

**Regular Meeting
Stafford Board of Education
Stafford Elementary School
February 6, 2017, 6:30 p.m.**

Board Members Present: Mr. Scott Gallison
Mr. Peter Kovaleski
Mrs. Andrea Locke
Mr. Jeff Roberts
Mrs. Tracy Rummel, Secretary
Ms. Sonya Shegogue, Chairperson
Mrs. Kathy Walsh

Also Present: Dr. Patricia A. Collin, Superintendent of Schools
Mr. Michael Bednarz, Director of Curriculum and Instruction
Mr. Isaac Combs, Student Representative
Mr. Devin Cowperthwaite, Supervisor of Building Services
Ms. Peggy Falcetta, Principal, Staffordville School
Mr. Damian Frassinelli, Director of Athletics and Recreation
Miss Autumn Gagnon, Alternate Student Representative
Ms. Christine Griswold, Assistant Principal, Stafford High School
Ms. Jennifer Hoffman, Principal, Stafford Middle School
Ms. Jolene Piscetello, Principal, Stafford Elementary School
Ms. Amy Stevenson, Director of Pupil Services
Mrs. Debbie Szymanski, Business Manager

Item I. Call to Order- Establishment of Quorum

The meeting was called to order at 6:33 p.m.

Item II. Pledge of Allegiance

The student representatives led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Item III. Secretary's Report- Approval of Minutes

Regular Meeting, 1/30/17

A consensus of the Board approved the Secretary's Report for the regular meeting held on 1/30/17, as presented.

Item IV. Treasurer's Report

Bills, 2/2/17- \$922,972.95
Grants, 2/2/17- \$10,492.05

A consensus of the Board approved the Bills and Grants, as presented.

Item V. Correspondence

A. Board Meeting Reminder

Ms. Shegogue read the Board meeting reminder that was posted on the agenda.

Item VI. Board Reports

A. Report from Student Representative

There was no update from the Student Representatives.

B. Budget Committee

The Budget Committee members are Ms. Shegogue, Mr. Gallison and Mr. Kovaleski (Mrs. Locke, alternate). There was no update from this committee. The Board members decided to cancel the regular meeting scheduled for Monday, February 13, 2017, and hold a budget committee meeting instead at 6:30 p.m.

C. Curriculum Committee

The Curriculum Committee members are Ms. Shegogue, Mrs. Locke and Mrs. Walsh (Mrs. Rummel, alternate). There was no update from this committee. Mr. Bednarz said that the committee meeting that was originally scheduled for this evening had been postponed to Monday, February 27, 2017, at which time the new textbooks would be presented to the committee and after to the full Board at the regular meeting.

D. Policy Committee

The Policy Committee members are Mrs. Rummel, Mr. Kovaleski and Mrs. Walsh. There was no report from this committee.

E. Negotiation Committee

The Negotiation Committee members are Mrs. Locke, Ms. Shegogue and Mr. Roberts. There was no update from this committee.

Item VII. Superintendent's Reports

A. Update on Graduation Gown Selection Process

Dr. Collin said that at its meeting on January 30, 2017, the Board of Education Chairperson asked Administration to provide information about the graduation gown selection process in response to comments addressed to the Board during the Public Forum portion of the agenda.

Mr. Pelliccia was unable to attend the meeting due to a family emergency, but he participated by phone. Mr. Pelliccia reviewed the process and explained why the district was looking to change the practice in the first place. He explained that Dianna Wentzell, Commissioner, State Department of Education, stated that the district may not assign different color gowns based on gender. He also noted that he contacted the districts in the NCCC, and that they are split on this issue, but that they will all be dealing with it in the near future. Mr. Pelliccia encouraged parents and community members to call him or to make an appointment to meet with him if they still have concerns about this issue.

Dr. Collin noted that Mr. Pelliccia met with the class officers (9th-12th grade) on February 1, 2017, after school in Mr. Gorski's classroom. The former had made an announcement earlier in the day and extended the invitation to any interested student. Miss Griswold and Dr. Collin, in addition to four staff members, were also present. Thirty-three (33) students attended the meeting. Mr. Pelliccia was clear in his opening remarks that while they were looking for student input, and that there would be some student choice in the matter, the purpose of the meeting was not to vote on a gown.

