

Frank Todisco, Chairman called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. in the Stonington High School Commons. Members present were, Candace Anderson, Deborah Downie, Jack Morehouse, Alisa Morrison, and Craig Esposito.  
Member Absent: Alexa Garvey, Secretary

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

### **Board Presentations:**

**Retiree Recognitions:** The following retirees were present and recognized for their years of service and dedication to the Stonington Public Schools community, Joanne Lindeborg, Michael Lindeborg, Jenny Brummund, and Rosemary Spiers. The administration shared a few words about each retiree's tenure. Other retirees honored were, Jane Wiseman, Kathleen Noyes, James Hilbie, Richard Walter, and Terrence Logan. Chairman Frank Todisco, congratulated each retiree, read the following resolution, presented each retiree with a copy signed by the Board of Education members, and a small gift of appreciation.

#### **Resolution**

*The Board of Education of Stonington, Connecticut, at its regular meeting on May 10, 2018, adopted this resolution in respect to "retiree"*  
**WHEREAS,** *This individual has completed (years) of faithful and conscientious service as an employee in the Stonington Public Schools and has now retired and*

**WHEREAS,** *This individual has devoted much effort in his/her job assignment to the extent that he/she is held in high admiration for his/her dedication and personal contributions to the varied needs of the Stonington Public Schools to the extent this person is held in the greatest esteem by all.*

**RESOLVED,** *That the Board of Education in a regular meeting assembled on this date attest to the valuable service rendered by this individual to the cause of education in the Town of Stonington, and*

*Be it further RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be spread on the minutes of the Board of Education, and that a copy be presented to this honored individual as a testimonial of the Board's sincere appreciation of loyalty, character, and service.*

**Junior Project:** This presentation was moved to the June Board of Education meeting agenda.

**Computer Science Presentation:** Mark Friese introduced students Blake Edwards, Nate Bury, and Ryan Fornara who have been working with teacher Abby Gauthier on Computer Science Independent Study opportunities. They shared a PowerPoint presentation explaining what and how Artificial Intelligence, Neural Networks work and examples of this theory. They also spoke about the Quantum Computer, building networks, and web design. One of the students shared he has been instrumental in the development of the Stonington High School web page, which he help build from the ground up and is very proud of the website. He added that he has developed a calendar application and plans on developing a social media site. Mr. Fornara demonstrated his project called "Voxion" which is a google home assistant program; focusing on hospitality, a personalized butler he stated. He gave an example of how his porotype worked and will be testing it with the town in the next month. The PowerPoint presentation is attached. The students thanked the Board and administration for allowing them to peruse their independent studies.

### **Middle School Steering Committee Report**

Mr. Tim Smith, Pawcatuck Middle School Principal spoke on the progress of the middle school consolidation. He announced that the subcommittee handling communications will be announcing the mascot and school colors at a reveal at Mystic Aquarium on May 15 all are welcome. They are also working on a parent night, to give feedback and discuss what parents want the middle school experience to be like for their student and have a chance to meet the committee members. Mr. Smith passed out invitations for the reveal to the Board members.

### **Communications and Recognitions**

Jack Morehouse shared he had an opportunity to attend both Mystic Middle School chorus and band concerts. Ms. Gilbert did collaboration with some Yale students and it was fabulous. He attended Mr. Hilbie's last concert where he received a well-deserved standing ovation, and added he will be missed.

Madison Geiger, Student Government Representative, noted it was teacher appreciation week and recognized all teachers for what they do for students and parents.

Candace Anderson thanked the graduation party committee; she received a letter from the committee about the change in the party date, and thanked them for all the hard work that has gone into organizing this event and added that the letter was very well written, thank you.

