

## SOMERSWORTH SCHOOL BOARD

March 27<sup>th</sup> 2018

City Hall Chambers

7:00pm

1. **CALL TO ORDER - ROLL CALL - PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Austin called the meeting to order at 7:10 pm. Upon call of the roll the following members were present: Austin, Richardson, Cannon, Larson, Hanlon, Hiller, Yoder, McCallion and Brennan  
Austin apologized for starting a bit later than scheduled. He stated they had a non-public meeting prior and needed to wrap that up.
2. **COMMENTS BY VISITORS:** None
3. **CONSENT CALENDAR:**
  - 3.1 **Removal of items from the consent calendar:** None
  - 3.2 **Approval of Consent Calendar:** A motion made by Hanlon seconded by McCallion to approve the consent calendar as presented. VOTE: motion passed, unanimously. Approved were:
    - March 20, 2018- Minutes of the Somersworth School Board Meeting
    - March 14, 2018- Minutes of the Somersworth School Board Meeting
    - High School/CTC News-March
    - Maple Wood News-April/May
    - Idlehurst News-April
    - 2018 District Showcase Event
4. **ANNOUNCEMENTS:** Lane stated that we are all aware that we have had some snow days this winter. She stated that what has been decided is that June 22, which is a Friday will be the last instructional day for students. She stated that this means 7 days have been added onto the end of the school year. She stated that the 8<sup>th</sup> day that needs to be added will be on May 25<sup>th</sup>, which had originally been a Professional Development Day for staff but it will now be an instructional day for students. She stated that she wanted to mention that the district found out last week that it had received a number of grants totaling a little over \$215,000.00 from the State Public Infrastructure Grants. She stated that we received \$57,000 for some Asbestos Abatement for some floor damage at the High School. She stated that for Maple Wood School they received \$22,000.00 for camera upgrades and radio upgrades. She stated that there is a larger project to redesign the entrance at Maple Wood School and we received \$100,000 for that. She stated that Idlehurst School received \$20,000 for radio upgrades. She stated that earlier this year the Middle School received \$16,000 to upgrade the camera system.
5. **DISCUSSION ITEMS:**
  - 5.1 **Elementary Re-Organization Presentation:** Lane stated that this presentation had been presented to the School Board already. She stated that they wanted to do this presentation again in front of the cameras so the community could see what we are looking at. She stated that this is a concept that has been around in the district for a while. She stated that you will hear about the advantages and see some of the things that we think we will be able to do better by reorganizing the elementary schools. She stated that there is no perfect system but there are a lot of positive things that we can make happen from this. Hersey stated that they are proposing that Idlehurst would become a pre-K to grade 2 school and Maple Wood would become a grade 3-5 school. See presentation attached. Hiller asked if you had all the fifth graders at Maple Wood would you start separating kids with the higher grades, middle grades, lower grades or would they be distributed equally. McNelly stated that he would keep them with all abilities mixed. Austin stated that there was an ad hoc committee to work with the Administration on this issue. He stated that the committee is Yoder, Larson and Richardson. He stated that they have met one time and the expectation as they move forward is that the Board will get an updated presentation in our second meeting in May. He stated that when he and Lane had looked at this concept they were thinking to start it in 19-20 but it seems it may be possible with the groundwork that has been laid and the data that has been accumulated that it may be possible to do for the 18-19 year. He stated that this would take a lot of

