



Southwick-Tolland-Granville Regional School District School Committee Regular Meeting

DATE: Tuesday, March 24, 2020

TIME: 5:30 P.M. Regular Session

LOCATION: Superintendent's Conference Room

Powder Mill School, 86 Powder Mill Road, Southwick, MA 01077

ZOOM WEBINAR CALL IN:

When: Mar 24, 2020 05:30 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Topic: School Committee Public Meeting

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NOTE WEBINAR

MINUTES

The listing of matters are those reasonably anticipated by the Chair which may be discussed at the meeting. Not all items listed may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law. Agenda times are estimates.

I. EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

II. ROUTINE (5:30 p.m.)

A. Attendance

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Houle at 5:30 p.m.

The Following were present:

School Committee:

- ☒ Jeffrey Houle, Southwick
- ☒ Pamela Petschke, Granville
- ☒ Theodore Locke, Tolland
- ☒ Jessica Boldyga, Southwick
- ☒ Chelsea Berry, Southwick
- ☒ Jonathan Schantz, Southwick
- ☒ Maria Seddon, Southwick

Administration:

- ☒ Jennifer Willard, Superintendent
- ☒ Stephen Presnal, Director of Finance and Operations
- ☒ Amy McLaughlin, Recording Secretary

Student Representatives:

- ☐ Gabrielle Houle and Amelia Coviello

News Media:

- ☐ unknown

Observers:

- ☒ Approximately 16

B. Opening Ceremony

None

Mr. Houle thanked all the participants for their patience and use of technology in practicing social distancing, in light unprecedented times. He notified everyone that the meeting was being recorded and would be available on the District website.

C. Secretary's Report

3/3/2020 Meeting Minutes Accepted

With the members Jeff Houle, Pamela Petschke, Theodore Locke, Chelsea Berry, Jonathan Schantz, Jessica Boldyga and Maria Seddon all voting individually and unanimously, the motion passes

Motion by Petschke, seconded by Berry 7/0/0

D. Warrants

Warrant signatures were obtained electronically via email

E. Correspondence

Superintendent Willard reported that she has been receiving updates from the Commissioner of Education and Governor Baker throughout the COVID-19 outbreak and information is shared with community members as soon as possible afterward. She is currently awaiting further guidance.

Ms. Berry inquired about a letter received from the Town of Granville Finance Committee. Mr. Presnal stated that the letter inquired about the transportation outsourcing and the underlying assessment to the Town of Granville and that the intent is to provide a written response to that letter.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT – excluding personnel issues

Mr. Houle notified everyone that: Members of the public viewing online may make comments electronically through the livestream platform. Comments will be read aloud at the meeting if the commenting individuals provide name and address. Public comments, including electronic comments, are not part of a Q&A, nor will the board respond directly.

Additionally, public comments may be emailed during the public comment portion of the meeting to superintendent@stgrsd.org.

Elaine Wissig, Granville, MA – Ms. Wissig stated that she did not want to make a comment but misunderstood when Ms. Petschke said she couldn't see the audience members. Ms. Petschke thanked her and gave instructions for the second public comment.

IV. STUDENT ADVISORY REPORT - None

V. EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATION

None

VI. POLICIES

None

VII. ACTION ITEMS

Approve Outsourcing of Transportation

- A. Motion to approve the transfer of school transportation services to the Lower Pioneer Valley Education Collaborative effective July 1, 2020, subject to successful negotiation with the Collaborative and the Transportation Association.

Mr. Presnal read a statement that he had prepared for the meeting. His statement explained that the initiative to explore outsourcing came directly from the School Committee and that STGRSD is one of only three Districts in Western Massachusetts that still operates its own transportation department.

Mr. Presnal highlighted and thanked the entirety of the transportation department personnel: the drivers, monitors, mechanic, assistant and manager, for their dedication and hard work in running a small stand-alone department in our rural district.