She said that after the presentation of a variety of options, all of which were under consideration, students were asked to complete a Graduation Gown Feedback Form. Mr. Pelliccia then allowed time for questions. While they were not surprised that some responses were consistent with the comments made last Monday evening, they were genuinely pleased at the responses (written and oral) of a number of students, who expressed an interest in selecting a single, unified gown which encompasses both colors and encouraged administration to maintain its original decision.

Dr. Collin said that administration decided, after hearing from the community on Monday evening, receiving input from the students on Wednesday, and receiving feedback from various community members, parents and students, that each student will be allowed to choose one of three options- blue gown, white gown, or a gown that incorporates both school colors. These options were outlined in a letter from Mr. Pelliccia, which was sent to students, parents/guardians and community members on Thursday, February 2, 2017.

A member of the audience asked when the students would be deciding on the unified gown. Mr. Pelliccia said that he's received some feedback already, but will be working with the students to make a decision sometime this week, due to the ordering deadline. Mr. Pelliccia said that any student interested in attending the meeting may attend.

Ms. Shegoue stated that this was not a Board decision, but a decision made by the administration and students.

Mr. Gallison said that more than the color of the gown being worn by the students, he was bothered by the way the district came to this decision. He also stated that he was upset by the language being used with the kids, such as "backwards way of thinking" and "you're wrong and we're right". He said that he thinks that the teachers may have communicated to the students that they were under a "gag order". He thought that perhaps it could have been explained to the teachers and students differently. He said that he understands that the teachers shouldn't be spending their entire class on the topic, but the teachers are supposed to be seen as mentors by the students and then they aren't allowed to talk with the teachers about an issue that's bothering them.

B. Stafford High School Book Club

Dr. Collin presented a proposal from Ms. Caitlin Donahue, Teacher of English, for a Book Club at Stafford High School. The purpose of the Book Club, which would meet monthly, would be "to discuss a novel in a dynamic, information setting," and "allow students to engage in critical discourse related to literature in an informal setting." In accordance with BOE Policy 6145: Extra-Class Activities, participation in the club would be open to all students and meetings will be held after school, and Ms. Donahue would serve as Faculty Advisor.

The Board was provided via the portal with Ms. Donahue's proposals, which includes a description, rationale, location and time, and the book selection process. She said that there is no cost to the Board for

the Stafford High School Book Club. Students may either obtain a copy of the novel from a library or choose to purchase their own copy.

Mrs. Rummel asked a question regarding the book selection.

C. Continued Presentation of the Proposed 2017 – 2018 Budget for the Stafford Public School District

Dr. Collin said that on Monday, January 30, 2017, she presented the proposed 2017-2018 budget for the Stafford Public School District, which totals \$28,432,204.51 and represents an increase of \$1,118,780.43 or 3.87%. At that time, the Board members were provided with binders, which included a copy of the PowerPoint presentation and supplemental information, in addition to a report of staffing adjustments that had been made since the approval of the budget at the May 2016 referendum. Board members were encouraged to forward questions to Mrs. Deborah Szymanski, Interim Business Manager, and Dr. Collin prior to the meeting.

Dr. Collin reviewed responses to the questions asked by Board members and members of the audience last week. Some Board members said that they had additional questions, which they would email to Dr. Collin. Mrs. Rummel asked that the Board members be provided with the responses to the questions prior to the Budget Committee meeting next Monday, since the Board would be asked to vote on the budget at the Board meeting on February 27, 2017.

Mr. Gallison said that he did some research on SROs in other towns. He said that many other towns pay for the SRO, and not the schools. He said that after speaking with others, he endorses the SRO wearing a uniform. He also asked what type of training the SRO would receive.

Mr. Gallison asked how the health classes would be covered after cutting the position at the middle school to .50 FTE.

Mr. Gallison stated that with the town's history of a 0% increase, the residents' foundation issues, and cuts to town funding by the State, he questions whether the Board should send a budget with 3.87% increase forward to the town. He said that he'd like to trim this budget before submitting it to the Board of Finance.

Mr. Kovalski asked what increase the town is putting forward.

