

A Special Meeting of the Ellington Board of Education was held on Wednesday, November 15, 2023, in the Ellington High School Library Media Center, 37 Maple Street, Ellington, CT 06029.

The meeting was called to order at 5:34 p.m. by Chair Jennifer Dzen.

PRESENT Chair Jennifer Dzen, Vice-Chair Mike Young, Secretary Jennifer Mullin (Virtual), Gary Blanchette, Marcia Kupferschmid, Angela Moser (Virtual), Miriam Underwood, Kerry Socha, Steve Viens, Dr. Lenora Williams

ALSO PRESENT Dr. Scott V. Nicol, Superintendent of Schools
Mr. Oliver Barton, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction
Ms. Alisha Carpino, Director of Finance and Operations
Dr. Kristy LaPorte, Director of Special Services
Mr. Aaron Fliss, Director of Information Technology
Ms. Jennifer Brown, Coordinator of Human Resources

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS

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Windermere Elementary School - Named 'School of Distinction' by the State of Connecticut

Principal Hill shared that she is honored and feels very proud to have Windermere School recognized as a school of Distinction. This honor is a testament to the dedication and hard work of our incredible students, talented teachers, and supportive parents, she shared. Principal Hill stated that the recognition reflects Windermere's Commitment to academic excellence and innovation fostering a positive school climate where everyone can come to school and learn while getting their needs met. Principal Hill thanked the teachers and staff who are dedicated to doing what is right for kids and who work tirelessly to maximize potential.

CAUCUS ADJOURNMENT

At this time, Chair Jennifer Dzen announced that the Board will adjourn to enter into a Caucus for purposes of discussing the election of officers.

The Board entered the Caucus at 5:40 p.m.

The Board returned to the Special Meeting at 6:37 p.m.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

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Chair Dzen called for a motion for the Chairman Position

MOTION First: M. Young
Second: M. Kupferschmid
To appoint Jennifer Dzen for the position of Chairman of the Board of Education.
Motion carried unanimously.

Chair Dzen called for a motion for the Vice Chair Position

MOTION First: S. Viens
Second: M. Kupferschmid
To appoint Kerry Socha for the position of Vice Chairman of the Board of Education
Discussion: Board Member Miriam Underwood requested to enter a nomination for Jennifer Mullin as Vice Chair and would like to share her reasons for the nomination.

A discussion continued as to whether both nominations had to go to the table as a motion and would result in being carried or not by a number of votes. Steve Viens withdrew the motion to appoint Kerry Socha as Vice-Chair at this time for further discussion of the nominees. It was decided that through roll call the position will be filled. A roll call vote will occur after the discussion. Chair Dzen opened the discussion of nominees.

Board Member Miriam Underwood stated as a Democrat, she wants to nominate Jennifer Mullin for the Vice-Chair position.

Board Member Gary Blanchette added that a Chair and Vice-Chair in different parties would be beneficial to the Board overall. He stated that Jenn Mullin has served as secretary well and is ready to move to a leadership role.

Chair Dzen asked if there was anyone else that the Board may wish to consider. Board Member Steve Viens shared that he would like to nominate Kerry Socha for Vice Chairman of the Board. He shared that Kerry Socha is passionate about the children and teachers and has shown that she is capable of handling parliamentary procedures and supporting the Vice Chairman of the Board.

Current Vice-Chair, Dr. Micheal Young, added that though historically the top positions have been of the same party so there won't be a change from the current status. Marcia Kupferschmid added that Kerry Socha has been on the Board for many years and has done a great job.

Current Secretary, Jennifer Mullin, added that it is not a question of who is more qualified for the position but would like to see bipartisan representation in the top officers since there is a position on the Board that will no longer be filled.

Angie Moser shared that she supports Kerry Socha as Vice Chair. Ms. Moser stated that Kerry has an energy that she brings to her care for the school system.

Jennifer Dzen called for a motion for Vice Chairman of the Board

MOTION

First: S. Viens

Second: L. Williams

To vote to appoint either Kerry Socha or Jennifer Mullin to Vice-Chair of the Board of Education through a roll call vote.

Motion carried unanimously.

Chair Dzen stated we would start the vote with the virtual participants, then in person.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Angie Moser (virtual) - Vote for Kerry Socha

Jennifer Mullin (virtual) - Vote for Jenn Mullin

Gary Blanchette -Vote for Jenn Mullin

Marcia Kupferschmid - Vote for Kerry Socha

Kerry Socha - Vote for Kerry Socha

Mike Young - Vote for Kerry Socha

Lenora Willimas - Vote for Jenn Mullin

Steve Viens - Vote for Kerry Socha

Miriam Underwood - Vote for Jenn Mullin

Point of order for Chair Dzen from Dr. Nicol. If the vote carries, the Chair does not have to vote. Chair Dzen shared that the majority vote is for Kerry Socha. Kerry Socha is appointed Vice Chair with a 5-4 vote.