Mr. Presnal then explained that because STGRSD is a stakeholder with seats on the governing boards at the Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative, LPVEC was the only organization considered for outsourcing. Mr. Presnal also explained the assistance and guidance the District received from LPVEC management, DESE Associate Commissioner Jay Sullivan, DOR Director of Accounts Mary Jane Handy, Financial Advisor Lynne Welsh at UniBank Financial Advisory Services and Bond Counsel Rick Manley.

Mr. Presnal explained the analysis from the perspective of a multi-year disposition of assets and avoidance of upcoming capital costs showed that the financial implications are “neutral” overall but the outsourcing model does provide a fixed daily bus rate that is set by LPVEC at the beginning of the fiscal year and is not subject to modification. There is no risk to educational services and no increased assessment as a result.

Mr. Presnal stated that LPVEC has committed to mirroring the existing operation as closely as possible for the 20/21 school year and the intent is for staff to remain, as employees of LPVEC. All of this with the intention of maintaining the same level of service for the families of the District.

If outsourcing is passed, next steps would be to work with LPVEC on a lease agreement for the Bus Garage, as the intent is to maintain the operations at the current facility for the near future, and work on an updated contract with drivers. Everything to be achieved by July 1, 2020.

Mr. Houle asked Committee members individually if they had questions.

Ms. Petschke thanked Mr. Presnal for his work and read her own prepared statement. Ms. Petschke stated that she understood the District motivations for exploring outsourcing but also explained that she understood community concerns which she attributed to lack of information and unease at the speed at which decisions are being made. She stated that she believes community members should have the opportunity to receive information and ask questions prior to their town meeting budget votes and requested that the Committee and administration find a way to make this possible.

Ms. Petschke reiterated that the decision to outsource is a Committee decision and explained that she had spoken to stakeholders and in her research, come to the conclusion that outsourcing is a decision that will allow the District to focus resources on education and she supports the decision.

Ms. Berry asked how the Daily Bus Rate is established and if field trips and athletic events were planned for. Mr. Presnal explained that the daily bus rate is a formula based on existing data and that trips and athletics are included and estimates were made based on previous year’s data.

Mr. Locke – No questions

Ms. Boldyga expressed concern that parents may have over the perceived loss of control. Mr. Presnal explained that currently with turnover in drivers and challenges in replacing them, the District cannot guarantee the same

level of service, even if there is no change. He reiterated that LPVEC is committed to maintaining the existing District transportation staff and accommodating the Districts unique needs.

Mr. Houle allowed Anna Bishop, Director of Finance and Operations and acting Assistant Superintendent of the Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative, to join the conversation. Ms. Bishop introduced herself and also stated that she is a Southwick, MA resident. She explained that she has been involved in discussions with the District on outsourcing from the beginning and LPVEC is intending to hire all of STGRSD's transportation employees (drivers) including the management team and the mechanic. She emphasized that the full intention is that STGRSD transportation maintain "status quo". Ms. Bishop stated that LPVEC underwent a similar transition with East Longmeadow a few years ago and, as with the East Longmeadow transition, they anticipate that some employees will decide to move on or retire but many will stay.

Ms. Bishop reminded the Committee that the LPVEC is an extension of the District (STGRSD) and Southwick-Tolland-Granville Regional School District has a 1/7th shareholder stake in the Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative, so the Superintendent and Business Managers set the guidance for LPVEC. She stated that LPVEC is a service oriented operation that is committed to meeting the needs of their stakeholders.

Ms. Boldyga thanked Ms. Bishop for this information asked if it was accurate, then, that the community members of Southwick-Tolland-Granville Regional School District should expect the same level of service, or possibly even better.

Ms. Bishop explained that the LPVEC is committed to the same level of service for families and the employees will also benefit. When transportation employees transition to LPVEC, they will be able to participate in the health plans under the LPVEC employer/employee contribution rates of 70/30, vs. 50/50 for STGRSD, and they are planning to bring drivers in under the current LPVEC contract rates, which are slightly higher than the current STGRSD contract rates.

