

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

The New Fairfield Board of Education held a regular meeting on Thursday, February 18, 2021, at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom.

**MINUTES – February 18, 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, Director of Instructional Technology and Communications Dr. Karen Fildes, 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 Principal Rob Spino, Consolidated School Assistant Principal Karen Gruetzner, Athletic Director Mark Ottusch, Director of Curriculum Alyce Misuraca, Special Education Supervisor Melissa Busnel and Board of Finance Alternate member Mark Werner

Director of Business and Operations Dr. Richard Sanzo 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 7:01 p.m.

**II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A. February 4, 2021 - Regular meeting - approved by consensus

**IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA** - approved by consensus

**V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Stefanie Marlow asked about options for remote learners for the 2021-2022 school year and if there is a plan in the budget to address remote learning.

**VI. BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS**

A. Chairman’s Report - Peggy Katkocin spoke of the following:

- The BOE has approved their budget for the 2021-2022 fiscal year and will present it to the Board of Finance on March 6<sup>th</sup>.
- Spoke of the vaccine clinic in New Fairfield and noted that some teachers have been able to get the vaccine on a standby basis. The biggest obstacle is lack of supply with the vaccines, but it is hopeful that the town will get more in the future.

B. Superintendent’s Report - Dr. Pat Cosentino spoke of the following:

- Thanked the bus drivers for getting students home safely today in the bad weather.
- Friday, February 19<sup>th</sup> will be a Remote Learning Day due to the snow.

- Reminded families that breakfast and lunch are available to all students every day. She noted that the district receives money based on the number of meals given and encouraged everyone to take a meal.
- She attended the Senior Night for the Boys Basketball team on Monday that recognized both the Senior Boys Basketball players and the cheerleaders.
- Noted that the BOE Policy subcommittee meeting was not recorded last night but minutes are available for anyone interested.
- The district celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> day of school this week. Dr. Pat thanked everyone for making it this far in the year despite the challenges.
- Dr. Cosentino responded to the question about remote learning for next year and noted that they are waiting for to see if the governor continues the executive order about whether or not remote learning will be considered appropriate learning. The budget is currently being put together as if COVID will be over, but adjustments can be made if necessary.

#### C. Student Representatives' Report

Senior Representative Nick Thiel-Hudson noted that:

- Student course requests for the high school are due tomorrow. Counselors are available tomorrow both in-person and virtually to help with this.
- Parent-Teacher conferences will be held at the high school from March 2<sup>nd</sup> through March 4<sup>th</sup>.
- High School juniors will have SAT Boot Camp on March 10<sup>th</sup> with in-school SATs on March 24<sup>th</sup>.
- Spring team captains' applications are due to Mr. Ottusch by February 19<sup>th</sup>.
- The Tri-M Music Honor Society will hold a virtual talent show in April.

#### D. Committee Reports

1. Business Operations/Resource Management - Ed Sbordone noted that this subcommittee met on February 18<sup>th</sup> and discussed:

- Summary vs. projected year-end expenditures as of January 31<sup>st</sup>.
- Spoke of a deficit of \$484,000 due to COVID. This will be covered by the BOE surplus from last year.
- Spoke of the deficit of the school lunch program and noted that the more students that participate in the free lunch program the better and encouraged students to participate.
- The ESSER II Grant was discussed.

2. Policy - Samantha Mannion noted that subcommittee met on Feb. 17<sup>th</sup> and reviewed two new policies and six new bylaws.

#### E. Liaison Reports

1. Board of Finance - Ed Sbordone noted that the BOF met on February 17<sup>th</sup> and discussed:

- Medical Plan for 2021-2022.
- There is a vacancy for an alternate member to the BOF due to the resignation of Brian Shea.
- The BOF prepared a letter to send to Governor Lamont to ask that he rescind the Executive Order that instructs the BOF to set the budget in lieu of an in-person taxpayer vote.
- The BOE and BOS will present their budget to the BOF on Saturday, March 6<sup>th</sup>.
- The Annual Audit has been filed with no material deficiencies.

2. Parks and Recreation Committee - The meeting for February 8<sup>th</sup> was cancelled.

3. School Security and Safety Committee - The meeting was cancelled.

## VII. INFORMATION ITEMS

A. NEASC Update - High School Principal James D'Amico gave a brief update of the two-year report for NEASC. There were several commendations for the high school including improvements to curriculum and attributes of a graduate. A special progress report regarding the school building project will need to be submitted by September 2021.

B. ESSER II Grant - Dr. Rich Sanzo noted that the district will receive \$900,000 for COVID relief through the ESSER II Grant. This money can be utilized between now and September 2023. This can be used for academic, social and mental health support and technology to support remote learning. This grant can also be used to fund certain operational expenses and capital expenses. The administrative team met to discuss the optimal ways to use these funds.

C. Interdistrict Cooperative Grant - Julie Luby spoke of the Interdistrict Cooperative Grant designed to breakdown racial and ethnic barriers. New Fairfield will partner with Danbury and Redding to apply for this grant. This program will take place in Redding in the summer and is based on Next Generation Science Standards. These are competitive grants in the amount of \$60,000.

D. New Course Proposals: Four English S electives (Second Reading)

1. Exploring Sports and Outdoor Literature
2. The Power of Language: Ethics, Persuasion and Manipulation
3. Film as Literature
4. Exploring Justice and Injustice

Julie Luby spoke of options for seniors for English. All seniors must take an English class but will be able to choose from the any of the four options or regular English.

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

Dr. Rich Sanzo gave an update on the high school and Consolidated School building projects. He noted that the PBC had a special meeting on February 16<sup>th</sup> and discussed the bus lot at Consolidated School. There was a review of the CELA project budget which is currently under budget. The final estimate for the high school project should be received soon.

There will be a Public Hearing with the Zoning Commission on February 24<sup>th</sup> for the high school project and on March 3<sup>rd</sup> for the Consolidated Early Learning Academy project.

## VIII. ACTION ITEMS

A. Personnel Report

**MOTION:** Kathy Baker made a motion to approve the Personnel Report as of February 11, 2021, as recommended by the administration. Kimberly LaTourette 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 Finance Pension and Bonding Subcommittee Recommendations

**MOTION:** Ed Sbordone made a motion to recommend to the full board that the Treasurer of the Town of New Fairfield, as a member of the Pension Commission, be authorized to sign pension plan documents on behalf of the Board of Education. 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

Dr. Rich Sanzo gave a brief description of the role of the Pension and Bonding Subcommittee.

**IX. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - None**

**X. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS - None**

**XI. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

Stephanie Strazza encouraged everyone to stay safe in the snow.

Greg Flanagan thanked the bus drivers for their hard work in the snow today.

Dominic Cipollone wished everyone a happy 100<sup>th</sup> Day of School.

Samantha Mannion spoke of an article in the Town Tribune regarding the SEE project and her concerns about lack of communication with the seniors and their parents about their opportunities for a SEE project. She spoke of possible ways to reach out to the seniors to make sure they get the correct information.

Ed Sbordone encouraged everyone to stay safe in the snow.

Kim LaTourette thanked the bus drivers for getting students home safely today in the bad weather.

She further thanked the teachers and administrators for being flexible with changing schedules.

Peggy Katkocin thanked everyone that works so hard to make sure our buildings are safe during COVID.

**XII. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** Peggy Katkocin made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:58 p.m. 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

Respectfully submitted,  
Suzanne Kloos