

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

The New Fairfield Board of Education held a regular meeting on Thursday, September 21, 2023, at 7:00 pm via Zoom.

MINUTES – September 21, 2023

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

ABSENT: None

ALSO PRESENT: Superintendent of Schools Dr. Kenneth Craw, Pupil Personnel Director Maria Kennedy, High School Principal James D’Amico, High School Assistant Principal Scott Rohwedder, New Fairfield Middle School Principal Karen Gruetzner, Elementary School Principal Allyson Story, Elementary School Assistant Principal Dr. Jennifer Hilderbrand, Elementary Special Education Supervisor Alexandra Lambert, First Selectman Pat Del Monaco,

Video Production Coordinator Quintin Flower explained the procedures 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. August 17, 2023 - Regular meeting - approved by consensus

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION: Kimberly LaTourette made a motion to approve the agenda with the addition of Information/Action Item “Discussion of Town Solar Project.” Ed Sbordone seconded the motion.

IN FAVOR: Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - None

VI. BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

A. Chairman’s Report - Dominic Cipollone reported on the following:

- Spoke of the wonderful Open House at the high school and thanked everyone involved.
- There will be a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony at the high school on Saturday, September 23rd at 10:00 a.m. Tours of the school will be given afterwards.

B. Superintendent’s Report - Superintendent of Schools Dr. Kenneth Craw

- Thanked everyone involved in getting the school year off to a great start.
- The Ribbon Cutting Ceremony at the high school will be held this Saturday, Sept. 23rd at 10:00.

C. Student Representative Reports

Senior Representative Brennan Hearty noted that:

- College visits are coming up soon for high school students
- The Homecoming football game will be held on Friday, September 22nd.
- The PSATs will be held on Thursday, October 12th.

- Seniors will be attending Rebel Kick Start on October 12th.

D. Committee Reports

1. Business Operations/Resource Management - Greg Flanagan noted that this subcommittee met on September 21st and reviewed the following:
 - Monthly summary of Budget vs. Actual for the current year.
 - Reviewed surplus for the previous year. There is a surplus of approximately \$20,000. The Director of Business and Operations will be requesting it from the BOF.
 - It was noted that the STEAM Room at Consolidated becomes very hot on warm days. There was a discussion of the possibility of installing air conditioners.
 - First Selectman Pat Del Monaco attended the meeting along with the CEO of Greenleaf Energy Solutions and gave a presentation of a possible Solar project.
2. Policy - This subcommittee met on August 23rd and reviewed the Memorandum of Agreement between the State Police and New Fairfield Board of Education for the School Resource Officers. The subcommittee also reviewed the policy for nonresident students and three policies related to code of conduct.
3. Field Fees - Ed Sbordone noted that this subcommittee met on September 19th and discussed the field conditions for Rebel Field. It was noted that the condition of Rebel Field is getting progressively worse. There was a discussion of getting estimates for replacing the turf. The Field Fees Committee voted to increase the Field Fees and will present this to the Parks and Rec Commission on Oct. 16th.

E. Liaison Reports

1. Board of Finance - Ed Sbordone noted that the BOF met on September 20th and discussed the following:
 - First Selectman Pat Del Monaco gave an update on the ARPA projects including the Sewer system design and permits which include the schools.
 - The BOF Medical subcommittee met on September 14th. They reviewed claims for July 2023 which were lower than projected. This subcommittee will meet again on October 19th.
 - There will be a special BOF meeting on Wednesday, October 11th to vote on a replacement member for the BOF due to the resignation of Kim Hanson. The replacement will serve until the November 2023 election.
 - The next regular meeting of the BOF will be held on Wednesday, October 18th.
2. Parks and Recreation Committee - Kim LaTourette noted that the Parks and Rec Commission met on September 11th and discussed the following:
 - New Fairfield Day will be held on October 14th. This is rescheduled from September 9th that was rained out.
 - Trick or Treat Fest will be held on October 27th.
 - The Turkey Run will be held on November 19th.
 - Santa's Workshop will be held on November 25th.
 - Town Engineer Tony Iadarola gave a presentation about a proposed Beach House for the Town Beach that will be funded through ARPA funds.

