

**NEW FAIRFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION  
NEW FAIRFIELD, CT**

The New Fairfield Board of Education held a regular meeting on Thursday, January 21, 2021, at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom.

**MINUTES – January 21, 2021**

**PRESENT:** Peggy Katkocin (Chairman), Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Rick Regan, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

**ABSENT:** None

**ALSO PRESENT:** Superintendent of Schools Dr. Pat Cosentino, Assistant Superintendent of Schools Julie Luby, Director of Business and Operations Dr. Richard Sanzo, Pupil Personnel Director Katherine Matz, High School Principal James D’Amico, High School Assistant Principal Scott Rohwedder, Middle School Principal Christine Baldelli, Middle School Assistant Principal Cheryl Milo, Meeting House Hill School Principal James Mandracchia, Meeting House Hill School Assistant Principal Allyson Story, Consolidated School Assistant Principal Karen Gruetzner, Athletic Director Mark Ottusch, Special Education Supervisor Melissa Busnel and Director of Curriculum Alyce Misuraca.

Network Administrator Paul Gouveia explained the procedure for the virtual meeting and noted that this virtual meeting is available to everyone including members of the public.

**I. CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman Peggy Katkocin called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

**II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- A. January 5, 2021 - Special meeting - approved by consensus
- B. January 7, 2021 - Regular meeting - approved by consensus
- C. January 13, 2021 - Special meeting - approved by consensus

**IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**MOTION:** Peggy Katkocin made a motion to table agenda item VII G “Superintendent's Mid-Year Evaluation” until the February 18<sup>th</sup> regular BOE meeting. Greg Flanagan seconded the motion.

**IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Peggy Katkocin, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Rick Regan, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

**V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Don Kellogg spoke in support of gifted and talented students and expressed concerns that they are under served.

Nicholas Thiel-Hudson agreed with Mr. Kellogg and noted that the district does not adequately provide for gifted and talented students.

## **VI. BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS**

### **A. Chairman's Report** - Peggy Katkocin spoke of the following:

- Spoke briefly about the budget and noted that it is still in the preliminary stages. She spoke of upcoming workshops and possible cuts that may be made before sending it to the Board of Finance.
- Noted that she appreciated the comments about the needs for gifted and talented students.
- Noted that the COVID vaccine will hopefully be available to teachers soon.

### **B. Superintendent's Report** - Dr. Pat Cosentino spoke of the following:

- Noted that the district is working very closely with the First Selectman and Health Director for New Fairfield, and the staff will be vaccinated in New Fairfield. Teachers are classified in Phase 1B of the program. Currently, residents 75 and older are receiving the vaccine. Residents 64 and over will be next, and it is hopeful that teachers will be able to get the vaccine soon.

- Meeting House Hill School will be on remote learning on Friday, January 22 and Monday, January 25<sup>th</sup> due to staffing issues. EdAdvance offers childcare for a fee for anyone that needs it.

- Winter Sports started on Tuesday, January 19<sup>th</sup>.

- The budget is still the Superintendent's budget and is in the early stages. The administrative team will listen to suggestions from the BOE members regarding the budget.

### **C. Student Representatives' Report**

Junior Representative Cayden Walker noted that:

- Winter sports started at the high school on January 19<sup>th</sup>.
- The high school will have in-person classes for everyone that would like to be in-person. The Rebel block will start too. The second semester starts on Monday, January 25<sup>th</sup>.
- The Program of Studies Question-and-Answer session was held for 8<sup>th</sup> grade parents tonight.
- Spoke as a representative of his peers in support of the importance of Physical Education in all the schools.

### **D. Committee Reports**

1. Business Operations/Resource Management - Ed Sbordone noted that this subcommittee met January 21<sup>st</sup> and discussed the monthly summary of budget vs. actual and everything is in line with what it should be. They discussed projections for the end of the year. Based on these projections, there will be a deficit of approximately \$527,000. The deficit will be covered by the 2019-2020 surplus of \$625,000. This deficit is made up of approximately \$192,000 in payroll and a \$354,000 deficit in Special Education expenses. Additional funding of approximately \$400,000 is expected for COVID expenses, but it is unsure if this can be used for operating expenses.

The school lunch fund as of December 31, 2020 will have a deficit of approximately \$40,000 that will have to be taken out of the operating budget. It was noted that more state reimbursements will be given as students take advantage of the free lunch program.

The subcommittee reviewed the Capital Improvement Plan for the Middle School for the years 2020-2030. This will be discussed after the budget is complete.

The subcommittee discussed the possibility of having Chromebook insurance available for purchase for families.

### **E. Liaison Reports**

1. Board of Finance - Ed Sbordone noted that this Board met on January 20 and discussed:

- A review of the medical plan. It was suggested that the budget for medical remains flat.
- COVID costs were discussed, as well as costs associated with vaccine distribution.

- The BOF discussed the school building projects and budget planning.
  - The 2019-2020 audit report will be filed on January 31, 2021. It will be presented to the subcommittee in February and to the full BOF in March.
  - The next meeting of the BOF will be held on February 17<sup>th</sup>.
2. Parks and Recreation Committee - Greg Flanagan noted that this committee met on January 11<sup>th</sup>. They discussed salaries for summer employees. It is hopeful that events can be held in person this summer. They also discussed a state grant that CLA applied for to fund a pilot program to attempt to monitor invasive species.
3. School Security and Safety Committee - Samantha Mannion noted this meeting was rescheduled until January 25<sup>th</sup>. It was suggested that the BOE meet in Executive Session sometime in March to get an update on school security regarding the school building projects.

