department. After speaking to the Leadership team there is a need for breakout of more curriculum development as we go forward. Dr. Riley noted that this proposal to make the department more efficient would be funded within the budget, but will wait to make this presentation when we know where we are with the budget from the Board and the Board of Finance.

Update on Math Supports for Students - Dr. Riley reported the elementary schools have some extra math supports during the day, the high school will be adding extra math help afterschool, Pawcatuck Middle School will be splitting math classes due to the size and will have two algebra classes and will also be adding afterschool programs for math to help students. Dr. Riley added these ideas will be going back to the Teaching and Learning Committee for further discussion.

Frank Todisco asked about the timeline for the posting of the Assistant Superintendent position. Dr. Riley reported we will move forward and would like Board members involved and added we would like advertise by March to hire mid to end of April for a July 1 start.

### **Tuition Revenue Discussion**

Dr. Riley explained two years ago we went to the Board of Finance with a MOU to allow students to come into our district on a tuition basis and use the funds but at that time, the idea was not approved by BOF but added that we would like to revisit this idea again. Dr. Riley also added we would also open it up to special education students and would like to discuss this idea with both the Board and Board of Finance. Chairman Todisco also agreed that the time has come to revisit this idea and has had some discussion with Mr. Bentz about this. Mr. Todisco added that he feels the Board needs to formulate a subcommittee to work on this matter with Dr. Riley and administration. The Board all agreed.

### **Approval of 2017-2018 Budget**

Frank Todisco updated the Board that he had several meetings with the First Selectman and Senator Somers regarding what is happening at the state level, the timeline and how far the approval of the town budget can be put off because of the cuts that could be coming from the state. Mr. Todisco noted at this time he asked the Board approve the budget as presented.

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

**Motion 2:** To move to approve the 2017-2018 School Budget at \$37,037,483.00 as presented.

All: Aye

### **Board Goals Update**

Dr. Riley reported the Board has asked for a mid-year summary of the Board Goals. Dr. Riley presented the summary and noted the district is making progress. Frank Todisco asked the Board to come up with a date for the mid-year review and will be sending out an email to the Board for their input.

### **Monthly Reports**

There were no questions on the monthly reports. Frank Todisco asked the SPS Infrastructure Analysis document be shared with the Board of Finance and Board of Selectmen.

**Committee Reports**

Alexa Garvey reported the Communications Committee met before this meeting and spoke about adding and updating the curriculum piece to the website. The Committee would also be working on the ability for people to ask questions and the answers monitored by the district where answers would come from the most appropriate person in the district and added we hope to increase our way to communicate and direct access to those who can answer the questions.

Frank Todisco spoke on the Policy Committee meeting and asked for a process to updated policy series on the website; Ana de Oliveira will be posting them once they are approved.

Faith Leitner reported that the Finance Committee did not meet this evening and added there were no major issues with the audit, the 16/17 budget and will take any input regarding the MOU and would be fine with writing it with the Finance Committee.

**Comments from Citizens Relative to Board Action on this Agenda**

Stephanie Clark, parent of an 8th grader at Mystic Middle School thanked the Board for their thoughtful consideration in the *Animal Farm* book issue. Ms. Clark feels the issue would not reached the level it did if some of the answers were given back to the parents and also feels moving forward we need to take steps to improve communication to help mitigate these types of issues in the future.

Alice Sasso, spoke that her children are having a fabulous year at Mystic Middle School and thanked administration for the packet regarding Curriculum that was available tonight. Ms. Sasso feels the more information out there the better for everyone to see.

**Items for Future Agendas**

No Items for future agendas were discussed.

**Board Comments/Concerns**

Faith Leitner asked about the two snow days and if we have a third where that is made up in the school calendar and it was noted that this day would be May 19.

Van Riley commented that the Mystic Middle School jazz band was scheduled to perform tonight but could not come and are now scheduled for the March meeting instead.

Deborah Downie commented she loves the idea of questions and comments on the website but feels a need for a webmaster to monitor this.

**Adjournment**

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

**Motion 3:** To Adjourn at 7:43 p.m.

All: Aye

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Faith Leitner, Board Secretary