

Sterling Board of Education
Minutes of the Regular Meeting
February 16, 2022
Cafeteria - 6:00 pm
“EXCELLENCE WITH KINDNESS”

I. Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 6:03pm

Present were: Michael Rouillard, Courtney Langlois, Victoria Robinson Lewis, Jennifer Mossner, Dorothy Capobianco

Late Arrival: Leatrice Shippee 6:26pm

Also present were: S. Rourke, H. Nickerson, L. Smith, M. Courter, C. Chandler, V. Stolzman

Absent: C. Brannon

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Public Comment

F. Bood presented the Board with an FOIA request for line item transfers and account balances.

Miriam encouraged the Board to consider making masks optional and leaving it up to the parents.

C. Chenette, 7th grade student, spoke about how uncomfortable the mask is and stated that he was asking that everyone be able to have a choice.

C. SanSouci encouraged the Board to make masks optional and spoke about the downfalls of wearing a mask.

K. Kettle asked the Board to not make students wear masks. She also spoke about health issues associated with wearing a mask.

S. Williams asked the Board to lift the masking for students.

- A motion was made by C. Langlois and seconded by J. Mossner to add items E and F to the agenda under New Business. E. Request use of School Capital Funds for the heating/cooling coils and F. Request of School Capital Funds for smoke detector replacement.

Vote: All in Favor

IV. Reports and Communications

A. Correspondence

B. Consent Agenda

1. Minutes of the Regular Meeting, January 19, 2022

2. Superintendent's Report

D. Capobianco asked S. Rourke about the acceptance of home COVID tests. S. Rourke stated that effective today the school can hire new employees that are not vaccinated and employees that are not vaccinated are not required to test weekly.

3. Special Education Director's Report

4. Principal's Report
5. Clinical Supervisor's Report
6. Monthly Check Register

- A motion was made by V. Robinson-Lewis and seconded by D. Capobianco to accept the consent agenda. Vote: All in favor

C. Budget and Expense Report

C. Brannon was absent from the meeting. The report was handed out to BOE members with a cover sheet of bulleted items.

- A motion was made by D. Capobianco and seconded by J. Mossner to accept the Budget and Expense Report. Vote: All in favor

D. Plainfield Board of Education Liaison

1. List of Plainfield Board of Education Meetings

BOE members volunteered to attend monthly meetings for the remainder of the calendar year.

C. Langlois attended the February meeting and gave an update. Highlights of the high school included: They are celebrating Career and Technical Awareness month, the Chamber Choir will be performing at Carnegie Hall in March, they have published their first student newspaper for PHS. Dr. Bitgood has been working with students on grant proposals, winter sports are going well, and the cheerleaders participated in a cheer competition on Saturday. She noted that Plainfield's graduation is set for June 17, 2022 at 6:00pm in the football field. They have completed their 2022/23 calendar. Plainfield is having a special BOE meeting on February 23, 2022 to have a public forum regarding masking.

V. Unfinished Business

None

VI. New Business

- A. Science Presentation - Mrs. Stolzman

V. Stolzman, Science Teacher for grades K-5, gave a powerpoint presentation showing how the students are working with FOSS Science Kits and discussed what each grade level has been working on.

- B. Introduction of new employee

S. Rourke introduced Margaret Courter, Interim Director of Special Services. Maggie spoke about her time so far here at SCS and the things that she has been working on. Maggie commended the special education staff.

- C. Review/discussion and possible action to approve Memorandum of Agreement with UPSEU
- S. Rourke spoke about the difficulty in providing appropriate substitutes to cover classes daily and how the administration has had to ask non-certified members paraprofessionals to work outside of their classification to cover classes as substitutes. The current UPSEU contract language states that “Employees who perform work in a higher classification for three (3) or more consecutive days, shall be paid at the higher rate, retroactive to the first day.” They have been asked to work as substitutes for the teachers. That is not in their classification so they are to be paid an instructional assistant’s salary if they are working in a different classification. The MOA allows them to be paid the difference between the para and the I.A. salary retroactive after 3 days of covering in a substitute teacher roll. This agreement is for the 2021-2022 school year only.