## **VII. INFORMATION ITEMS**

A. PSAT/SAT Scores - High School Principal James D'Amico spoke of progress with Math and Writing and how PSAT/SAT scores are affected. He spoke of Evidence Based Reading and Writing and Math scores and compared scores to previous years. He encouraged students to use Kahn Academy for practice. He spoke of support and intervention for growth, including Math coaches and expanded tools to help identify gaps. There was a brief discussion among BOE members on how to increase Math scores.

B. College and Career Pathways - High School Principal James D'Amico spoke of the direction of College and Career pathways. He spoke of what is currently available and put it together in new and meaningful ways. He noted that every graduate should have a plan for after high school. He spoke of the attributes of a graduate. Examples of pathways include Applied Health, Arts and Design, and Engineering. There was a brief discussion of the logistics of these pathways and staffing required for this.

### **C. Board of Education Policies (Second Reading)**

1. Bylaw 9200 - Number of Members and Terms of Office
2. Bylaw 9221 - Filling Vacancies
3. Bylaw 9222 - Resignation/Removal from Office/Censure
4. Bylaw 9230 - Orientation of New Board Members
5. Bylaw 9250 - Remuneration and Reimbursement
6. Bylaw 9270 - Conflict of Interest
7. Bylaw 9271 - Code of Ethics

### **D. New Fairfield High School/Consolidated School Building Project Update**

Dr. Rich Sanzo noted that the design team will present an update regarding the high school to the Permanent Building Committee on Tuesday, January 26<sup>th</sup>. BOE members are encouraged to attend. Dr. Sanzo will send Board members the design package as soon as he receives it.

### **E. Math Update**

Assistant Superintendent Julie Luby spoke of the Math program and noted that there was growth despite the pandemic. She spoke of curriculum and resources, specifically Stepping Stones and Big Ideas, and a review of other programs. She recommended using both resources for Math.

#### F. Health Requirements/Recommendations

Julie Luby spoke of Physical Education and Health and the recommendations for each grade level. She spoke of what is required and what is recommended and the logistics of getting everything in during the day.

G. Superintendent's Mid-Year Evaluation - Tabled until the February 18, 2021, regular meeting.

### **VIII. INFORMATION/ACTION ITEMS**

#### A. 2021-2022 Budget

Peggy Katkocin spoke of the Superintendent's budget for 2021-2022. She spoke of information received from Director of Business and Operations Dr. Rich Sanzo on potential cuts and items that are new this year and how it affects the budget. There was a lengthy discussion among the Board members and the Administration regarding the budget. Specific items discussed costs of textbooks, Chrome books, labs at the high school and Special Education contracted services.

There will be a workshop between the BOE and BOF on Wednesday, January 27<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. The BOE should have a final budget by February 8<sup>th</sup> and will present it to the BOF on March 6<sup>th</sup>.

### **IX. ACTION ITEMS**

#### A. Personnel Report

**MOTION:** Kathy Baker made a motion to approve the Personnel Report as of January 14, 2021, as recommended by the administration. Ed Sbordone seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Peggy Katkocin, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Rick Regan, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

#### B. Board of Education Policies

**MOTION:** Samantha Mannion made a motion to recommend to the full Board the approval of the Board of the Education Bylaws listed below as presented. Dominic Cipollone seconded the motion.

**IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Peggy Katkocin, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Rick Regan, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

1. Bylaw 9030.1 - Conflict in Public Education
2. Bylaw 9030.2 - Civility
3. Bylaw 9120 - Officers
4. Bylaw 9121 - Office of the Chairperson
5. Bylaw 9122 - Office of the Vice-Chairperson
6. Bylaw 9123 - Office of the Secretary
7. Bylaw 9124 - Recording Secretary/Clerk
8. Bylaw 9125 - Attorney
9. Bylaw 9130 - Committees
10. Bylaw 9132 - Standing Committees
11. Bylaw 9133 - Ad Hoc Committees
12. Bylaw 9140 - Board Representatives
13. Bylaw 9150 - Board Consultants
14. Bylaw 9273 - Civility Code

#### C. Professional Leave of Absence Request - Executive Session

## **X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Many members of the public including many high school students spoke in support of keeping the Physical Education teachers and the importance of physical activity in relation to schoolwork. Some members of the public spoke of their concerns with the reduction in staff, especially regarding the ELC program.

## **XI. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS – None**

## **XII. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

Rick Regan thanked the high school for being flexible in allowing in-person instruction every day.

Stephanie Strazza thanked everyone for the constructive discussion regarding the budget and for being agreeable to adding items back to the budget.

Ed Sbordone encouraged everyone to attend the Wednesday, January 27<sup>th</sup> budget discussion.

Kathy Baker and Greg Flanagan thanked everyone, especially the students, for their public comment.

**XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING THE SUPERINTENDENT’S MID-YEAR EVALUATION** - Tabled until the February 18, 2021, regular meeting.

## **XIV. EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST**

**MOTION:** Peggy Katkocin made a motion to go into Executive Session at 9:40 p.m. to discuss a leave of absence request and to invite Dr. Cosentino into the Executive Session. Kathy Baker seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Peggy Katkocin, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Rick Regan, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

**MOTION:** Peggy Katkocin made a motion to come back from Executive Session at 9:45 p.m. Stephanie Strazza seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Peggy Katkocin, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Rick Regan, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

**MOTION:** Peggy Katkocin made a motion to recommend to the full Board of Education the approval of Rosemarie Petschauer’s request for an unpaid leave of absence of from approximately February 9, 2021, through the end of the 2020-21 school year or pending vaccination. Greg Flanagan seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Peggy Katkocin, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Rick Regan, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

## **XV. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** Peggy Katkocin made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:46 p.m. Kathy Baker seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Peggy Katkocin, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Rick Regan, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

Respectfully submitted,  
Suzanne Kloos