



Monthly Meeting
Avon Board of Education
34 Simsbury Road, Avon, Connecticut

Mission Statement

Our mission is to inspire in each student a joy and passion for learning and a commitment to excellence, personal integrity, and social responsibility.

Tuesday, November 15, 2022, 7:00 pm

Avon High School, Library/Media Center

Avon Board of Education
34 Simsbury, Avon, Connecticut 06001

Minutes

Attendance

Board Members Present: Jackie Blea; Debra Chute, Board Chair; Jeffrey S. Fleischman, Board Secretary; Lynn Katz; Lisa Seminara; Thej Singh; Liz Sommerkorn; Sarah Thompson; Laura Young

Board Members Absent: none

Administration Present: Dr. Bridget Heston Carnemolla, Superintendent of Schools; Jess Giannini, Assistant Superintendent; Roberto Medic, Assistant Superintendent; Susan Russo, Business Manager (attended virtually)

I. Call to Order

Deb Chute, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

A. Roll Call

Ms. Chute conducted a roll call of Board members and administrators.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Mission Statement

Ms. Chute read the Board's mission statement.

IV. Avon Achievers

A. RBS – Noam Sturm, Principal, and Susan Horvath, Assistant Principal

- Mr. Chris Michaud in recognition for the warmth, positive energy, professionalism and confidence he brings in his role as the Safety/Security Specialist at Roaring Brook School.
- Mrs. Lauren Staron in recognition for the impact as a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) utilizing her skill set in supporting positive student behavior at RBS.

V. Presentation

Student and Family Support Coordinator, Tasonn Haynes, and Assistant Coordinator of Internships, Maria Mascoli, introduced the students who participated in the ACHIEVE Summer Internships: Alexa Faust - Theatre Guild of Simsbury; Lakshmi Jetty - Hartford Healthcare Cancer Infusion Center; Aaradhya (AK) Kumar - Hartford Healthcare Cancer Infusion Center; Chloe Kieper- Today Publishing; Ricky Paul - UConn Health Richard Berlin Center for Cell Analysis & Modeling w/Dr. Blinov; Viraj Sheth - Avon Public Schools Technology Dept.; Claire Volpe - UConn Health -

Center for Regenerative Medicine & Skeletal Development w/ Dr. Peter Maye; Jack Wang – UConn Health – Dept. of Nephrology w/ Dr. Dong Zhou. Students shared their internship experiences.

VI. Approval of Minutes

A. Board of Education Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes of October 18, 2022

Jackie Blea made a motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Monthly Meeting of October 18, 2022, Lynn Katz seconded.

The motion passed 9-0-0

B. Board of Education Special Meeting Minutes of November 3, 2022, 9:00 am

Lynn Katz made a motion to approve the minutes of the 9:00 am Special Meeting of November 3, 2022, Laura Young seconded.

The motion passed 9-0-0

C. Board of Education Special Meeting Minutes of November 3, 2022, 5:00 pm

Laura Young made a motion to approve the minutes of the 5:00 pm Special Meeting of November 3, 2022, Thej Singh seconded.

The motion passed 9-0-0

VII. Communication from Public

Dr. Alex Chen, Avon resident and APS parent, brought to the Board's attention again his concern of students having cell phones at Avon High School stating that students are sharing their phones to play video games. He expressed his concern that students can also potentially be exposed to pornography and other inappropriate things. Dr. Chen was also concerned that cell phones hurt students' mental well-being and performance.

VIII. Items of Information and Proposals

A. Student Representative Report – Charlotte Parry and Lillian Peng, AHS Student Representatives
Ms. Parry and Ms. Peng shared updates of the various school events. At Avon High School, AHS and Lewis Mills HS are holding a fund raising and non-perishable food collection competition; registration for winter athletics is open; the Annual Powder Puff Football game will be held on Sunday; AHS' Fall play "Clue" will be presented Nov. 18 & 19; and a fundraiser at Puerta Vallarta will be held by the Junior Class on Nov. 17. At Avon Middle School, the Boys Cross Country team defeated Smith Middle School of Glastonbury; the PTO is hosting a turkey and food drive on Nov. 20th; the first edition of "Beau's Bearcast" school newspaper was distributed; and Ms. Gooding was recognized during National School Psychologist Week. At Thompson Brook School, the student council held daily drives to collect items for local homeless shelters; tryouts has begun for their musical; the PTO will host their annual book fair Nov. 28 – Dec. 2; and TBS raised over \$300 for Breast Cancer Research in October. RBS & PGS kindergarten students enjoyed a Halloween parade at Avon High School; professional development was held on Election Day; events and assemblies were held on Veterans' Day and Pine Grove School will also be holding their book fair.

