Chairman Mark Holden called the Regular Meeting of the Board of Education to order at 7:02 p.m.

Roll Call:
Mark Holden, Chairman
Thomas Minotti, Vice Chairman
Kate Kutash, Secretary
Anne Gaydos
David Gioiello

Jose Goncalves (excused)
Amanda Kilmartin
Darlisa Ritter
Kathleen Yolish

Final Quorum – 8 present; 1 absent

Board of Education Administration present: Dr. Christopher Clouet, Superintendent of Schools; Carole Pannozzo, Human Resources Director; Rick Belden, Finance Director

(1 tape on file in City/Town Clerk’s office)

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of Agenda

Thomas Minotti moved to approve the agenda; motion seconded by Mandy Kilmartin. Thomas Minotti moved to amend the agenda to strike report of SBAC Scores from Superintendent’s Commentary; seconded by Darlisa Ritter and passed unanimously. David Gioiello moved to add a motion to approve expenditure of $100,000 for ChromeBooks to the Finance Committee report; motion seconded by Darlisa Ritter and passed unanimously. Thomas Minotti moved to approve the agenda as amended; motion seconded by Kathy Yolish and passed unanimously.

Presentations and Recognitions

Superintendent Clouet introduced Ria Dalvi, SHS sophomore, member of Swim and Robotics teams, and former four-year participant in the FIRST Lego League programs at SIS and PHS. This past summer, she initiated and ran a STEM program where she was able to teach computer robot programming and building to several students in Nepal via the internet and web-based interaction. Ria also ran a session for some younger students in Shelton, using some of the Shelton FIRST Lego League Robotics equipment to facilitate the class. She is a valued member of the SHS Robotics team and is passionate about our mission of spreading the excitement of Science and Technology in our schools and community. Mark Holden discussed Ria’s Facebook page, Stemming It Up With Ria, and said some of her students who attended the summer camp have gone on to the FLL program this year. Michele Piccolo praised Ria for her ability to reach out and said she excelled on all the teams she has been on. Ms. Piccolo said she sees only great things ahead for her. Ria thanked Mr. Niski and Mr. Vogl for helping her to run the session and giving her the resources she needed.

Superintendent Clouet introduced this month’s Innovative Educator, Doug Williams, SIS Technology teacher, who teaches a number of technology courses including the very difficult Project Lead the Way pre-engineering courses and also runs the very popular E-Sport program. He said Doug is a teacher that represents the future, which is the whole idea of the Innovative Educator program. Mr. Williams gave a presentation highlighting the Project Lead the Way Robotics Club at SIS, online classroom through Google Classroom including high percentage of parental engagement, and showed pictures of students engaged in collaborative work to develop code to program robots. Moving forward with the robotics lab at SIS, he said he would like to incorporate some 3D printing so students can fabricate the parts for robots.
Public Hearing
Eugene Kierce, 120 Thoreau Drive, discussed topics of school security, terrorism and bullying.

Jimmy Capra, 11 Elizabeth Street, outgoing member of Board of Aldermen, recognized Board of Education members Anne Gaydos, Thomas Minotti and Mark Holden and thanked them for their service.

Walter Dunn, 836 So. Main Street, Beacon Falls, parent of SIS student, expressed concerns about news articles he has seen regarding the lawsuit filed by the City against the BOE. He mentioned an SIS field trip to Amish Country and took issue with the description used versus Lancaster County. He said communications given to the media need to be accurate with updates for the public to have an objective viewpoint.

Lisbeth Condo, parent, commented that she loves what is going on at Shelton High School with new ideas, students being excited, new technology and “pretty inside and outside” and expressed her appreciation.

Greg Johnson, NAACP Ansonia Branch President, addressed the issue of perceived bias in the district, lack of consequences for student actions and displeasure with some of the decisions being made by the board. Mr. Johnson said a Diversity Coach needs to be hired with required workshops for students and teachers, as well as workshops for parents. He said it is a call for action and said the ball is in the board’s court to make a stance and change the paradigm.

Approval of Minutes
Kathy Yolish moved to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting on September 25, 2019; motion seconded by Kate Kutash and passed unanimously.

Communications to the Board
There were no communications.

Superintendent’s Reports & Action Items
Dr. Clouet said the SBAC scores analysis will be given at the November meeting. He noted that Principal Dina Marks and Assistant Superintendent Kenneth Saranich are attending an awards ceremony recognizing Dina Marks tonight.