- A motion was made by V. Robinson-Lewis and seconded by C. Langlois to accept the MOA. Vote: All in favor

- D. Discussion on possible changes to masking, isolation, and quarantine requirements

S. Rourke spoke about the recent Legislative decisions about lifting masking mandates by the Governor. The governor gave the authority to local Boards of Education as of February 28th. She also discussed how the Department of Public Health will have overriding authority. Masks on buses are still required, this is a federal mandate.

Also noted was that as of February 15, 2022 new hires at public schools do not need to be vaccinated and employees that were not vaccinated do not have to test weekly.

Administration is still waiting for the CSDE and DPH to give guidance on isolation and quarantine.

L. Shippee asked if S. Rourke would be more comfortable waiting for the guidance to come through? S. Rourke stated that she did not know for certain when the guidelines were going to come.

M. Rouillard stated that he personally feels that it is time the masks should come off. Providing the DPH and CSDE don't say that masks are mandatory.

V. Robison-Lewis stated that she felt that parents should have a choice. She also shared that 68 towns have voted to lift the masks.

C. Langlois expressed concern and looks forward to hearing the guidance that is shared from the CSDE and DPH. She hopes that removing masks doesn't create other barriers.

L. Shippee expressed that it should be stated that mask options are at school and not on buses.

It was agreed that if sports are being played in a district that requires masks then our students need to wear them.

- A motion was made by C. Langlois and seconded by V. Robinson Lewis to continue to recommend mask wearing based on the CDC guidelines but allow “mask option choice” for all staff and students at the school starting on February 28, 2022, and then to integrate any new guidance that comes forth from the Connecticut State Department of Education and Department of Public Health when it is made available to us. This is also to include any functions in the school setting. Vote: All in favor

E. Request use of School Capital Funds for heating/cooling coils

- A motion was made by C. Langlois and seconded by V. Robinson Lewis to approve the request to use the Sterling Community School Capital Funds for the heating/cooling coils.
Vote: All in favor

F. Request use of School Capital Funds for smoke detector replacement

- A motion was made by L. Shippee and seconded by D. Capobianco to approve the request to use the Sterling Community School Capital Funds for the smoke detector replacement.
Vote: All in favor

VII. Committee Updates

A. **Superintendent Search**

M. Rouillard gave an update on the progress with the search. He noted that the job has been posted and that several Focus Group meetings have been scheduled. Information is available on the school website.

S. Rourke encouraged all community members to complete the survey.

C.Langlois shared that Mary Broderick (CABE) will be sharing the profile that has been created at the March Board of Education meeting.

B. **Negotiations**

C. Langlois spoke about scheduling the upcoming meetings and moving forward. The next meeting is scheduled for February 24, 2022.

C. Policy

S. Rourke spoke about looking at the Policy Audit done by CABE in April 2021. Noted were 6 mandated policies that need to be looked at. The first Policy meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 2nd at 3:30pm.

D. Budget

The budget committee is scheduled to meet on Tuesday, March 8th at 4:00pm. The electronic copy of the budget needs to be sent to the Town Hall by March 30th.

VIII. Recommendations, Questions and/or Comments

V. Robinson-Lewis asked that there be a line item for Athletics added to the budget.

S. Rourke said that it could be done easily and that was her intent to add that.

IX. Public Comment

F. Bood voiced his concerns and stated that he thought that money should be allocated for athletics to include covering the cost of uniforms. He also spoke about other accounts that are at the town hall. He also voiced his opinion on mask wearing and responses from the BOE. He asked the Board to focus on the budget and line item transfers. He is concerned because the school has given money back for the past 7 years.

C. Palmer asked who is going to be responsible for enforcing the wearing of masks on the bus.

X. Executive Session

- A Motion was made by C. Langlois and seconded by V. Robinson-Lewis to go into Executive Session and to invite S. Rourke and H. Nickerson to discuss personnel matters.

Vote: All in favor

Entered into Executive Session: 7:30pm

Exited Executive Session: 8:35pm

XI. Adjournment

- A motion was made by C. Langlois and seconded by V. Robinson-Lewis to adjourn the meeting at 8:35pm. Vote: All in favor