VII. **INFORMATION/ACTION ITEM**

A. Discussion of Town Solar Project

Dr. Craw spoke of the presentation regarding a solar project that could benefit both the Town buildings and the schools.

First Selectman Pat Del Monaco gave a presentation of this project and noted that it can be financed through tax credits through the Inflation Reduction Act and municipal loans. She noted that these panels could generate enough electricity for all the town buildings and schools. She spoke of the cash

flow for the project and noted that some geotechnical work up would be necessary with a cost of approximately \$15,000.

There was a brief discussion among the Board members. Kimberly LaTourette encouraged everyone to watch the subcommittee meeting of September 20th to see the presentation. There was a question of whether payments are refundable in the event that the site is not feasible. It was decided to put this for a vote on the next regular meeting agenda after more information is received.

VIII. INFORMATION ITEMS

A. New Fairfield High School Building Project Update

High School Principal James D'Amico noted that the new high school building opened and that everything looks great. He noted that the project was on time and on budget.

B. District Goals 2023-2024

Dr. Craw spoke of District Goals for 2023-2024 including the four key areas of Teaching and Learning, Healthy Learning Environment, Strategic Planning and Resources to Support Learning. These goals will be voted on at the next regular BOE meeting.

C. Establishing the Conditions for a Successful School Year

High School Assistant Principal Scott Rohwedder and Elementary School Assistant Principal Dr. Jennifer Hilderbrand gave a presentation of the Action Plan for Chronic Absenteeism. They thanked Rob Spino, Mark Ottusch, Cheryl Milo and Paul Gouveia for their help with this project. There was a discussion of ways to increase attendance. Scott Rohwedder noted that 18 days or more per year is considered chronic absenteeism. He spoke of absentee data and compared it to data from before the pandemic.

Dr. Hilderbrand spoke of Technical and Adaptive challenges for absentee rates. Technical updates include automated letters and information sent to families. The adaptive updates include looking at the reasons why students are absent and interventions to make sure students are comfortable at school. There was a discussion of the responsibility of the parents to make sure students are in school every day. There was a suggestion of prizes and contests in order to increase attendance rates.

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 September 14, 2023, as recommended by the administration. Greg Flanagan seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

B. Paraprofessional Leave of Absence Request - Executive Session

X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Eileen Hacaj spoke of absentee rates and noted that attitudes regarding whether to send a student to school have changed since the pandemic with families being more reluctant to send a student to school sick. She further spoke of concerns regarding contests and prizes for attendance as it may cause hurt feelings towards students that may have chronic illnesses.

XI. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS - The Board will discuss the solar project site review, increase in field fees and the policy for nonresident students at the next meeting.

XII. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Kathy Baker noted that the committee will start looking at the Healthier Start Times again soon. Greg Flanagan noted that the Convocation was great and expressed excitement for the new school year. Ed Sbordone noted that the Healthier Start Time subcommittee will meet on October 5th at 6 p.m.

XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING A PARAPROFESSIONAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST

MOTION: Dominic Cipollone made a motion to go into Executive Session at 8:28 p.m. for the purpose of discussing a paraprofessional leave of absence request and to invite Dr. Craw into the Executive Session. Greg Flanagan seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

MOTION: Dominic Cipollone made a motion to come out of Executive Session at 8:32 p.m. Stephanie Strazza seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

MOTION: Kimberly LaTourette made a motion to recommend to the full Board of Education the approval of Pamela McNally's request for an unpaid leave of absence beginning on September 22, 2023, with a return to work on November 7, 2023. Greg Flanagan seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Dominic Cipollone made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:33 p.m. Kathy Baker seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

Respectfully submitted,
Suzanne Kloos