

*Note: Per C.G.S. 10 – 218, Board of Education meeting minutes are provided in a draft format within 48 hours of the date the meeting was held. With the exception of motions and votes recorded, these minutes are unofficial until they have been read and approved by a majority vote of the Board. Should edits be necessary, they will be made at the next regularly scheduled meeting, noted in the meeting minutes, and voted upon.*

## **SCOTLAND BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**Scotland, Connecticut**

### **Meeting Minutes**

**April 5, 2022**

**Chairperson Cassidy Martin called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Present were Board members Sherry Smardon, Scott Sears, Rod Perry, Bill Trudelle, Clark Stearns and Gracie Martin. Administrators present were Superintendent Valerie Bruneau, Principal Ann Knowles, Special Ed Director Maggie Courter and Finance Coordinator Tim Smith. Others present was First Selectman Gary Greenberg.**

The Board recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

- There is a Zoom audience for tonight's meeting just for watching.
- Chair Cassidy Martin apologized to the Administration for the disrespectful conduct at the March meeting and personally takes full responsibility for not gaining control of the meeting sooner. Personal attacks will not be allowed. The Board was reminded about the rules of not sharing information discussed in Executive Session (sharing is unacceptable and goes against the CAGE Code of Conduct). The rules were clarified for Audience for Citizens.

## **2. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**

- Judy Benson-Clarke of 61 West Rd, Marlborough expressed concerns with shutting down public comments referring to book about Freedom of Information by Attorney Mark Sommaruga.
- Special Ed teacher Suellen Henry of 61 West Rd, Willington expressed concerns about the budget meeting the needs of the students, and cuts to paras without any input from the Special Ed staff.
- Financial Assistant Ashley Kammer of 16 Palmer Rd, Scotland thanked Cassidy Martin for her opening comments and thanked the new Administration for taking over and running with it.

## **3. COMMUNICATIONS TO THE BOARD**

- A letter of retirement was received from Finance Coordinator Tim Smith effective April 30, 2022 (will work remotely with the Financial Assistant as necessary).
- A letter was received from Mindy Smith of the Christian Fellowship Church thanking the Board for making their March 13<sup>th</sup> Blood Drive possible with the use of the gymnasium (47 units collected).

## **4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- **Regular Meeting of March 1, 2022:**  
***#1-21/22 Motion to approve the regular meeting minutes from March 1, 2022, was made by Sherry Smardon with the following correction: Item #7F – correct the spelling for Jayme Horton. The motion was seconded by Gracie Martin and carried with abstentions by Clark Stearns and Sherry Smardon.***

## **5. OPPORTUNITY TO ADD OR DELETE AGENDA ITEMS**

- ***#2-21/22 Motion to add to agenda as Item #8H5 – Discuss Venue for Future Board Meetings, was made by Scott Sears, seconded by Sherry Smardon and carried unanimously.***
- ***#3-21/22 Motion to add to agenda as Item #8H6 – Accept Retirement from Tim Smith, was made by Sherry Smardon, seconded by Scott Sears and carried unanimously.***

## **6. CELEBRATIONS**

- No masks and new Zoom for meetings.
- The first school-wide assembly was held with the American Heart Association.

## 7. REPORTS

### A. Chairperson's Oral Report: No Report

### B. Superintendent's Report:

- Looking at programming to bring in: American Sign Language coming in this week for the lower grades, local woman with deaf therapy dog "Sophia" – will encourage students to learn Sign Language.
- Technology Update from Savage Systems who could not attend tonight's meeting – taking inventory to examine potential items to qualify for E-rate, making sure PowerSchool is integrated and utilized, making use of scheduling system, migrating school website with Word Press, focus group this summer to look at platforms, did a system audit, looking at disaster recovery system and ransomware, and making sure privilege rights are where they should be.

### C. Principal's Report:

- Masks are off for the month with some students wearing them.
- Spirit Day encourages freedom of optional.
- The School Readiness Grant and Quality Enhancement Grant were submitted on time to EASTCONN.
- It's been a nice transition as everyone moves back to normal with 42 days of class time left.
- Enrollment is at 103 students with a new student in PreK.