Mr. Schantz stated that overall he sees the outsourcing option as a positive one for the District and sees it as an opportunity to target the District focus. He thanked Ms. Bishop for the information she provided and reiterated that communication is the key and the District should work to provide information to the communities.

Ms. Seddon thanked both Ms. Bishop and Mr. Presnal for their work and stated that she believed that drivers will continue to make connections with students and families and that she had no hesitation in her vote to approve.

Mr. Houle thanked everyone for the time and effort they put into research.

With the members Jeff Houle, Pamela Petschke, Theodore Locke, Chelsea Berry, Jonathan Schantz, Jessica Boldyga and Maria Seddon all voting individually and unanimously, the motion passes
Motion by Petschke, seconded by Berry 7/0/0

Approve STGRSD FY21 Operating Budget

- B. Move to approve the FY2021 Southwick-Tolland-Granville Regional School District assessment ratios to the member towns, as follows:

	<u>Southwick</u>	<u>Tolland</u>	<u>Granvill</u> <u>e</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Operating Assessment Ratios	84.43%	3.29%	12.28%	100%
Capital Assessment Ratios	83.11%	3.69%	13.20%	100%

Mr. Houle asked Committee members individually if they had questions.

Ms. Petschke asked how the assessment ratios are calculated and how frequently.

Mr. Presnal responded that the Operating Assessment Ratios are calculated yearly based on a five year rolling average of the foundation enrollment. Foundation enrollment is based on the annual October 1 data submission to the State. He explained that the FY21 Operating Assessment Ratios are based on the average of the October 1 enrollment data submitted in 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016 and 2015.

Mr. Presnal responded that the Capital Assessment Ratios are calculated every five years and based on 50% of the Operating Ratios and 50% Census data. He stated that there is another year or two before that would be re-calculated, he'd have to check his records.

The Committee members had no additional questions.

With the members Jeff Houle, Pamela Petschke, Theodore Locke, Chelsea Berry, Jonathan Schantz, Jessica Boldyga and Maria Seddon all voting individually and unanimously, the motion passes
Motion by Petschke, seconded by Berry 7/0/0

- C. Move to approve the Southwick-Tolland-Granville Regional School District FY2021 Budget in the amount of \$26,298,086.

Mr. Houle asked Committee members individually if they had questions.

The Committee members had no questions.

With the members Jeff Houle, Pamela Petschke, Theodore Locke, Chelsea Berry, Jonathan Schantz, Jessica Boldyga and Maria Seddon all voting individually and unanimously, the motion passes
Motion by Petschke, seconded by Berry 7/0/0

D. Move to approve the FY2021 Southwick-Tolland-Granville Regional School District assessment ratios to the member towns, as follows:

	<u>Town</u>	<u>Appor.%</u>	<u>Assessment</u>
Operating Assessment (Transportation)	Southwick	84.43	\$631,535.00
	Tolland	3.36	\$24,609.00
	Granville	12.61	\$91,854.00
Capital Assessment	Southwick	83.11	\$1,654,798.00
	Tolland	3.69	\$73,471.00
	Granville	13.20	\$262,824.00
Minimum Contribution	Southwick		\$9,367,553.00
	Tolland		\$422,883.00
	Granville		\$1,529,253.00
Discretionary Charges	Southwick	84.43	\$165,039.00
	Tolland	3.29	\$6,431.00
	Granville	12.28	\$24,004.00
Non-Discretionary (District Services to Town)	Southwick		\$12,000.00
	Tolland		---
	Granville		---
TOTAL ASSESSMENT	Southwick		\$11,830,925.00
	Tolland		\$527,395.00
	Granville		\$1,907,936.00

Mr. Houle asked Committee members individually if they had questions.