D. Financial Report July 1, 2016, through January 31, 2017

Dr. Collin presented the financial report of funds budgeted and encumbered/expended from July 1, 2016, through January 31, 2017, as prepared by Mrs. Deborah Szymanski, Interim Business Manager.

She said that the total approved budget for the 2016-2017 school year is \$27,373,424, which is -0.36%, a decrease of \$99,076, as compared to the 2015-2016 approved budget. The report indicates that period to date expenditures total 49.2% with 44.4% encumbered, leaving a balance of \$1,765,128.76 or 6.4% of the total budget to be expended or encumbered by June 30, 2017.

Dr. Collin said that after reviewing the information posted if the portal, a Board member asked a question regarding the over-expended out-of-district tuition line. She reviewed the way the district backs out the excess cost funds from the special education budget and that the over-expenditures in those lines will be covered by the excess cost funds received by the district later this fiscal year.

Item VIII. Public Comment

A member of the audience asked why the 115- Non-Certified Related Salaries increased by 34%. Mrs. Szymanski said that the 17-18 budget amount is based on historical spending.

A member of the audience asked why the clerk position is being increased to full-time. Dr. Collin explained the new background check mandates and that this person would be assisting in the business office as well.

The student representative asked about the process that would be followed regarding allowing a male student identifying as female into the girls' bathroom and locker room.

A member of the audience said that now that the gown issue seems to have been resolved, no one cares about the process, and he still has issues with that. He also asked if students asked for this change. Ms. Shegogue said that the Board does not have a policy on gowns and ceremonies. She said that the Board gave this issue back to the administration and students to resolve. She said that all students need to feel safe and comfortable in the school environment. She said that the Board is always there to listen, but the Board can't fix everything that's brought to their attention.

Dr. Collin said that the students that were addressed about their Facebook posts were those that violated Board policy due to the content of their posts.

Mr. Gallison said that he disagrees and that the Board should have been consulted on the gown issue. He said that the Board should have a say in any "hot button" issue. He said that he would have continued to push, had this not been resolved.

A member of the audience asked about the role of the SRO.

A member of the audience said that the SRO was rejected unanimously the last time it was proposed. The issue is that the person is under the jurisdiction of the police and not the district. She asked if this is the best bang for the buck and stated that the Board should be provided with much more information, should it consider this proposal.

Five members of the audience spoke about the gown issue. Many of the speakers were in favor of one, unified gown. A couple of the speakers think that offering all 3 color choices didn't really resolve the issue, as some students may still be made to feel uncomfortable. They would have preferred one unified gown.

Item IX. Old Business

There was no Old Business.

Item X. New Business

There was no New Business.

Mrs. Locke made a motion, seconded by Mr. Roberts, to place items XI. A.- **Evaluation of a Public Official / Officer: Individual Board of Education Member' Performance (Board Member Input /**

Feedback on Individual Performance of Each Member and Interpersonal Relationships) (Executive Session Anticipated), and XI.B.- **Discussion Regarding Attorney Client Privileged Written Communication (Legal Advice Regarding Graduation Ceremony) (Executive Session Anticipated)** into executive session. Mr. Gallison, Mr. Kovaleski, Mrs. Locke, Mr. Roberts, Mrs. Rummel, and Mrs. Walsh voted for the motion, which carried.

Item XI. Personnel Matters

A. **Evaluation of a Public Official / Officer: Individual Board of Education Member' Performance (Board Member Input / Feedback on Individual Performance of Each Member and Interpersonal Relationships) (Executive Session Anticipated)**

No action was taken on this item.

B. **Discussion Regarding Attorney Client Privileged Written Communication (Legal Advice Regarding Graduation Ceremony) (Executive Session Anticipated)**

No action was taken on this item.

Item XII. Student Matters

There were no Student Matters.

Item XIII. Adjournment

Mrs. Locke made a motion, seconded by Mr. Kovaleski, to adjourn. Mr. Gallison, Mr. Kovaleski, Mrs. Locke, Mr. Roberts, Mrs. Rummel, and Mrs. Walsh voted for the motion, which carried. The meeting adjourned at 10:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Christine C. Marinelli, Recording Secretary

Sonya Shegogue, Chairperson

Tracy L. Rummel, Secretary