B. Financial Report – Susan Russo, Business Manager

Ms. Russo reported for there was an unencumbered balance of over \$5.8 million for the month ending October 2022. Ms. Russo reviewed other financial highlights which included some savings on administrative and certified salaries. Budget transfers were also explained with some to offset rising costs in the global markets and utilities. A brief overview of special education tuition and transportation costs were also given. Ms. Russo informed the Board that a soft freeze has been implemented which still allows purchases of necessary curricular items.

IX. Committees & Liaison Reports

A. Committee Reports

1. Curriculum & Professional Practices – Jackie Blea, Chair
Ms. Blea stated that the C&PP Committee will be meeting on Dec. 6th
2. Finance – Lynn Katz, Chair
Ms. Katz reported that the Committee reviewed the budget transfers and donation letters. The soft freeze was to help administration keep a close eye on expenditures due to the continued rising cost of materials and utilities. Next meeting is on Dec. 13.
3. Negotiations – Deb Chute, Chair
Ms. Chute informed the Board members that the committee was preparing to start negotiations with the administrative assistants.
4. Policy – Laura Young, Chair
Ms. Young stated that the committee did not meet in November after having two special Board meetings to discuss legislative updates.

B. Liaison Report

1. Capital Region Education Council – Jackie Blea, Board Representative
Ms. Blea stated that she was unable to attend last month's CREC meeting but planned on attending the next meeting and will forward the minutes from the last meeting to Board members.

X. Chair's Report – Debra Chute, Board Chair

A. Board Chair Update

Board Chair Chute spoke of the district's Veterans' Day events; traveling around the various events with the veterans and hearing their individual stories was especially impactful. Ms. Chute expressed how special it was to have a school day on Veterans' Day and having this tradition to recognize and honor the veterans. Ms. Chute extended her appreciation to the schools for impressive assemblies.

XI. Superintendent's Report – Dr. Bridget Heston Carnemolla

A. Hiring Report

Dr. Carnemolla informed the Board that an additional safety and security specialist position for the high school has been posted and due to the Esser funds and the work of the Business Manager to find the funding for the salaries the district has been able to acquire a great crew of safety and security specialists. The additional specialist will potentially be a 9:00 to 5:00 shift position to cover all the after-school activities and sports. Mr. Medic reported that certified positions remain fully staffed with certified staff or certified substitutes (due to medical leaves) in every classroom. Mr. Medic also reviewed the new hires as well as resignations. Dr. Carnemolla informed the Board that the district was also in the midst of hiring an IT technician and someone for accounts payable due to vacancies.

B. Enrollment Report

The Superintendent reviewed the enrollments numbers which has been static and reported that the district is still two students short of the Open Choice goal of having 112 students and additional seats were released in the PreK program for peers.

C. Strategic Plan Update

Mr. Giannini gave a presentation on the Science of Reading, providing information on what it is, how it came to be, how it is impacting Connecticut school, what Avon is doing in response to it. He also reviewed the five main components which are phonics; phonemic awareness; vocabulary and oral language development; reading fluency and reading comprehension and shared how many school superintendents are petitioning the state to make some changes to the implementation of this work especially since the State Department released a memo requiring all CT school districts to use one of six pre-approved PreK-3 reading programs; many educational leaders feel that the state is confusing curriculum with instructional resources. Avon already has a really robust reading curriculum and the state mandating the use of six specific programs as well as the use of certain programs to assess and give feedback are some of the issues. Mr.

Giannini clarified that the district does believe in the research behind SOR and implementing evidence and scientifically based instruction in the classrooms however the district has worked to align the curriculum with SR and added additional resources to support all five main components and believes the district to have a strong curriculum model that is grounded in research and serves its students well as they acquire early literacy skills. The district stands with neighboring communities and CAPSS to await revised guidance from the CSDE. The Science of Reading slide presentation is attached.

