

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

The New Fairfield Board of Education held a special budget workshop on Wed. January 27, 2021, at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom.

**MINUTES – January 27, 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 Michael Chapleau, 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, Director of Curriculum Alyce Misuraca, Athletic Director Mark Ottush, BOF Chairman Wes Marsh, BOF Members Tom Garben, Jane Landers and Cheryl Reedy, and BOF alternate members Mark Werner and Greg Williams

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 7:01 p.m.

**II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**III. WORKSHOP- Review of the 2021-2022 Budget**

BOE Chairman Peggy Katkocin thanked the members of the BOF for attending this meeting. She spoke of the process for the budget and the goal of the board to balance the needs of the students and the district with the taxpayers’ ability to pay.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Pat Cosentino spoke of the upcoming budget for 2021-2022 and how it has been affected by the pandemic. She spoke of the rearrangement of staff in order to have smaller class sizes and be able to have cohorts. As a result, there were not a lot of intervention services offered this year. These staff positions will be back to their original positions for the 2021-22 school year.

It was noted that this budget is compiled with the assumption that COVID will be over for the 2021-22 school year. Dr. Cosentino noted that the increase is currently 2.48% over last year’s budget.

Director of Business and Operations Dr. Richard Sanzo spoke of possible adjustments to the budget based on community feedback. Main points discussed included a restoration to Physical Education teachers and parts of the Music program that will be offset by the reductions to other areas such as a high school secretary, deferment of the replacement of the Technology Lab and a reduction in co-curricular offerings.

Dr. Sanzo further spoke of an approximate \$75,000 savings of debt service for the school building projects due to a reduction in interest rates. There was a brief discussion of the possibility of bonding for future years for the building projects while the interest rates are low.

Director of Instructional Technology and Communications Dr. Karen Fildes spoke of positive changes to technology that have occurred due to COVID. She spoke of the ability to accommodate technology classes without a Technology Lab at this point and noted that she feels comfortable deferring the lab at this point. She further spoke of Chromebooks for Consolidated students and noted that work can be done with Chromebooks on carts for these students instead of on-demand as has been done this year. Dr. Fildes thanked the teachers and all staff for their hard work with embracing technology during the pandemic.

Assistant Superintendent of Schools Julie Luby spoke of loss of skills that may have occurred due to COVID and the need for interventionists in the budget, especially in Math.

Pupil Personnel Director Katherine Matz spoke of the Transition Program. This program teaches life and social skills for special needs students up until the age of 21. She spoke of the budget implications for this and noted that there may be some savings due to not having to outsource students. Dr. Cosentino spoke of adding a teacher to the Talented and Gifted program and the importance of having a strong program for students in this category.

There was a discussion of the BOE working with the BOF Pension and Bonding Subcommittee and retirement incentives.

Members of the BOE spoke of their desire to have the taxpayers vote on the budget via referendum instead of having the BOF set the budget and Mil Rate as was done last year.

Chairman Peggy Katkocin thanked everyone that participated in this budget workshop. It was decided that the BOE members will vote on the budget at their February 4<sup>th</sup> meeting.

#### **IV. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Meeting House Hill School teacher and President of the Teachers' Association Jeff Giuliano thanked the teachers for going above and beyond during the pandemic. He noted that he appreciated all the kind words that members of the public said about the teachers recently.

Millie Kellogg spoke as a parent in the district and thanked the teachers for all their hard work. She noted that her children are currently remote learners and are doing well. She praised the teachers for making sure that remote learners are fully engaged and are valued students of the classroom.

The budget will further be presented to the Board of Finance at the March 6, 2021, BOF meeting.

#### **V. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** Peggy Katkocin made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 p.m. 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

Respectfully submitted,  
Suzanne Kloos