Jennifer Dzen called for a motion for Secretary of the Board

MOTION

First: M. Underwood

Second: M. Young

To appoint Jennifer Mullin to continue as Secretary of the Board of Education.

Motion carried unanimously.

Chair Dzen announced that the Board now has the Positions of Chair (Jennifer Dzen), Vice-Chair (Kerry Socha), and Secretary (Jennifer Mullin).

BOARD CHAIR REPORT

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Chair Jennifer Dzen began by sharing her thanks for the vote of confidence. Ms. Dzen stated that she will do what she can to ensure growth in the district and continue to move our students and staff forward. Ms. Dzen will share committees and a list of liaison positions available in the coming weeks. Ms. Dzen personally welcomed Lenora Williams to the Board. Ms. Dzen closed by mentioning Liz Nord and recognizing her work and contributions. She shared that Liz was diligent and worked tirelessly for the Board and the district is in a better position because of her and we (the Board) thank her for her hard work.

CITIZEN & STAFF FORUM - None

CONSENT AGENDA

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1. Approval of Minutes: Regular Meeting, October 25, 2023, 6:00 p.m.
2. Human Resources Monthly Report

Chair Dzen asked if anyone wished to remove any item(s) from the Consent Agenda. Chair Dzen announced that with hearing none, the Consent Agenda stands.

REPORT AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

SPECIAL REPORTS

Watch [HERE](#)

REGULAR BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

Finance Committee

The Budget Calendar was presented by Ms. Carpino and built based on past years. A time request was made to adjust the meeting times to 5:45 p.m. to accommodate schedules. Ms. Carpino discussed the FY2024 update. The Finance Committee was concerned about the overage in the group insurance; it was shared that it was due to a spike in enrollment that was unexpected. Next, the district hired a BCBA for a partial year from December to June - Ms. Carpino shared that by hiring staff directly, the district saved approximately \$29,000. The position will be an at-will employee with benefits provided. More discussion will be presented and considered in the Superintendent's proposed budget.

Curriculum

Watch [HERE](#)

Dr. Young shared that there were two items on the agenda for the Committee meeting. First, the Internship Program with local businesses that was offered to Ellington High School students with Desco Manufacturing. The district will look to expand with other local businesses and this opportunity would not only provide a paid internship but career development and skills along with High School credit. The next item was the NGSS science test review. The results show good performance in Grades 5 and 8 with Ellington above State averages at all three tested grade levels. However, compared to Ellington's prior performance on this assessment, we were less successful at grade 11 than in previous years. The addition of Earth Science to this test before some students may have taken it is one possible reason. The committee will continue to monitor the issue of high school performance on this assessment and look for reports on efforts to address any issues.

Communications

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Committee Chair Jenn Mullin shared that we did not meet in November and decided to postpone due to the election and potential new board members, however, did have data to share. The September edition of Communications Corner has 1800 views and has been viewed in multiple countries. Ms. Mullin shared that was really amazing news. Facebook followers are at 853, and Instagram is at 300. Both platforms are growing steadily. In the last 90 days, Facebook visits are up 24%, and Instagram, 17%. Ms. Mullin reminded the Board to please take photos at any winter events they attend. The next edition of Communications Corner will go out after the December Regular Board Meeting. Board Member Viens asked about Twitter or X. Dr. Nicol is on X with an account on behalf of the district. Ms. Mullin will get more specifics on that.

ADMINISTRATION REPORTS

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Superintendent's Report

Dr. Scott V. Nicol, Superintendent

Dr. Nicol shared that the Permanent Building Committee designated December 5, 2023, as the groundbreaking ceremony for Windermere School. Many people will be invited so we can showcase the project and the work that has been done up to this point. More details to come on that. Dr. Nicol also shared a brief update on the process of developing the Superintendent Goals for Dr. Williams and that the goals are developed to align with the district Improvement Plan and the School Improvement Plans. Miriam Underwood inquired about the addition of another School Security Officer. Dr. Nicol shared that we hired a third officer this year and we will look at the effectiveness of having three and any recommendation for additional security will come at the end of this year or next.

