

Stratford School Board
Board Meeting
February 3, 2021

The Stratford School Board had a meeting on Wednesday, February 3, 2021 at 5:30 pm. Present were: Kyle Haley (Remotely from Home-Stratford), James Kennett and Nicole King. Absent was: None. Also present were Superintendent Ronna Cadarette, Business Administrator Patty Brown, Student Services Administrator Michelle Mason and Principal Bridger DeWitt. Absent was: None.

James Kennett called the meeting to order at 5:31 pm.

A motion was made by Kyle Haley and seconded by Nicole King to approve the public minutes of January 13, 2021 as presented. A vote was then taken and all were in favor.

Reports:

Ronna Cadarette updated the board on the plan for the traditional Annual School Budget Meeting on March 8, 2021 at 6:00 pm in the Stratford gymnasium. There should be plenty of room for everyone to be socially distanced between seats in the bleachers and on the floor. We have the option to delay the meeting until later in the year, but we feel it's better to keep things as normal as possible. We can provide a safe space to have a meeting for the community.

Ronna explained the grant funding received for COVID expenses and anticipates additional funding to come soon. CARES/ESSER #1 = \$57,738 must be spent by 9/30/2023, ESSER Supplemental = \$30,247 must be spent by 12/30/2020 (that was the quick one) and CARES/ESSER #2 = \$230,866 must be spent by 9/30/2023.

Ronna then spoke to the board about staff restructuring, looking at performance data and COVID guidelines. In the spring staffing assignments will be made based on student needs and class sizes.

Bridger DeWitt presented his report and noted the current enrollment is at 60 students, there were two more homeschool students that returned and one new student. There are three more new students projected to start by March and two more homeschool students have inquired about coming back also.

Bridger explained how drama is organizing a performance this year by doing small settings by video and putting them all together for one final presentation virtual style. We also had two recipients of the Rock Star Award this year; Eno Garcia and Betty Williams. As a reminder, grades will be closing on March 5th.

Michelle Mason presented her report and had one change to the proposed budget, the \$336k tuition line will be reduced to \$96k, with a transportation increase of \$13k. This has already been reflected in the budget that will be presented tonight during the budget hearing. The board was very impressed and pleasantly surprised to hear this news.

Shane Cloutier presented his report and had nothing to add or change. There were no questions.

Patty Brown presented her report and discussed the current transportation capacity concerns. Under our current Back to School Plan we only allow one student per seat unless they reside in the same household. Under this arrangement we exceed capacity on our two buses in the afternoon runs. Our buses are doing multiple runs in the morning and afternoon. We have been working with Berry Transportation to come up with ideas without removing students from the buses and allowing everyone the opportunity to ride to and from school. The law states we only have to provide transportation to students who live one mile or more from the school. To avoid having students walking along Route 3 or crossing Route 3 we would like to allow two students per seat with masks at all times. We require masks to be worn at all times now and currently one run has 16 seats with

two students in each seat now (related). We will continue to work with the bus company to avoid anyone feeling uncomfortable the best we can and we'll also work with the driver to create the seating chart/assignments.

The board asked about the runs and what parts of town and VT students were delivered. Bridger and Patty Brown responded with the information they had from Berry Transportation. If any routes change or are tested, we will notify those impacted prior to doing it. We want to do what is best for everyone and has the least impact on the student's educational day. We also don't want the students stuck here at school until 3:30 because we still have a lot of cleaning to do.

The school board would need to amend and approve Stratford's transportation portion of the Back to School Plan to allow two students per seat. This would only impact Stratford School District students in this plan.

A motion was made by James Kennett and seconded by Nicole to amend Stratford's transportation portion of the Back to School Plan and allow two students per seat. A vote was then taken and all were in favor.

Patty Brown then informed the board the Selectmen requested the use of the gymnasium for the Town Meeting on Saturday, March 13, 2021 at 10:00 am. The town would be responsible and in charge of set up, clean up and following all COVID-19 guidelines as required by law.

A motion was made by James Kennett and seconded by Kyle Haley to approve the town's request to use the gymnasium for the Annual Town Meeting on Saturday, March 13, 2021. A vote was then taken and all were in favor.