### Comments from Citizens

Susan Fornara commented she received an email from Dr. Riley a couple of weeks ago explaining tonight, he will be presenting the proposed changes to the music program and how it is affected by the elementary schedule. She added she hoped the Board will not vote on these changes until Dr. Riley has outlined a proposal and the public can have a chance to give feedback. She thanked Mr. Morehouse for his comment on the Beatlemania event, which she agreed, brought many people from the community together and show cased our schools. She also spoke on the staffing for art at the elementary and middle school level.

Christina Fullerton also spoke on behalf of Harriet Statchen, regarding the music and arts. She added that many students stay at Stonington for this reason. She voiced three concerns, the difficulty of hiring of a one-year instrumental teacher at the middle school level and feels would be better to make it a full time position. Her second concern was the proposed change for the elementary schedule and the third concern is to make music mandatory through 8th grade. Ms. Fullerton gave justifications for each of her concerns.

Kerry O'Neil a music teacher in West Warwick, who has a son at West Broad added he has had a wonderful music experience and feels there is nothing bad about the program that exists right now.

### Elementary Program Schedule 2019

Dr. Van Riley offered a report to the Board, which provided a summary on the elementary schedule and how music will be impacted in the elementary program. He thanked Principals Dawe and McCurdy, teachers and staff for putting together the report. (Attached) Dr. Riley added he met with survey teachers to get ideas to expand the offerings for all students. The middle school 6, 7, and 8 music program was not addressed since it is a part of the consolidation. Principals Jenn McCurdy and Alicia Dawe gave an overview of the current elementary scheduling, programming and 2019-20 proposals. Principal Dawe explained a typical schedule, with some of the proposed changes such as; students will have on average fifty minutes a week of special surveys, which allows them to have one special twice a week. Grade five students will have a daily recess of twenty minutes, Principal McCurdy added the goal in music is to have students become independent musician but also develop a lifelong appreciation of music. She gave an overview of the current K-4 music program such as, each class involves music including singing, performing, movement, and games, students are learning in K-4 to respond to music though movement, students are learning to read notes, simple pitch notations, and learning appropriate technology. The proposal for grade five is they follow the elementary schedule. Instruments would be built into the curriculum starting in grade K. We would like to see students learn recorder in grade three and continue in grade four and five. We would also like to introduce the ukulele in grade four, in grade five various drums, and percussion instruments as part of a world music drumming program. A choral program would be part of the music program and all students would have learned to play various types of instruments, vocal and experience of performing by grade five. Students in grades four and five would have an opportunity to learn an instrument of their choice and a choral group before or after school. This model will provide many opportunities for students to explore and participate in a variety of specials and surveys.

Dr. Riley explained the information on his report, which included elementary music teachers' perspectives, programming, area district elementary music models and program offerings, the Opportunity-to-Learn Standards resource, staffing and financial support for elementary music program in 2019, elementary music data, and high school music data. He noted that our program will have more instructional minutes than area districts. The district will provide the instruments and lessons for students. He voiced his concern for pulling students out of class for music classes. We came up with a program that we will not have to do that. All students will have the opportunity to have lessons before or after school. We are looking at costs, and his recommendation is to provide each school with \$10,000 for start up to purchase instruments and will also be able to use the savings from the move to pay for the teachers. We will be able to hire two teachers for each school for morning for lessons. There will also be an opportunity to participate in other afterschool programs such as drama by using stipends to pay staff. Dr. Riley summarized by saying what we think is best for our students, is to provide general music in K-5, exposure to instruments in those grades, vocal and movement, have recorders and ukulele start in grade three and four, world percussion in grade five, optional band instruments would start in grade four for afterschool lessons.

Chairman Frank Todisco noted to be fair to the Board since we are getting the report for the first time tonight we will need to bring this back for comment and concerns. Deborah Downie asked Principal Dawe about the general program, and questioned why Art is not on the list of surveys. Principal Dawe clarified that yes art is a part of the surveys.