Ms. Petschke asked why the Granville Operating Assessment (Transportation) percentage was identified as 12.61% and not the 12.28%. Mr. Presnal acknowledged the error and confirmed that the calculation of the assessment was correct but only the percentage was not amended when editing the information for the action item. Mr. Presnal confirmed that a similar editing error occurred in the Tolland Operating Assessment (Transportation) percentage.

Mr. Presnal took the Committee through the calculation and apologized for not editing the percentages correctly.

Mr. Houle made a motion to amend the motion to change the % of the Operational Assessments (Transportation) to reflect 84.43% for Southwick, 3.29% for Tolland and 12.28% for Granville.

With the members Jeff Houle, Pamela Petschke, Theodore Locke, Chelsea Berry, Jonathan Schantz, Jessica Boldyga and Maria Seddon all voting individually and unanimously, the motion passes
Motion by Petschke, seconded by Berry 7/0/0

- E. Move to approve the FY2021 Southwick-Tolland-Granville Regional School District assessment ratios to the member towns, as follows:

	<u>Town</u>	<u>Appor.%</u>	<u>Assessment</u>
Operating Assessment (Transportation)	Southwick	84.43	\$631,535.00
	Tolland	3.29	\$24,609.00
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	Granville		---
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TOTAL ASSESSMENT	Southwick		\$11,830,925.00
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With the members Jeff Houle, Pamela Petschke, Theodore Locke, Chelsea Berry, Jonathan Schantz, Jessica Boldyga and Maria Seddon all voting individually and unanimously, the motion passes
Motion by Petschke, seconded by Berry 7/0/0

Approve STGRSD FY21 Capital Budget

- F. Move to approve the authorization to incur debt by the issuance and sale of bonds or notes up to the amount of \$375,000 for the purchase of all items specified in the STGRSD FY2021 Capital Improvement Plan, as follows:

Technology	\$75,000.00
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network infrastructure equipment, including but not limited to storage server(s) and optical network terminals 	
Building Improvements	\$75,000.00
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replace domestic water heaters at Powder Mill School gym area - \$20,000.00 Install supplemental heating in main entry vestibule at Southwick Regional School - \$30,000.00 Gymnasium renovations at Southwick Regional School to include gym floor and audio control system - \$25,000 	
Building Furniture, Fixtures, and Equipment	\$15,000.00
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walk-off matting systems for all schools 	
Grounds Equipment	\$20,000.00
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field maintenance equipment package 	
Grounds Improvements	\$190,000.00
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replace front sidewalk at Woodland School main entry - \$40,000 Install new paving at Powder Mill Road parking lot - \$150,000 	

Mr. Houle asked Committee members individually if they had questions.

Ms. Petschke ask for clarification on Walk-off matting and Field maintenance equipment.

Mr. Presnal explained that the field maintenance equipment consists of implements for the tractor for grounds keeping, walk-off matting is specialized floor matting that helps preserve tile life.

Ms. Berry stated that the perception of the matting could be that they are “welcome mats” and should be clarified for community members.

Ms. Boldyga asked if the Woodland main entry replacement would include the sidewalk from the Rec Center. She also endorsed the paving of the Powder Mill Road parking lot and asked if signage could be placed to let families know that it is school parking.

Mr. Presnal clarified that the Woodland main entry replacement would not include the sidewalk from the Rec Center but that other options were being looked at to improve the sidewalk. Ms. Willard agreed with the signage and said she would work with the building principal and Supervisor of Buildings and Grounds on communication.

Mr. Locke – no questions

Mr. Schantz asked about the timing of the paving. Mr. Presnal responded that if the capital is approved, the District would work to get the paving completed over the summer, before school start.

Ms. Seddon – no questions

Mr. Houle asked if there were any options to bundle the paving project with any paving projects that the Town of Southwick might be planning. Mr. Presnal said he would review.