Rod asked for the projected number of 3-year-olds for the fall (should know better next month – the maximum number could be 17 based on the number of births in town). First Selectman Gary Greenberg asked why enumeration is not used anymore to project the number of students and suggested starting it up again (Valarie will look into).

### D. Special Education Report:

- PMT Training is scheduled for the staff.
- Added 1 student with an IEP and 2 additional 504 students.
- Contacted UCONN about a Speech and Language Pathologist for in-service (the position is still posted with 2 people interested in full-time).
- There is a CBA Consultation with an outside provider that is helpful with programming for the youngest learners.
- Continue working with the State Special Ed Director – has signups for new CT SEDS IEP training.
- Continue to look at the budget for next year and auditing the needs of the students for IEP services.

### E. Financial Report:

The Financial Reports were reviewed. Rod Perry asked about the bottom line and if the budget should be tightened (Heating oil may go over – had to prebuy). If more oil is needed, would have to pay a higher price (Rod suggested calling around to different suppliers if another purchase is necessary and turning down the thermostat). There is no contract because company is not willing to project a price for next year. Bill Trudelle asked about the cost for the maintainers (cost is within what was projected, will switch to paying them directly). Grants should be spent by the June 30<sup>th</sup> deadline.

***#4-21/22 Motion to approve the Financial Report dated March 17, 2022, was made by Scott Sears, seconded by Sherry Smardon and carried unanimously.***

### F. PTO: No Report

### G. Committee Reports:

**Inter-district Cost Sharing, CABE/EASTCONN, Readiness Council, Policy Committee, Personnel Committee, Technology, Finance Committee, Facilities Committee and Climate Survey Committee**  
Interdistrict Cost Sharing – The proposal for a Cooperative Agreement is almost finalized. A Committee with Board of Education members from each town would oversee the operation of the school. The model budget for the combined schools is nearing completion with a lot of detail and estimated to cost

2.9 million dollars (not counting local costs for regular & special ed out-of-district, magnet schools and transportation). Public information meetings will be held on May 3<sup>rd</sup> in Hampton and May 5<sup>th</sup> in Scotland. Waiting to hear from the state Department of Ed regarding how grant funds will be handled. EASTCONN – The Executive Director resigned the end of March with David Irwin as Interim Director. Readiness Council – Discussed and reviewed policies – almost done except Special Ed costs that will be discussed at the next meeting.

Personnel Committee – Working on dates for Non-Certified Staff negotiations.

Climate Survey – Nick Caruso from CABE has concerns with staff surveys and anonymous parent surveys. The Board Attorney has concerns with using staff survey results with the Superintendent Evaluation (the Board should talk to the union rep, not individual staff members) and anonymous parent surveys. Nick Caruso recommends hiring a survey company and include a question asking how the Board is doing. Gary Greenberg suggested contacting the Political Science Program at UCONN to see if there is graduated student interested in doing a dissertation. Clark Stearns suggested Administrators be here a year before evaluating (are there goals with benchmarks and are they being met). The Board should do a check-in with the Administrators.

## 8. BOARD BUSINESS

### H. Items for Discussion & Actions

#### 1. Item: Reduction in Force Topic/Non-Renewals (Action Anticipated):

There are no non-tenured staff positions for non-renewal.

Discussion was held about reducing 3 paras. Scott Sears spoke about the focus being on Special Ed paras when there are paras for Regular Ed as well. Gracie Martin asked about volunteers used previously in classrooms to assist the teachers. Cassidy Martin asked how Scotland compares to other districts (most towns average 3-4 students per paras – Scotland average is 2). Gary Greenberg asked to clarify that some paras are not for IEPs (very small classes have para support).

***#5-21/22 Motion for the Board to authorize reduction of paraprofessionals from 11-8, was made by Clark Stearns, seconded by Rod Perry and carried with one abstention by Sherry Smardon.***

#### 2. Item: Teacher Early Retirement Incentive (Action Anticipated):

This is the same incentive offered previously.