Dr. Clouet stated our anti-bias plan is far from an empty plan. It is a very seriously considered plan that is evolving. He read a Report on Bias Incidents: Action Steps (attached). He stated Michele Stewart-Copes, a trained diversity consultant, a highly-regarded African-American woman, met today with principals of the high school and intermediate school, a team assembled by each, and himself to talk about plans for training students as well as staff. For students, there is the creation of the Multicultural Ambassadors at the high school. This diverse group of students will be trained by Ms. Stewart-Copes on how to work with younger students, in an age-appropriate way, on cultural diversity and social justice. The intermediate school will have a similar group. This will result in older children having conversations with younger kids in a way that will open minds and not make anyone defensive. He explained there is a misconception about the Drill Team issue that has nothing to do with diversity training. Children asked for the program to be reinstated. Superintendent Clouet reviewed the action plans for staff and families. Discussion followed. Dr. Clouet mentioned that Carole Pannozzo has been working with the State Department of Education to recruit more people of color, something she believes in and has been working in her capacity to change the culture through hiring.

Relative to budget, Superintendent Clouet stated we are taking new steps in working with City Finance to align our reporting system. Rick Belden added some of their formats will be utilized to drive our initial
budget development. He said there have been ongoing discussions with the auditor and City Finance to have our reporting systems line up better with multi reconciliations. A budget timeline is being prepared for our staff with a goal to have the board review a budget sometime in January with submission in February. Something new this year will be a one-year budget to support a five-year plan. Kate Kutash suggested, based on last year’s budget meetings, to include snow dates on the calendar.

Dr. Clouet noted four members will be departing the board and individually commended José Goncalves, Anne Gaydos, Thomas Minotti, and Mark Holden for their dedication, commitment of time, and hard work. He said these four board members have served their community well.

Superintendent Clouet discussed first grade classroom overcrowding at Sunnyside School and said after meeting with the principals, the consensus was to add a tutor to be shared between classes that have the highest enrollment.

Approved Field Trips
None

Items Presented for Vote
Thomas Minotti moved to approve the request of the Pecylak Committee and SHS Boys’ Basketball Team Parents to conduct fundraising activities for the 2019-2020 school year; motion seconded by Kate Kutash and passed unanimously.

Kate Kutash moved to approve the request of Shelton High School Girls Volleyball Team to conduct fundraising activities for the 2019-2020 school year; motion seconded by Anne Gaydos and passed unanimously.

Kate Kutash moved to accept on behalf of Booth Hill School a donation from BHS PTO of $6,794.02 worth of listed items to be used for the gym and during Physical Education classes; motion seconded by Thomas Minotti and passed unanimously.

Kate Kutash moved to accept on behalf of Booth Hill School a donation from BHS PTO of $657 as reimbursement for last year’s grade 4 field trip to the Connecticut Science Center; motion seconded by Kathy Yolish and passed unanimously.

Kate Kutash moved to accept on behalf of Booth Hill School a donation from BHS PTO of $946.50 for the purchase of three ChromeBooks for the gym; motion seconded by Darlisa Ritter and passed unanimously.

Kate Kutash moved to accept on behalf of Booth Hill School PTO a donation of $6,441 from Advanced Security Technologies, Inc. of Shelton, to install a Main Entrance Inner Vestibule Doors Remote Lock solution, as quoted; motion seconded by Kathy Yolish. Discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

Kate Kutash moved to accept on behalf of Long Hill School two donations from LHS PTO:
- $7,068.50 to be used towards the purchase of 19 ChromeBooks, 1 cart and other services from Wholesale Computer
- $2,100.28 to be used for the purchase of multiple items from Lakeshore
Motion seconded by Darlisa Ritter and passed unanimously.
Comments by the Board Chair
Chairman Holden talked about Commissioner Cardona’s recent tour of the School of Innovation and discussion of Project ExcEL. He said the students did an excellent job of running the tour. He commented that we are definitely in the forefront of helping non-English speaking students to succeed through Project ExcEL. Mr. Holden said he is very happy with the work Superintendent Clouet has been doing to address the issue of bias. He said he hears a lot of very good things about what is going on throughout the district. He has heard nothing but praise for the terrific work Dr. Beth Smith is doing in her new assignment. He commented that we have terrific people up and down the line in our system. He stated years before I came here, they figured out that we could no longer afford to hire our friends and relatives…we had to hire the best person we could for every job. That has been done for ten or more years and I hope it continues.

Reports of Standing Committees
Teaching & Learning – Anne Gaydos said Teaching & Learning did not meet in October, and the next scheduled meeting will be announced following the election.