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Candace Anderson asked about the one-year band teacher position, and does this shift to a part-time position. Dr. Riley explained this is a middle school issue and it is not just band we also have an art teacher. We do not have the final recommendation from the middle school level. Ms. Anderson asked what the staffing is at the elementary level. Dr. Riley explained there will be one full time teacher at each elementary teacher plus two teachers for the lessons before or after school. Chairman Todisco asked whom would the lessons be given by. Dr. Riley said either existing or outside people, it does not have to be a credential position.

Jack Morehouse asked for a side-by-side comparison of what we have now for the music program and what the proposed plan is. Mr. Morehouse is concerned changing things up in a way that will have a negative impact on our schools. Dr. Riley will have a separate report on the music program for the June Board meeting.

Chairman Todisco stated he will bring this item back in June when the Board has an opportunity to review the report.

### **Consent Agenda**

- A. Minutes –April 26, 2018 (Special)
- B. Checks and Bills
- C. Transfers
- D. Personnel Report
- E. 2018-19 Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Statement
- F. Approval of Curriculum: Music Appreciation
  - Grade Nine English
  - Senior Probability and Statistics

The following motion was made by Alisa Morrison and seconded by Craig Esposito:

**Motion 1: To approve items A - F on the Consent Agenda.**

**All: Aye**

### **Receipt of and action upon a recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools for the termination of a teacher contract pursuant to Connecticut Statutes Section 10-151**

Dr. Riley stated in my capacity as Superintendent of Schools, I recommend that the Board of Education vote to terminate Stephen Beale's contract of employment in the Stonington School System effective on June 30, 2018. Mr. Beale was notified that his contract of employment was under consideration for termination, but did not file a timely request for a hearing. I am making this recommendation for the following reason: Reduction in force.

The following motion was made by Alisa Morrison and seconded by Craig Esposito:

**Motion 2: Move that, pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-151, the Stonington Board of Education vote to terminate the contract of employment of Stephen Beale as a teacher in the Stonington School System as recommended by the Superintendent with an effective date of June 30, 2018; and I further move that the Superintendent of Schools be directed to communicate this action in writing to Stephen Beale.**

**All: Aye**

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

Dr. Riley applauded the Mystic Middle School concerts; they were amazing and appreciated the hard work. Next week there are more concerts and hopes to see everyone there. He thanked Ellen Gilbert for a great job on the choral concert.

### **2018-2019 Budget**

Chairman Todisco reported he received a message from Senator Somers that our ECS funding was only reduced by \$74,000 and appreciated their efforts for advocating for us in Hartford.

Dr. Riley noted that the budget passed this week; part of the budget is a reduction of \$110,000 and will bring back options to the Board in June.

### **2018-2019 Calendar**

Dr. Riley said we have a new color version of the calendar, there were a few changes on the calendar, kindergarten conferences, built in snow days, and the graduation date is set on June 21.

Chairman Todisco asked if we have eight snow days we have five built in where would the other three come from, would we use the three professional development days at the end of school and move those to the following week. Dr. Riley answered yes; we would move the professional development days to the following week and keep graduation on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

Madison Geiger asked if snow days go more than those days then graduation would not be locked in either way. Dr. Riley notes there is a clause that states; "Graduation Day is subject to change pending any signification district closures", we always have a chance it could change, but on this calendar we are as flexible as we can be.

The following motion was made by Alisa Morrison and seconded by Candace Anderson:

**Motion 3: To approve the school calendar for 2018-2019 as presented.**

**All: Aye**

### Monthly Reports

The Board had no comments on the monthly reports.

### Committee Reports

The Board had no comments on the committee reports.

### Building Committee Update

Deb Downie reported the construction remains on schedule and is moving along, having tours of the buildings, furniture ordered, and in the next few weeks will get number for remediation, transition, and moving. Chairman Todisco inquired about the PCBs and if the Board will need to get involved. Dr. Riley and Ms. Downie explained that the committee has not discussed a date yet. Chairman Todisco added we need to start looking at that issue and meet with June Strunk and Rob Marseglia to plan a meeting to look at the long term.