With the members Jeff Houle, Pamela Petschke, Theodore Locke, Chelsea Berry, Jonathan Schantz, Jessica Boldyga and Maria Seddon all voting individually and unanimously, the motion passes
Motion by Petschke, seconded by Berry 7/0/0

Approve STGRSD Student Opportunity Plan SY 2021-2023

- G. Move to approve the Southwick-Tolland-Granville Regional Schools Student Opportunity Plan: SY 2021-2023.

Ms. Willard explained to the Committee that as part of the State funding for the Student Opportunity Act, all Districts were required to submit a plan. STGRSD has been allocated \$42,000.00 under the Student Opportunity Act and the plan was written to identify how that money would be spent. Part of the process included receiving community feedback. An open session was held, which one person attended, and feedback was also solicited through email, with four additional community members commenting.

Ms. Willard summarized some of the feedback received, including:

- suggestions of additions to Tier 1 support, which was included in the plan
- a parent who works in another District and that District is submitting their plan via the long form, due to demographic and funding differences
- full day PreK, which is not possible due to funding
- additional social emotional supports, which is not part of the Student Opportunity Plan but is being addressed by the District in other budget areas

Ms. Willard thanked all of the parents who provided feedback.

Ms. Berry stated she was excited about the plan and pleased that Tier 1 was included.

Ms. Seddon asked if Ms. Willard had acknowledged the responses. Ms. Willard responded that with the COVID-19 she had not been able to but is planning to send thank you notes.

Mr. Houle asked Committee members individually if they had questions.
No additional questions.

With the members Jeff Houle, Pamela Petschke, Theodore Locke, Chelsea Berry, Jonathan Schantz, Jessica Boldyga and Maria Seddon all voting individually and unanimously, the motion passes
Motion by Petschke, seconded by Berry 7/0/0

VIII. REPORTS

A. Superintendent

Ms. Willard reported that she is working hard during the COVID-19 outbreak to keep the Committee, staff and families as up to date as possible. She also explained that she is meeting with the admin team and principals will begin sending a weekly Monday memo to keep families informed.

B. Director of Finance and Operations

Mr. Presnal had no additional report.

Ms. Petschke ask some clarifying questions about the budget including regarding Medicaid Reimbursement, local tuition, and fee charges. Mr. Presnal gave an overview of the Medicaid Reimbursement which is a federal reimbursement that the District submits with assistance from the LPVEC; explained local tuition is revenue from the PreK peer partners; clarified fee charges is athletic fees.

IX. SUB COMMITTEES AND LIAISONS

Subcommittee Assignments

Negotiations: Locke, Berry, Schantz – On hold.

Finance: Boldyga, Locke, Houle – upcoming meeting

L.P.V.E.C. Bd. Directors: Petschke –no report

L.P.V.E.C. Bd. Governors: Houle – no report

Policy: Schantz, Berry, Seddon – Ms. McLaughlin will schedule a Zoom meeting, after 4:30 p.m.

Buildings and Grounds: Houle – no report

Transportation: Locke, Boldyga – no report

Liaison Assignments

(ILT): Petschke, Boldyga, Berry – no report

Wellness Liaison: Locke – no report

SPED Liaison: Petschke– no report

Technology: Petschke, Schantz– no report

Southwick Capital Committee: Berry – Ms. Berry reported that there have been two meetings and voting tomorrow on recommendations.

Southwick 250th : Berry – Ms. Berry reported that all activities are suspended due to COVID-19

Legislative Liaison: Rotating attendance at MASC

X. PUBLIC COMMENT – excluding personnel issues

A public comment was received via email to superintendent@stgrsd.org. Ms. McLaughlin read the comment: Nicole Berndt, Granville, MA - Granville Selectboard - This is a travesty. I wanted to make a public comment before you voted under the cover of darkness all while the town of Southwick is currently in another town meeting, however, I only had access as a call in on my cell phone which apparently means, I didn't get the opportunity to comment. Ridiculous that I'm having to try to hammer out an email in the matter of a minute...shame on you. ALL of you!