dedication and focused attention. Lane stated that the committee has met once and that Hersey and McNelly have already done a lot of work. She stated that they have a number of meetings scheduled in the next weeks. She stated that they think the benefits of this outweigh the negative and that it would be beneficial to do for this coming school year. She stated that no decisions have been made and we will continue to study it to make sure that the timing is correct and we can make it happen the way we want it to. Larson asked what the benefits would be to have it happen this year rather than next. Lane stated that change can be difficult. She stated that the benefits of moving forward this year are all of the things that Hersey and McNelly talked about. She stated that this has a lot of potential of being good for kids. She stated that there are staff benefits and financial benefits. She stated that sometimes it is not until you settle into something that it starts to become more real and you are able to see the benefits. Hersey stated that in her sixteen years in education, in her heart she knows that reorganizing is going to benefit kids. She stated in the past three years they have turned Idlehurst around and made such huge gains and this reorganization will only strengthen that. She stated that the sooner that they can do it, the sooner it will be better for all kids. She stated that the staff does not want to spend a whole year just waiting and thinking about it. She stated that change is hard and we understand that. McNelly stated that if the committee thinks that reorganization is something that we ought to do and has the benefits that we say it will have, waiting just pushes off the “ripples in the pond”. He stated that if you make a change there will be some transition time, and people may be unhappy, maybe even angry. He stated that unfortunately as humans we sometimes see change as loss and have a hard time seeing the actual benefit. He stated that if you wait another year you are just pushing off those feelings. Hanlon stated that unless there is a financial hardship that comes up or something that would cause a problem to make this not work properly we should expedite anything that will help the kids’ education. He stated that unless there will be a problem with this or cost us a lot of money we need to do this as quickly as possible. Hiller stated that perhaps the parents and staff do not realize how much work has already been done in exploring this before it was publicized. She stated that other school systems have been researched and visited. She stated that she feels this is a great thing and implores that it be done for this September. Austin stated that one of the comments from the Board the last time they saw this presentation is that it is important to get buy in from the elementary communities. He stated that he thinks the committee should schedule a community meeting and get the PTA involved. McCallion stated that from the Buildings and Grounds Committee standpoint this is something that can definitely be done with the buildings. He stated that there will be a cost savings and we should start saving now and not wait a year. Austin stated that even if it is cost neutral, if students get a better quality education there is no reason not to do it. He stated that he is not convinced that it will save money and he will need to see some data on that. Yoder stated that she wanted to reiterate what Austin said about the community involvement, especially the elementary staff. She stated that she’d like to hear from some teachers and the parents in the community and how they feel about this. She stated that if there is no support from the community and staff it is not positive she does not want it to cause upheaval more than it will. Richardson stated that the committee needs to work with the administration at the buildings to schedule meetings so that the information from those meetings can be brought back here to the next Board meeting. He stated that the data from other school districts that have done this, their testing scores improved dramatically. He stated that here’s an opportunity to start boosting up the scores for the kids. Hiller stated that as long as the majority of staff and parents buy into this idea you should move forward. She stated that you will always have some people that will be negative. Richardson stated that the committee is going to Exeter on April 6<sup>th</sup> to talk to the staff there as they have already gone through this process. Hanlon stated that any negative comments or thoughts better be negative against the educational process. He stated that’s what matters. He stated its what’s best for the education of the children, not what building people really like or what’s closer to where they live. He stated that the best education that we can provide to our students is the most important thing. Larson stated that the committee has made no decisions yet.

**5.2 Full Day Kindergarten Presentation:** Lane stated that we are now in our second year of full day kindergarten. Eris Hersey, Principal at Idlehurst and Devin McNelly, Principal at Maple Wood want to share with you some of the progress that we are seeing. She stated that sometimes we put things in place and we do not always see the results of that. See presentation attached. McNelly stated that they give all the NWEA test to students. This allows us to monitor student growth from fall to spring. Hersey stated that after full day kindergarten students scores increased dramatically from the low end to the high. She stated that scores rose dramatically at Idlehurst as seen on the graph. She stated that the hard work is paying off. She stated that she wanted to thank the Administration for giving them full day kindergarten. McNelly stated that the next set of scores is for Maplewood and on the left side are the scores for the low group for the last first grade group and the scores on the right side are from students after a year of kindergarten. He stated that he wanted to thank the Administration also for full day kindergarten. Hersey stated with the half day kindergarten is about 176 minutes of instruction a day and when it is a full day kindergarten it doubles that time. She stated that having the extra time lengthens the math and reading blocks and also gives them the chance for social play, gives them several recesses a day, and still being able to feed them breakfast and lunch. She stated that we were not able to do this with half day kindergarten. She stated that this is why we now have the results that we have. Larson asked if the tests vary from year to year. McNelly stated that NWEA uses a computer adapted test with a huge bank of questions and if the student answers the questions correctly the questions get harder. He stated that if they answer a question incorrectly the questions then start to get easier and zeros in on where the student is. Larson stated that it seems that full day kindergarten is benefiting the children and is a no brainer.

### **5.3 Standing Committees**

- **Budget and Revenue: None**

- **Building, Grounds and Transportation:** McCallion stated that Waste Management will be taking away two dumpsters in district which will save us about \$1,200.00 a month. He stated that they had discussed the grants coming in which is great news.

- **Curriculum & Activities: None**

- **Policy Committee:** Hanlon stated that they had met last week. He stated that they reviewed some policies that will be coming forward. He stated that they had sent the Building Use Policy back to the Building and Grounds Committee for them to review some of the changes that we had made. He stated that they have another meeting on April 3<sup>rd</sup>.