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

Rob Marseglia commented on the proposed music program and added the biggest reason we have not sent our kids to a Magnet or Williams School is because of our music programs. The music program at Deans Mill was exceptional with Miss Young. Mr. Marseglia asked how could we meet or exceed what we have now. He asked the Board to establish criteria of what we would like the district to look like and work that into the curriculum at all levels. Mr. Marseglia asked that the district look at specifically Preston Schools to see how their music instruction program is in grade four. He agrees we should not be pulling kids out of class but need to preserve the music program to keep students involved in the adjudications, win awards, and feel good about themselves. He also mentioned the building committee incorporated larger rooms for music with the expectation of new music program in the elementary level. He also believes it is important to keep it a mandatory learning requirement. He appreciates the work that the principals did in their report.

Christine Fullerton commented on the need for someone that is qualified and experience to teach the before or afterschool lessons. Feels if we do not have qualified staff to teach this we might have students drop this. She is also worried about how parents will be able to get students to the lessons we do not know how that will affect things. She would also like to see the side-by-side report. She also mentioned she does not see true instrumental until sixth grade and feels we are moving backwards.

Cindy Nadeau invited the Board to the June 7 award winning band concert at Pawcatuck Middle School.

Katie Quinlan spoke she would rather see an early release day on February 15 and not February 19 as noted on the 2018-2019 school calendar and asked administration to consider changing this. She also commented on a presentation that Ms. McCurdy did at the PTO meeting regarding the music program and overall the feedback was really good, she did not hear any negativity, and is excited to see the introduction of recorders and what is to come.

Kristy Head she has an elementary and middle school student and is a graduate of Stonington. She spoke on her own experience in music taking clarinet lessons in third grade as a pull out session, she is grateful for the music program and excited that we will not be pulling out kids from class for music opportunities. She also shared here experience with lessons, which were taught but someone other than a teacher and does not see any disparity in finding professional people to come in in the morning to teach lessons. She feels extending music to grade three with recorders is moving in the right direction.

Susan Fornara asked for clarification regarding how students will have access to instruments for lessons and have an opportunity to try the instruments when this will not be consistent. She feels it could also be a burden on the parents to get the students to the lessons before school. Ms. McCurdy explained they would be picking an instrument and staying with that same one the way they do now in the 5th grade

**Items for Future Agendas**

1. Elementary Schedule Discussion
2. 2018 -19 Budget Recommendations
3. Report on changes to other specials, art, digital media, etc.
4. Discussion regarding language and how we might be able to add at the elementary level
5. Board Goal on marketing Stonington Public Schools – report from Communications Committee
6. Partnerships with outside organizations, STEM program
7. 2018-19 School Calendar

**Board Comments/Concerns**

Jack Morehouse asked maybe the Board might want to consider sitting down with high school students like they have in the past to get their ideas. He suggested maybe once a year. Madison Geiger added she would like to have Student Government as well as Class Officers involved in that idea, they would love to sit down and here what the Board does and what their ideas are. Chairman Todisco commented absolutely, we will open it up to the entire student body during a lunch block.

Candace Anderson thanked Ms. McCurdy, Ms. Dawe, and Ms. Butler, along with all who put the elementary schedule and music program report together.

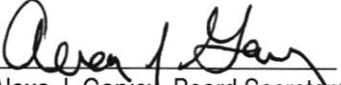
Deborah Downie commented that Alexa Garvey could not attend tonight but asked that she share a quote with everyone that is very pertinent to elementary and middle school music used by Mr. Hilbie. *“Going forward it will be different but different isn’t bad, different is different”*.

**Adjournment**

The following motion was made by Craig Esposito and seconded by Candace Anderson:

**Motion 4: To Adjourn at 9:04 p.m.**

**All: Aye**

  
Alexa J. Garvey, Board Secretary