Finance Committee – Thomas Minotti reported on the topics of the meeting of October 16 and commented that the bulk of the fall sports fees for Pay to Participate have been received. Pre-K tuition is lower due to fewer typical peers enrolled in the program. Summer School final accounting will be completed in October. Building use fees and parking fees are on target as compared to previous year. The Expenditure Report showed Administrative Salaries projected to be higher due to transition of staff in Special Education Department. Working on staffing in certain areas, such as Special Education tutors and paraprofessionals, due to the new students with IEPs and existing students with IEP changes requiring additional staff resources. Mr. Minotti reviewed additional topics, which can be found in the minutes posted online. The November 13 meeting will be canceled due to the election.

Thomas Minotti moved to approve the expenditure of $100,000 in technology funds from the Board of Education budget for acquisition of ChromeBooks from Wholesale Computers of Trumbull, as approved by the Board of Education previously, with the City of Shelton providing funding for the balance of $158,000. Motion seconded by Darlisa Ritter. Discussion of leasing versus purchase. Motion passed unanimously.

Darlisa Ritter asked if parents can get a copy of the warranty for student ChromeBooks or if something could be posted on the website. Rick Belden discussed the insurance and process for repairs and loaners.

Policy Committee – Kate Kutash said the committee did not meet due to lack of power at Central Office. November meeting is canceled due to election and agenda will be moved forward to December.

Public Relations & Outreach Ad Hoc Committee – Mandy Kilmartin stated no meeting was held and there is nothing scheduled at this time.

Reports of Special Committees
CES – Thomas Minotti said the CES Representative Council met on October 3. There was a policy update first read concerning tuition reimbursement plan for non-certified personnel. CES will adopt in November a policy regarding service animals to ensure that students with disabilities are permitted to participate in and benefit from district programs, activities and services and to ensure that the district does not discriminate on the basis of disability. CES will comply with all state and federal laws and regulations concerning the rights of students with service animals. The CES 2020-2021 calendar was approved, which will affect our summer programs for special education students. Executive Director Chip Dumais gave a report that included topics of a new DCF formula and regionalization of schools. The next meeting will be November 7 at 3:00 p.m.
Unfinished Business
There was nothing discussed.

New Business
There was nothing discussed.

For Your Information
Chairman Holden noted the attachments in the packet including Vacancy Report, Staff and Stipend Actions, Enrollment Report.

One Positive Comment
Kathy Yolish attended a book club at Booth Hill School and talked about The Knowledge Gap. Kate Kutash said she has served on the board for 8 years and hopes to remain on the board next month. She said it has been a very positive experience to serve on the board. Darlisa Ritter thanked Thomas Minotti, Anne Gaydos and Mark Holden for their commitment of time on the board. Rick Belden said he is always amazed at the good work being done by teachers and students with the resources we are given. He encouraged board members, both current and future, to take the opportunity to visit the schools and observe what is happening. Anne Gaydos thanked the citizens of Shelton for allowing her the opportunity to serve them over the past two years. She said it has been a pleasure working with fellow board members, Dr. Clouet, teachers, school administrators and parents. She said it is time to work together on our common goals to provide the best education for our children. Amanda Kilmartin, as one of the newer members, said Mark Holden reached out to her, even prior to being elected, to make sure she had the answers to questions and always made her feel welcomed. She said it takes courage to swim against the current and integrity to vote your conscience rather than to sway with political forces and expressed her admiration of those leaving the board for their courage and integrity. David Gioiello addressed Mark, Tom and Anne individually, saying there is no doubt they made decisions in the best interest of the kids and thanked them for their service. (Note – Tape 1, Side B @ 8:34) Thomas Minotti read a statement thanking his family for their support and encouragement during his 14 years on the board and also thanked current and previous board members with whom he had served, as well as numerous staff. He expressed hope that those who are elected to the board come with a clear vision for the future of Shelton public education; focus on the educational issues; work together as a team; be able to share sound ideas; listen intently; be respectful; be honest; establish trust; work with and support the superintendent. He cautioned them to not let politics influence decisions or voting. He said knowing what your role and responsibilities are, execute them accordingly, keeping in mind your actions and decisions will reflect on the students of Shelton Public Schools, as well as the residents. Mr. Minotti said although he was not given the opportunity to retire or resign, he leaves tonight with dignity, his head held high and very proud that he had the opportunity to serve 14 years on the Board of Education. Chairman Holden commented that it's been fun.

Adjournment
Chairman Holden adjourned the meeting at 8:40 p.m.

Diane Luther
Secretary to Board of Education
October 31, 2019