It doesn't matter that there are not other districts doing this. Good grief! That's a child's argument!

This pandemic should further illustrate our point of losing our control & flexibility of maintaining our own transportation. There is NO reason to be pulling the trigger on this right now (especially considering what is going on in the world right now) as there is no savings & actually a price increase.

We were hammered over the head by you all in getting us to approve your capital budgets these last few years because it was so important that we were in the unique position to be providing our own transportation because it allowed us to have the flexibility & being able to affordably run sports & field trips! What happened to that Mr Presnal & Ms. Willard??? Now all of a sudden the party line is “well, no one else is doing it”.

But, alas, I don’t know why I’m wasting my breath & my fingers ferociously typing this to you all. I will instead be using my voice loudly to speak to our neighbors in Southwick & Tolland & continue to expose what goes on down the hill to my Granville constituents.

Again, the manner in which you have gone about this is a complete travesty. Good luck at town meetings & in your next elections, you’re all going to need it.

A public comment was received via the chat feature:

Kara Welch, West Springfield, MA – This is Kara Welch, librarian at Woodland School. In light of our school closures due to COVID-19, I think it has to be said, THANK YOU! to Superintendent Willard, Amy McLaughlin, Principal Kim Saso, administrators and coaches and especially my co-workers at Woodland School. We have learned how to educate and collaborate in ways we never imagined, Communication and expectations have been outstanding! Although we are physically apart, we are stronger together. I hope everyone stays strong and healthy!

A public comment was received via the chat feature:

Jenny Sullivan, Westfield, MA - I really appreciated being able to attend this meeting remotely. I was able to hear everyone, and it was nice to be able to be home and multitasking as an attendee :) This option would be nice even after social distancing is behind us.

XI. COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

A. Old Business:

Mr. Schantz thanked the teachers and administration for all of their communication during the pandemic. He also asked for more information on the cleaning processes being used at the school and guidance on education over the next couple of weeks.

Ms. Willard responded that the custodial staff is following CDC guidelines for cleaning protocol and that guidance is coming from the State Commissioner of Education and that the State is working closely with Superintendents and the teachers union and she anticipates information sooner than later.

Ms. Willard recognized the entire food service department and thanked them for their work. She stated that 104 students were served meals.

Ms. Seddon thanked Ms. Willard and everyone for all of their work.

Ms. Boldyga asked about Special Education students. Ms. Willard responded that the District is working very carefully to follow the required guidelines and that currently curriculum is intended to review and enrich what has been taking place in the classrooms.

Ms. Berry asked if the Powder Mill playground will be cleaned, or closed due to the number of children that have been on it during the school closure. She also thanked the District for continuing meal service. Ms. Willard responded that the playground will be closed and signage was being put up.

Ms. Petschke thanked all of the Instructional Coaches for all of the work they’ve been doing to support the District and teachers during this time.

B. New Business

XII. ADJOURNMENT

At 7:09 p.m., a motion was made to adjourn the meeting.

With the members Jeff Houle, Pamela Petschke, Theodore Locke, Chelsea Berry, Jonathan Schantz, Maria Seddon and Jessica Boldyga all voting individually and unanimously, the motion passes

Motion by Petschke, seconded by Berry 7/0/0

Meeting adjourned at 7:09 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chelsea Berry', written in a cursive style.

Chelsea Berry, Secretary

XIII. STAFFING

Appointments

Resignations

Retirements

I. LIST OF DOCUMENTS VIEWED OR DISCUSSED DURING THIS MEETING:

- Agenda for the March 24, 2020
- Minutes for March 3, 2020 meeting
- Southwick-Tolland-Granville Regional School District FY2021 Budget Summary
- Southwick-Tolland-Granville Regional School District Proposed Fiscal Year 20201 Capital Improvement & Acquisition Plan
- Southwick-Tolland-Granville Regional Schools Student Opportunity Plan: SY 2021-2023