

NEW FAIRFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION

NEW FAIRFIELD, CT

The New Fairfield Board of Education held a regular meeting on Thursday, February 6, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. via zoom.

MINUTES – February 6, 2025

PRESENT: Dominic Cipollone (Chairman), Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone

ABSENT: None

ALSO PRESENT: Superintendent of Schools Dr. Kenneth Craw, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Dr. Kristine Woleck, Director of Business and Operations Carrie DePuy, High School Principal James D’Amico, Middle School Assistant Principal Steven Groccia, Elementary School Principal Allyson Story, Director of Technology Paul Gouveia, Interim Director of Pupil Personnel Services Monika Krepsztul, BOF member Wes Marsh and BOF member Cheryl Reedy

Director of Technology 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 Dominic Cipollone called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- A. January 16, 2025 - Regular meeting - Approved by consensus.
- B. January 21, 2025 - Special meeting - Approved by consensus.
- C. January 22, 2025 - Special meeting - Approved by consensus.
- D. January 23, 2025 - Special meeting (4 p.m.) - Approved by consensus.
- E. January 23, 2025 - Special meeting (7 p.m.) - There was a brief discussion of this meeting, and it was questioned if the engineer said whether or not the drop off center was not a viable location for the bus lot. It was decided this will be checked and discussed further at the next meeting.
- F. January 28, 2025 - Special meeting - Approved by consensus.

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA - Approved by consensus.

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - None

VI. ACTION ITEM

A. Discussion and Action on Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Operating Budget and Capital Budget

Members of the BOE noted that this is a responsible budget with a modest increase, much lower than surrounding towns. Members expressed a desire to have the budget pass at the first referendum.

MOTION: Dominic Cipollone made a motion to reduce the Superintendent’s budget by \$28,000 which yields an increase of 3.75% from the 2024-2025 budget. The \$28,000 reduction should be \$3,500 from Elementary School supplies, \$3,500 from Middle School supplies, \$3,500 from High School supplies, \$8,000 from the golf cart and \$9,500 to be at the discretion of the Superintendent. Amy Johnson seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone

AMENDMENT TO THE MOTION: Dominic Cipollone amended the previous motion to have the \$28,000 cut be from non-payroll at the discretion of the Superintendent. This reduction will yield an increase of 3.75% from the 2024-2025 budget. Ed Sbordone seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone

MOTION: Ed Sbordone made a motion to recommend to the full board the approval of the 2025-2026 capital budget in the amount of \$735,000. Dominic Cipollone seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone

VII. BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

A. Chairman's Report - Dominic Cipollone spoke of the importance of encouraging the love of reading for students.

B. Superintendent's Report - Dr. Kenneth Crow noted that school was cancelled today due to snow. The last day of school and High School graduation is Friday, June 13th. Additional snow days could affect the last day of school but graduation will still remain as June 13th. He further thanked the Board of Education for their due diligence with the budget review.

C. Student Representatives' Reports

Senior Representative Emilia Sedlak spoke of the following:

- Scholarship support sessions for upperclassmen will be held from Feb. 11 - Feb. 14th during lunch waves.
- The deadline for Personal and Business Yearbook ads has been extended to Monday, February 10th.
- Boys Lacrosse will host "Bag Bingo" as a fundraiser on Saturday, March 8th.

Junior Representative Ella Skogstrom spoke of the following:

- There will be a SAT practice session for Juniors on February 26th from 2:15 to 5:00 p.m.
- The Connecticut Bar Foundation Essay contest deadline is February 20th.
- The Poetry competition is due on March 15th.
- The AFL/CIO Workers Memorial Day Scholarship essay is due by April 1st.

D. Committee Reports - None

E. Liaison Reports

1. Board of Finance - Ed Sbordone gave a summary of the recent BOF meeting on January 22nd.

- The BOF reviewed the January Expense report from the BOE.
- BOF Alternate member Greg Williams resigned from the Board. Anyone interested in filling this position should contact the BOS.
- There was a joint meeting of the BOS, BOE, BOF and PBC regarding the bus lot on January 23rd.
- There was a presentation by Assessor Rich Seaman regarding reassessment and how it affects the Grand List and the Mil Rate.
- The BOF Medical subcommittee met on January 21st. It was noted that the committee decided to use a 12-month rolling average to report claims. The subcommittee discussed the optimal amount to budget for claims.
- There was a discussion at the BOF regular meeting about accounting for a grant that was received by the BOE for Cybersecurity. It was noted that the BOE is asking to offset their expense budget next year with part of the Sherman Tuition.
- The BOF discussed the report for the General Fund Balance and why the expenditure surplus is not separated into Town and BOE as was done in the past. There was a request to show the BOE Expenditure surplus on this report.
- The Capital subcommittee met with various members of the BOE and the administration on January 13th. The oil tank removal is much less expensive than anticipated. The Pool and HVAC are some new items on the list for the Middle School. The subcommittee reviewed tentative requests for plans for future years, specifically improvements to the Middle School. The subcommittee spoke of the possibility

of “renovate as new” for the Middle School within the next five to ten years. The subcommittee encouraged the BOE administration to come up with an estimate for the difference between “renovate as new” and fixing issues in the Middle School on an ongoing basis.

- The BOF made a motion to approve the updated General Fund Policy. The only change needed is to delete the word capital in order to take into account the new State law.
- Two members of the BOF requested a copy of the BOE Expenditure Status report on a monthly basis.
- Future agenda items include Boat Dock lock box information, Purchasing policy and Bus Lot.
- The next regular meeting of the BOF will be held on Wednesday, February 26th.

VIII. INFORMATION ITEMS

A. New Fairfield High School/Consolidated School Building Project Update

Director of Business and Operations Carrie DePuy noted that they are waiting on the propane testing for the Science rooms. It is anticipated that the results will be in next week.

IX. ACTION ITEMS

A. Personnel Report

MOTION: Kathy Baker made a motion to recommend to the full Board the approval of the Personnel Report for January 30, 2025, as recommended by the administration. Ed Sbordone seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone

X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - None

XI. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS - It was noted that the Educational Cost Sharing amount is declining for New Fairfield for next year despite an increase for surrounding towns. The Board will discuss how Education Cost Sharing is calculated at the next meeting.

XII. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Sue Huwer spoke of the importance of students reading at Grade level and what can be done to encourage this.

Sue Huwer asked about the minutes of the January 23rd Joint meeting regarding the bus lot and asked about whether it was actually said that the Drop Off Center was not a viable option for the bus lot.

Ed Sbordone reminded everyone that the BOE budget will be presented to the BOF on Saturday, March 1st at 10:30 a.m.

Kimberly LaTourette spoke in support of the BOE budget and encouraged Board members to advocate for the needs of the students.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Dominic Cipollone made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:47 p.m. Kathy Baker seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone

Respectfully submitted,
Suzanne Kloos