

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

The New Fairfield Board of Education held a regular meeting on Thursday, April 6, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom.

MINUTES – April 6, 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, New Fairfield Middle School Principal Karen Gruetzner, Middle School Assistant Principal Cheryl Milo, Elementary School Assistant Principal Jennifer Hilderbrand, Elementary School Assistant Principal Steve Groccia, Supervisor of Special Education Melissa Busnel, Director of Technology Paul Gouveia, First Selectman Pat Del Monaco, Selectman Khris Hall, Board of Finance Chairman Wes Marsh, Board of Finance member Mark Beninson, and Board of Finance member Claudia Willard.

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. March 16, 2023 - Regular meeting - approved by consensus
- B. March 28, 2023 - Special meeting - approved by consensus

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA- approved by consensus

V. INFORMATION/ACTION ITEM

A. Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Budget

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Kenneth Craw gave a presentation regarding the budget and compared the BOE approved budget for 2023-2024 to the voter approved budget for 2022-2023. He spoke of the factors that contribute to the increases which include debt payments for the building projects, medical claims that are considerably higher than projected, the expiration of federal relief funds and expenses related to the pandemic recovery. It was noted that the average increase for the BOE Operating budget in recent years has been less than the Social Security Cost of Living Adjustments.

Dr. Craw spoke of the increase in enrollment and certified staffing for the district including a five-year staffing projection. He further spoke of the effects of the pandemic on education and the budget. It was suggested that Dr. Craw give this presentation again at the BOF meeting on April 12th.

Dr. Craw spoke of the impact of a 0% increase and how it will affect education and what would need to be cut to achieve this. Board of Education Chairman Dominic Cipollone further spoke of the impacts of a 0% increase. There was a discussion among the Board members regarding possible reductions. It was suggested that a motion be made to show that the BOE members stand in solidarity against these cuts.

MOTION: Samantha Mannion made a motion that the Board of Education endorse a budget reduction scenario to reduce the proposed 13.15% increase to a 7.99% increase as presented. Ed Sbordone seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza. **ABSTAINED:** Tim Blair and Amy Johnson

VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Terra Volpe, John McCartney and Millie Kellogg spoke in favor of the budget as presented and thanked the BOE for their due diligence.

VII. BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

A. Chairman's Report - Dominic Cipollone spoke of the following:

- Spoke of a very successful musical, Urinetown, at the high school.
- Spoke of concerns with getting the budget through the BOF.

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

- Thanked all the paraprofessionals in honor of Paraprofessional Appreciation Day.
- Wished everyone a Happy Passover and Happy Easter.

C. Student Representatives' Report

Junior Representative Brennan Hearty spoke of the following:

- The Juniors recently took the SATs.
- AP Tests will begin soon.
- Senior Prom tickets will be on sale from April 24 - 28th.

D. Committee Reports

1. Curriculum - Stephanie Strazza noted that this subcommittee met on March 27th. They reviewed the I-Ready data. There has been a lot of progress in both reading and math since last year. The subcommittee spoke of the Math programs. They reviewed the Music Program and noted that there is a significant interest in both the Strings and Band program.

2. Policy - Samantha Mannion noted that this subcommittee met on March 22nd and discussed a policy concerning Identification Tags and a policy concerning social media.

E. Liaison Reports

1. Board of Finance - Ed Sbordone noted that the BOF met on March 29th and discussed the following:

- There was a lengthy discussion of the 2023-2024 budget. Over 300 attended this meeting via Zoom. Public Participation lasted over 1 ½ hours and most speakers were in favor of the BOS and BOE budgets as presented.
- The last bonding for the school projects was completed with a \$12 million bond with an interest rate of 3.357% which produced a premium of \$807,000. The overall balance of the premium is approximately \$3,043,000. Out of the bond premium, \$175,000 could be used to reduce the budget for the next fiscal year.
- The BOF reviewed the medical fund with the Medical Consultant. No decisions were made at this time.
- There was a discussion of the debt service, payroll and non-payroll expenses.

- No decisions were made regarding a percentage cut for the budget. The next BOF meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 12th at 7:30 p.m. via Zoom.

VIII. INFORMATION ITEMS

- A. Board of Education Policy (First Reading)
 1. Policy 3517.1 - Identification Badges

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 March 30, 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. New Fairfield High School Graduation

MOTION: Kimberly LaTourette made a motion to recommend to the full Board approval of June 16, 2023, as the graduation date for the NFHS Class of 2023. 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

- C. Board of Education Policy

- Suspension of the Rules (referring to Policy 4118.51)
 1. Policy 4118.51- Social Media

MOTION: Samantha Mannion made a motion to suspend the rules referring to Policy 4118.51. 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

There was a suggestion of reviewing this policy on a regular basis to keep up with the changing definition of social media.

MOTION: Samantha Mannion made a motion to recommend to the full Board the approval of Board of Education Policy 4118.51 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

- D. Acceptance of Donation
 1. USA Pickleball

MOTION: Kathy Baker to recommend to the full Board to accept with gratitude the donation of pickleball equipment worth approximately \$2,200 and an equipment grant of \$825 (\$275 for each school - Meeting House Hill School, New Fairfield Middle School and New Fairfield High School) for a total of \$3,025. Kimberly LaTourette seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION- None

XI. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Amy Johnson asked for an update regarding the building project and if there are any current bonding outstanding for the old Consolidated School and the Culinary Arts Center in the current high school.

XII. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Tim Blair and Amy Johnson explained their reasons for abstaining on the vote regarding the budget.

Members of the Board spoke in support of the proposed budget as presented and encouraged participation at the upcoming BOF meetings.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Dominic Cipollone made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:32 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