Director's Report

Monthly Financial Report

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Ms. Alisha Carpino, Director of Finance and Operations

Ms. Carpino shared that the non-certified salaries are over budget. This is because there are encumbrances that are still being looked at and will continue throughout the year. She is also monitoring Group Insurance to see if there are any trends as to why that has increased significantly besides the increased enrollment. Retirements and tuition are also over but both are in the right place and will continue to be monitored.

BOARD LIAISON REPORTS

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Student Liaison, Noelle Krawsynski's report included the following points:

1. Ellington High School held its annual Veteran's Day Breakfast and Assembly to honor those who have served. The Student Council and Vocal Ensemble did an excellent job.
2. The NCC Music Festival was hosted at the high school. Multiple schools come together to perform a chosen set of music.
3. The CT Music Educators Association (CEMA) Festival is taking place and a select group of singers and instrumental players will attend to learn and perform music.
4. On November 21, 2023, the Mock Trial Team will be scrimmaging against RHAM to prepare for the first round of the Civics First High School Competition.
5. Half-Day of School on Wednesday, November 22, 2023, and no school on Thursday (11/23) and Friday (11/24).

Permanent Building Committee

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Liaison Gary Blanchette shared an update on the Windermere Building Project. We were able to gain 2% more savings. Unexpected costs can come from demolition which can affect the budget. For the first two phases were are in a good spot at 5%. A special meeting is coming up on Tuesday, November 21, 2023, for another vote. Mr. Blanchette also shared an update on the HVAC and lighting. HVAC is in the design phase and there was discussion about bringing on a project manager. As for the lighting project, there is only one bid from Earthlight.

Center School

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Liaison Kupferschmid shared dates and events as follows:

December 1, 2023 - Conferences start

December 2, 2023 - Winterfest Tree Lighting and Parade, 4th graders sing at Gazebo at 4:10 p.m.

December 5, 2023 - Holiday Shop

December 8, 2023 - Pajama Day to support CCMC

Ellington Middle School

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Liaison Kerry Socha wanted to share that the Ski Club is available at the Middle School this winter and has grown. The High School has a new school store with all the new styles available that can also be personalized.

Windermere School

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Liaison Steve Viens shared that the team was honored to be recognized as a School of Distinction and that has really been a motivation for the teachers and students, they are really excited about the honor. The Kindergarten team is hosting a Friendsgiving and connecting the tradition to Ellington Unplugged having each dish be "Cooked from Scratch." Mr. Viens shared that the Veterans Day Celebration was successful and the Holiday Boutique is coming up on December 11, 2023.

ACTION ITEMS

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First read to approve the adoption of revisions to Policy 4040, Child Abuse, Neglect and Sexual Assault Reporting

MOTION First: M. Young
Second: S. Viens
To approve first read to approve the adoption of revisions to Policy 4040, Child Abuse, Neglect and Sexual Assault Reporting.
Motion unanimously carried.

First read to approve the adoption of revisions to Policy 5330, Improve Completion Rates of FAFSA

MOTION First: M. Kupferschmid
Second: M. Young
To approve first read to approve the adoption of revisions to Policy 5330, Improve Completion Rates of FAFSA.
Motion unanimously carried.

First read to approve the adoption of revisions to Policy 5430, Physical Activity and Student Discipline

MOTION First: S. Viens
Second: M. Kupferschmid
To approve first read to approve the adoption of revisions to Policy 5430, Physical Activity and Student Discipline.
Motion unanimously carried.

First read to approve the adoption of revisions to Policy 6157, Parental Access to Instructional Material

MOTION First: S. Viens
Second: M. Kupferschmid
To approve first read to approve the adoption of revisions to Policy 6157, Parental Access to Instructional Material.
Motion unanimously carried.
Discussion/clarifications requested by Dr. Young.

Approval of the 2024-2025 Budget Calendar, as amended.

MOTION First: M. Kupferschmid
Second: M. Underwood
To approve the 2024-2025 Budget Calendar, as amended.
Motion unanimously carried.

Approval of the 2023-2024 Superintendent Goals

MOTION First: M. Kupferschmid
Second: S. Viens
To approve the 2023-2024 Superintendent Goals.
Motion unanimously carried.

CORRESPONDENCE/ROUNDTABLE

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Chair Dzen stated she would be remiss to not thank Michael Young publicly as Vice-chair of the Board for his service and appreciates his time. Kerry Socha asked for clarification on the meeting time changes for the budget meetings and that it affects teachers and staff who have to come back.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION First: M. Kupferschmid
Second: S. Viens
To adjourn the Regular Meeting of the Board (7:48 p.m.)
Motion unanimously carried.