D. Updates

The Superintendent gave some additional strategic planning updates informing the Board of continued administrator visits to the classrooms; continued conversations with administrators on what the district would like to be known for and what that would look like; continued to strengthen data driven decision making processes as a district team and working on curriculum, programs and instructional strategies. Dr. Carnemolla also informed the Board that Christine Sardinkas has been hired to replace Shirley Moy as she retires from her current position but will continue to work with the district part time to work on the district website. Dr. Carnemolla also remarked on how fantastic the Veterans' Day program was and thanked the local VFW for graciously attending the day long program.

XII. Consent Calendar

- A. 22-23/18 Approval of Donation of \$4,300.00 from TBS PTO for supplemental classroom material at TBS
- B. 22-23/19 Approval of Donations of \$200.00 each from Wade's World and Erin Barthel to PGS
- C. 22-23/20 Approval of Donation of a Gaga Pit, valued at \$4,868.82 from PGS PTO to PGS
- D. 22-23/21 Approval of Donation of two basketball hoops, valued at \$3,706.00 from PGS PTO to PGS
- E. 22-23/28 Approval of Donation of \$1,00.00 from PGS PTO to refresh teachers' room at PGS
- F. 22-23/29 Budget Transfers
- G. 22-23/30 Approval of AHS French Class Field Trip to Quebec City, Canada, Feb. 15-18, 2023
- A. 22-23/31 Approval of Contract for Assistant to the Superintendent

Jackie Blea made a motion to approve the Consent Calendar as presented, Jeffrey S. Fleischman seconded.

The motion passed 9-0-0

XII. New Business

- A. 22-23/32 2022-2023 Graduation Date

Dr. Carnemolla explained that the last day of school is currently scheduled for June 13th and is proposing Thursday, June 15th for graduation which would allow for two snow days. She also reminded the Board that with the change in legislation several years ago districts are now allowed to set the graduation date which is helpful in planning the venue but also for families and students to plan accordingly. Through a survey conducted, students, families and staff at Avon High have selected to hold graduation at The Bushnell. The Board was reminded that the motion was to approve the date of graduation and not the venue.

Debra Chute made a motion to approve the June 15, 2023 as Avon's graduation date for this school year, Thej Singh seconded.

The motion passed 9-0-0

- B. 22-23/33 Consolidated Title I, II and III Grants and Sheff Settlement – Open Choice Academic and Social Support Grant

Dr. Carnemolla stated that this is completed annually and the law requires BOE approval. Mr. Giannini clarified for the Board that the process was streamlined intentionally so the bulk of the grant money is to fund the district's intervention tutors. He also explained that while the

Farmington Valley Academy, the Montessori and The Webb School qualified for funding many of the schools turn down the amounts because they are so small.

Debra Chute made a motion to accept the Consolidated Title I, II and III Grants and the Sheff Settlement – Open Choice Academic and Social Support Grant and approve the application of the grants as discussed, Lynn Katz seconded.

The motion passed 9-0-0

XIII. Communication from Public

There were no further communication from the public.

XIV. Communication from Avon Board of Education Members

Ms. Katz commented on how impressed she was with the ACHIEVE internship students and hearing of their passion. She also thanked Tasonn Haynes and Maria Mascoli for their work.

Ms. Thompson added as an Avon High student she also participated in an internship program and it influenced her entire career. She felt the internship program to be very important and was impressed with the variety of what students were offered.

XV. Executive Session

Discussion Concerning an Attorney Client Privileged Communication regarding Board Member Roles & Responsibility in Regards to Strategic Planning

At 8:15 pm, Chair Chute asked to enter into Executive Session and invited Dr. Carnemolla, Mr. Giannini, and Mr. Medic to join the discussion concerning an attorney client privileged communication regarding Board member roles and responsibility in regards to strategic planning, Sarah Thompson seconded.

The motion passed 9-0-0

XVI. Return to Public Session

At 9:00 pm the Board left Executive Session and returned to Public Session.

XVII. Adjournment

At 9:01 pm, the Board adjourned by unanimous consent.

Minutes prepared by Shirley Moy, Board Recording Secretary

Minutes respectfully submitted by Jeffrey S. Fleischman, Board Secretary

Jeffrey S. Fleischman, December 16, 2022