

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

The New Fairfield Board of Education held a regular meeting on Thursday, May 4, 2023, at 7:00 pm in the New Fairfield Community Room 33 Route 37, New Fairfield, CT.

MINUTES – May 4, 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, Assistant Superintendent of Schools Julie Luby, Director of Business and Operations Carrie DePuy, Pupil Personnel Director Katherine Matz, High School Principal James D’Amico, New Fairfield Middle School Principal Karen Gruetzner, Elementary School Principal Allyson Story, Elementary School Assistant Principal Jennifer Hilderbrand, Elementary School Assistant Principal Rob Spino, Director of Curriculum Alyce Misuraca, Supervisor of Special Education Melissa Busnel, Director of Technology Paul Gouveia, First Selectman Pat Del Monaco, Selectman Khris Hall, Board of Finance member Thora Perkins, Board of Finance member Claudia Willard and Middle School Science teachers Kate Lowry and Rachel Wilson

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. April 25, 2023 - Regular meeting - approved by consensus

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA - approved by consensus

V. RECOGNITION - CABE STUDENT LEADERSHIP AWARDS

Middle School Science teachers Kate Lowry and Rachel Wilson presented two Middle School students with CABE Student Leadership awards.

High School Principal James D’Amico presented two High School students with CABE Student Leadership awards.

The Board of Education congratulated all these students on their accomplishments.

VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

John McCartney thanked all teachers, administrators and school staff members in honor of Teacher Appreciation Week.

Mary Caitlin Cronin spoke of her disappointment with the Board’s decision to censure BOE member Amy Johnson at the April 25th BOE meeting.

Thora Perkins spoke in support of BOE member Amy Johnson. She spoke in support of all board members and expressed hope that everyone can work well together in the future.

VII. BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

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

- The concert at the high school on May 3rd was amazing. He congratulated all the musicians.
- Noted that it was Senior Representative Grace DeMarco's last meeting. He thanked her for the dedication to the BOE and wished her well in college.
- He spoke of the budget cuts for the 2023-2024 fiscal year and noted that the district will prevail no matter the circumstances.

B. Superintendent's Report - Superintendent of Schools Dr. Kenneth Crow

- Spring sports are wrapping up with upcoming conferences and playoffs.
- The Art Show will be held on May 24th and 25th.
- High School Graduation will be held on Friday, June 16th at 5 p.m.
- Middle School Moving Up ceremony will be held on June 15th.
- The 5th Grade Step-Up will be held on June 9th.

C. Student Representatives' Report

Junior Representative Brennan Hearty spoke of the following:

- Junior Prom was held on April 29th.
- Senior Prom will be held next week.
- AP tests will be held this week and next.
- The Senior SEE projects will begin soon.
- Two high school students were awarded SWC Leadership Awards.

D. Committee Reports - None

E. Liaison Reports

1. Board of Finance - Ed Sbordone gave a summary of the BOF meeting from April 26th.

- Public Comment lasted almost 2 ½ hours with over 50 residents urging the BOF to send the budget to the taxpayers with no additional cuts. Two residents spoke in favor of cutting the budget.
- The BOS and BOE gave presentations regarding the effects of the proposed cuts on their respective budgets.
- The BOF approved by a vote of 4-2 to cut \$800,000 from the BOE operating budget and \$100,000 from the BOE Capital and Nonrecurring budget.
- Two advisory questions asking if the BOS and BOE respective budgets are too high or too low will be on the budget referendum ballot.
- A second public comment after the BOF budget decisions lasted approximately one hour with approximately 20 residents expressing disappointment with budget cuts.

VIII. INFORMATION ITEMS

A. New Textbook Adoption (*First Reading*)

1. EdGems Core Math - Middle School - Director of Curriculum Alyce Misuraca gave a presentation regarding the EdGems program for Middle School Math. Math Coach Cathy Hall gave a presentation showing the digital platform for this resource.

IX. INFORMATION/ACTION ITEM

A. Fiscal Year 2024 Budget

Dr. Crow gave a presentation showing the effects of \$900,000 (\$800,000 in operating and \$100,000 in capital and nonrecurring) worth of cuts to the budget. This presentation included guiding principles and effects of staffing and class sizes and programs. There was a discussion among the BOE members regarding their disappointment with the size of these cuts.

Director of Business and Operations Carrie DePuy gave an update on the track and turf field at the high school.

X. ACTION ITEMS

A. Personnel Report

MOTION: Kathy Baker made a motion to recommend to the full Board the approval of the Personnel Report for April 27, 2023, as recommended by the administration. 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

B. Board of Education Policy

1. Policy 3517.1- Identification Badges

MOTION: Samantha Mannion made a motion to recommend to the full Board the approval of the Board of the Education Policy 3517.1 Identification Badges as presented. 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

C. Acceptance of Donation

1. New Fairfield Community Thrift Shop

MOTION: Ed Sbordone made a motion to recommend to the full Board to accept with gratitude the donation of \$2110 to cover the cost of a first grade STEM program field trip to the Ever Wonder Museum for 142 students. 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

XI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Millie Kellogg spoke of disappointment with the budget cuts. She further thanked teachers for Teacher Appreciation Week.

Christine Garabo spoke in support of Amy Johnson and her disappointment that the BOE voted to censure her at the last meeting.

John McCartney thanked Thora Perkins and Claudia Willard for supporting Amy Johnson at this meeting. He noted that he wished that they would have supported and listened to the hundreds of the residents that spoke about the budget. He further noted that he cannot support the budget as presented and will answer the advisory questions as too low.

High School Student Skylar Kellogg spoke against cuts to the budget.

Shawn Lincoln spoke against budget cuts and encouraged residents to get involved in the process. He encouraged residents to vote no on the budget and to answer the advisory question as too low.

Amber Fidel spoke of concerns regarding the budget cuts.

Student Lilah Kellogg spoke against cuts to the budget.

XII. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Update on the future of the Safety and Security subcommittee.

XIII. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Kim LaTourette thanked Dr. Craw for putting together the budget scenario. She noted that these cuts are not appropriate.

Ed Sbordone spoke of his concerns regarding the \$900,000 worth of cuts.

Greg Flanagan thanked the staff in honor of Teacher Appreciation Week. He noted that he was glad to see some BOF members in attendance at tonight's meeting and wished that they had attended more meetings. He spoke of concerns regarding the budget cuts.

Samantha Mannion spoke of concerns regarding the cuts and noted that they either hurt students and/or teachers.

Amy Johnson spoke of her disappointment and embarrassment regarding the BOE's decision to censure her at the April 25th meeting. She further spoke of Public Comment at tonight's meeting and noted that any comments should be addressed directly to the chairman.

Tim Blair thanked all the teachers and staff in honor of Teacher Appreciation Week. He further apologized to fellow BOE member Amy Johnson for voting to censure her at the last BOE meeting and noted that he regrets voting in favor.

Stephanie Strazza spoke of the budget cuts and her concerns on how they will affect the students.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Dominic Cipollone made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:39 p.m. 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

Respectfully submitted,
Suzanne Kloos