A motion was made by Nicole King and seconded by James Kennett to suspend the regular board meeting to go into the Budget Hearing at 6:10 pm. A vote was then taken and all were in favor.

Budget Hearing:

Patty Brown presented a Power Point with an overview of the proposed 2021-2022 budget. The operating budget appropriation total presented was \$2,264,179, along with a teacher's article in the amount of \$17,821, for a grand total appropriation of \$2,282,000 which is a \$176,000 reduction from last year's appropriation raised.

Patty then went down and highlighted the significant differences with reasons for the increases and decreases. Those reports will be printed in the town report for the public to view that is not in attendance tonight and available for the Annual School Meeting in March.

Patty covered the estimated tax rate by explaining loss revenue caused by last year's fund balance and adequacy aid results in a net decrease of \$8,684 to collected from tax payers. Overall decrease in the tax rate by \$.12, the tax rate is estimated to be \$16.66.

The Warrant for the Annual School Meeting was then presented and discussed.

A motion was made by Nicole King and seconded by James Kennett to approve Articles 1-7 on the Warrant as presented and read during the Budget Hearing. A vote was then taken and all were in favor.

A motion was made by Nicole King and seconded by James Kennett to approve the operating budget article in the amount of \$2,264,179, the teacher's negotiations article amount in the \$17,821 with a total appropriation in the amount of \$2,282,000 as presented for the proposed 2021-2022 budget. A vote was then taken and all were in favor.

A motion was made by Nicole King and seconded by James Kennett to go back into the regular board meeting at 6:25 pm. A vote was then taken and all were in favor.

Continuing Business:

James Kennett mentioned the town select board minutes reflected the school had over 65 bags of garbage in one week dropped off at the transfer station. Nicole King added she did contact Patty Brown and let her know a few weeks ago of these minutes so the SAU would be aware. James asked if we could track the number of bags going out.

Patty Brown responded that as soon as Nicole contacted her about the select board minutes she immediately reacted by having SPS document how many bags leave with our contractor every other Monday to the transfer station. Patty also noted that our garbage only goes to the transfer station every two weeks, not weekly. This past run only 37 bags went to the transfer station, this was two weeks' worth of garbage. We will continue to document the number of bags that leave, but do anticipate those numbers to decline. We have recently hired our kitchen repair guy to install a food disposal in one of our sinks for all leftover food. No more food will be thrown away. This alone will reduce some garbage, especially weight.

The board then had a lengthy discussion about composting and science classes, potential animals, learning experiences, research, etc... Senior Project opportunities for GHS students, etc...

Patty Brown did inform the board that Charlie Goulet did come in to see her to talk about the transfer station and apologized about the mix up that happened the other month. There was missed communication but everything is all cleared up now. The town is over budget with the transfer station because of COVID, there is excess garbage coming from people's homes. People are cleaning out and remodeling, so the town's budget is going up for the transfer station and basically the school added to that a little too. All is good and Patty was glad he came in because the school meant no harm and only made the change to save money for the taxpayers.

New Business:

Patty Brown went over the tuition rates being proposed for the 2021-2022 school year. In the past we have used the state elementary cost per pupil for the 2019-2020 fiscal year, which was recently posted in December 2020.

Kyle Haley noted in the past we have added \$500 to the state cost per pupil to come up with our tuition rate.

James Kennett and Patty Brown agreed that it has been a couple years that we have chosen not to do that because of the increase in the cost per pupil at the state level.

A motion was made by James Kennett and seconded by Nicole to approve the SPS tuition rate of \$17,188 for the 2021-2022 school year. A vote was then taken and all were in favor.

Next Meeting:

Monday, March 8, 2021 at 6:00 pm, SPS Annual Meeting.
Wednesday, April 7, 2021 at 5:30 pm, SPS Board Meeting.
Tuesday, April 20, 2021 at 5:30 pm, SAU Board Meeting at SVS.

Adjournment:

A motion was made by Nicole King and seconded by Kyle Haley to adjourn the meeting at 6:50 pm. A vote was then taken and all were in favor.

Minutes were respectfully submitted by Patricia Brown