***#6-21/22 Motion to offer Teacher Early Retirement Incentive, was made by Sherry Smardon, seconded by Clark Stearns and carried unanimously.***

#### 3. Item: 2022-23 Budget (Action Anticipated):

The Draft #1 2022-23 Budget has a 0% increase and includes reduction for 3 paras. The decrease for line #106 Board of Education - Other Salaries is for the Enumerator. Rod Perry asked about the following: does the budget include increase for Non-Certified Staff negotiations (includes projected amount), is there an increase to STEM Tuition (expect to hear soon) and asked about 10% increase for Telephone (Gary suggested checking with Savage Systems that offers phone service). Clark Stearns expressed concerns about unforeseen increases (he sells products to municipalities and has seen monthly increases of his product).

***#7-21/22 Motion to adopt Draft #1 2022-23 Budget with 0% increase, was made by Clark Stearns, seconded by Gracie Martin and carried unanimously.***

#### 4. Item: Account Signatory Addition (Action Anticipated):

According to Board Policy, the Superintendent can review and is financially responsible for checks that require 2 signatures (one should be the Superintendent). Clark Stearns commented that the purpose of signing checks is to assure the money is being spent appropriately (there should never be the same people signing in a row).

***#8-21/22 Motion to add the Superintendent as Account Signatory, was made by Clark Stearns, seconded by Gracie Martin and carried unanimously.***

**5. Discuss Venue for Future Board Meetings:**

Gary Greenberg reported that the town purchased a system with Covid funds that would allow for Hybrid meetings. Equipment will be installed at the Firehouse with 2-way communication with the remote audience. The Board was asked to consider changing their meeting room to the Firehouse Community Room and will be notified when the system is up and running.

**6. Accept Retirement from Tim Smith:**

***#9-21/22 Motion to accept with regret resignation from Finance Coordinator Tim Smith, was made by Sherry Smardon, seconded by Gracie Martin and carried with one no vote.***

**I. Old Business updates**

- **Rose Khourie Scholarship:**

The Scholarship Fund was setup in a trust and intended to go to a college student to repay after getting a job. The trust was dissolved with \$10,000 put into a CD. The Attorney recommends going to Superior Court to show how the Board wants to use this money. Ideas include: turnover to the RD11 Scholarship Fund to earn more interest (would be tracked separately), give out until its gone, give out every 4 years or until it reaches a certain level (Gary will check with the Attorney).

- **A/C Project:**

Pre-work will be done over April vacation. A walkthrough was done and everything is going according to plan. Bill Trudelle asked for the final number and expressed concerns with not following policy by going out to bid (not required for a grant).

- **BOE Goals:** The Board will discuss goals during Executive Session at the next meeting.

**9. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC ON AGENDA ITEMS:**

- Reading Intervention Specialist/Art Teacher Lynn Johnson understands the needs of the students and expressed concerns with cutting paras who are essential for the classroom with more students coming up that may require Special Ed.
- Judy Benson-Clark expressed concerns about not speaking to the staff about reducing the paras and increase to Administrators and Secretaries.
- Kristen Goyette asked for clarification on cutting Special Ed, reducing paras, increase for the Special Ed Director and Administration and expressed concerns about cutting the department that is already lacking without the support it needs.

**10. OTHER ACTION ITEMS:** None

**11. UPCOMING MEETINGS**

- **Regular Board Meeting May 3, 2022 at Scotland Elementary with Zoom**
- **Items for Next Meeting and Assignments**
  - Board Goals (Executive Session)
  - Discuss Possible Survey Company or UCONN Political Science Student
  - Enumeration

**12. ADJOURNMENT:**

***#10-21/22 Motion to adjourn (9:11 PM) was made by Sherry Smardon, seconded by Gracie Martin and carried unanimously.***

***Respectfully submitted by Kathleen Scott  
Recording Clerk***