- **Joint Commission of City Council and School Board: None**

**5.4 City Council Update:** Pepin stated that they are getting ready to start working on the budget proposal. He stated that the Council all sat on Saturday and listened to non-profit organizations. He stated that for the next few meetings they will be working very hard on the budget. Austin asked what the date of the Public Hearing was. He stated that he believed it to be April 2<sup>nd</sup>. Pepin stated that was correct.

**5.5 Student Representative Report: Rachel Wattimena: None**

## **6. ACTION ITEM: None**

## **7. NEW BUSINESS:**

**7.1 District Calendar:** Lane stated that this is an item that Larson had brought up a few times. Larson stated that on the SAU56.org website the calendar needs an update to be more functional and have additional information on it such as sports, school and community activities. She stated that it will cost \$80.00 to update this with a plug in feature which can also be used with your phone. She stated that she would like the School Board to look into this. She stated that right now it is an old technology that can only be accessed by the SAU office. Lane stated that some SAU staff have access to upload items to the site. She stated that we do not have a Web Master. Larson stated that this would allow anyone to put in information on the calendar for school, for sports, and for community information. She stated a calendar already exists but it is six years old. Austin stated that he is not sure who owns the website. He stated it could be the Somersworth School District but it

may be the SAU. He stated that this may be a topic for the SAU Board to consider as he is sure that the SAU actually owns the website. Hanlon stated that it is a shared website and would have to be discussed at the SAU Board Meeting. Larson stated that it is for the community that she would like to see a calendar that has all activities listed on it.

**8. OLD BUSINESS:**

**8.1 Vision 20/20 Committee:** None

**8.2 Budget:** None

**9. MAYOR FORUM DATES**

- **April 14, 2018- Mayor, Ward 3 City Councilor and School Board Member**
- **May 12, 2018- Mayor, Ward 4 City Councilor and School Board Member**

**10. FUTURE MEETING DATES/SUGGESTED AGENDA ITEMS:**

- **April 10, 2018- Somersworth School Board Meeting-7 PM-City Hall Chambers**
- **May 7, 2018-SAU 56 Board Meeting-6:30 PM-CTC 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Mulligan's Grill**

**11. CLOSING COMMENTS**

**11.1 Visitors:** Phil Yoder of 51 Mt. Auburn St. stated that he is hoping that the district does not rush into making a decision about reconfiguring the two elementary schools especially where we are transitioning to a new Superintendent in July. He stated that he questions the financial benefits. He stated that he is not for it and not against it but moving hard and fast to do it doesn't necessary mean that we should. He stated that it is very important to have the backing of everyone that will be affected because if people do not see the benefits of this they will not be on board. He stated that he has been in a situation, in a small venue where they went from one group of administrators to another and what happens is one tries to make decisions before the next one comes in. He stated that the new incoming Superintendent needs to be involved. He stated that he doesn't know how much of that has happened. He stated to be diligent but smart on how we progress on this.

**11.2 Board Members:** Richardson stated that he appreciates Katelyn Carrington's "Beautiful World, Terrible World" remarks that she had in the HS/CTC newsletter. He stated that those words came from the heart and it makes the kids feel good about themselves in a world that is not always going so well. He stated that it makes them realize their contributions that they can make now and in the future are really important. He stated that he just appreciated so much what she wrote. Cannon stated that she wanted to thank the administrators and staff members that put together the rough plan for merging the schools. She stated that we really need to take a look at this for the future of Somersworth's education of our students. Hiller stated that she wanted to thank the kids that made the first quarter and second quarter honor roll that was in the paper today. She stated that she also wanted to bring attention to the results of a study that came out last week that verifies something we all knew and that is that summer reading is very beneficial to your kids. She stated that kids who don't read over the summer lose a third of what they learned the previous year. She stated that kids who read over the summer retain close to 100% of what they learned the previous school year. She stated that the new superintendent has been involved in the reorganization project so we are not trying to rush it before he gets here. Austin stated that in all of the projects they undertake we utilize all of our resources. He stated that the work that has been going into the reorganization has been very intense over the last several years and this has not been a two-month project. He stated that he thinks that there is a lot of educational logic that goes into why this is a beneficial change. He stated that we will need to communicate this more to the public at large who will be most impacted by this. He stated that we have also been doing a lot of homework over the last few years to be sure that this is the right move to make. He stated that we will leave it to the committee to come back with a recommendation at the meeting in May and the Board can act on it at that point.

**12. ADJOURNMENT:** A motion made by Yoder seconded by Cannon to adjourn. VOTE: motion passed, unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:10 PM.

Melinda Sullivan  
Board Secretary

Pending Board Approval