

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

The New Fairfield Board of Education held a regular meeting on Thursday, February 5, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. in the New Fairfield Community Room, 33 Route 37, New Fairfield, CT.

MINUTES – February 5, 2026

PRESENT: Dominic Cipollone (Chairman), Kathy Baker, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Peggy Katkocin, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, and Ed Sbordone

ABSENT: None

ALSO PRESENT: Superintendent of Schools Dr. Kenneth Craw, Middle School Principal Karen Gruetzner, Elementary School Principal Allyson Story, Director of Pupil Personnel Services Monika Krepsztul, Director of Business and Operations Carrie DePuy, BOF members Jessica Sanchez and Rick Regan

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. January 15, 2026 - Regular meeting - Approved by consensus.
- B. January 20, 2026 - Special meeting - Approved by consensus.
- C. January 21, 2026 - Special meeting - Approved by consensus.
- D. January 27, 2026 - Special meeting - Approved by consensus.

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA - Approved by consensus

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

BOF member Jessica Sanchez asked about the possibility of negotiating the cost of PowerSchool.

VI. ACTION ITEM

- A. Fiscal year 2026-2027 Operating Budget and Capital Budget

There was a lengthy discussion regarding the proposed budget for 2026-2027. Each Board member gave their opinions regarding this budget. There was a discussion of increasing cost of Special Education and there was a suggestion of possibly forgoing some of the Capital Budget to cover Special Education expenses. Dr. Craw noted that the budget is starting with a \$150,000 deficit due to attrition.

MOTION: Ed Sbordone made a motion to recommend to the full Board of Education the approval of the 2026-27 Board of Education's operating budget in the amount of \$53,591,293 an increase of 4.44%, and the 2026-27 Board of Education's capital budget in the amount of \$615,000. Kimberly LaTourette seconded the motion.

MOTION: Ed Sbordone made a motion to amend the previous motion to increase the capital budget in the amount from \$615,000 to \$623,000. Kimberly LaTourette seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR OF AMENDMENT:** Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Peggy Katkocin, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, and Ed Sbordone. **IN FAVOR OF MOTION AS AMENDED:** Kathy Baker, Amy Johnson, Peggy Katkocin, Kimberly LaTourette, and Ed Sbordone

OPPOSED TO MOTION AS AMENDED: Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, and Samantha Mannion **MOTION APPROVED**

VII. BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

A. Chairman's Report - Dominic Cipollone encouraged everyone to stay safe and warm.

B. Superintendent's Report - Dr. Kenneth Craw spoke of the following:

- Chronic absenteeism has declined from 13% to 9%. Staff attendance has been trending over 95%.
- Testing for Elementary School and Middle School will begin soon.
- Encouraged students to challenge themselves when picking classes for next year.
- Congratulated Dr. Woleck on her second anniversary in New Fairfield.

C. Student Representative Report

Junior Representative Hailey Lafaro spoke of the following:

- The Tri-M Talent show was held on February 4th.
- The Program of Studies for the 2026-2027 school year is now available.
- A Career and Trade panel will be held on February 6th.
- School will not be in session on Feb. 13th and 16th.
- The Spring Musical "The Addams Family" will be held from March 19th to 22nd.
- Festival of Cultures will be held on March 28th.
- SEE Project proposals for the Seniors are due on February 27th.
- The Junior trip to Washington, DC will be held from March 11th to March 13th.

D. Committee Reports

1. Policy - Samantha Mannion noted that this subcommittee met on January 28th. Policy 6161.12-was brought forward for a first reading and it was decided to suspend the rules regarding Policy 3542.43 and bring it forward for a vote at tonight's meeting. The subcommittee also discussed the policy regarding residency.

2. Special Education Ad Hoc - Kimberly LaTourette noted that this committee met on February 5th and discussed the Bridge Program. They discussed the best ways to keep students in the district.

E. Liaison Reports

1. Board of Finance - Ed Sbordone spoke of the BOF meeting of January 28th:

The BOF discussed medical claims for the past six years and compared USI claims projection, Anthem claims projection, budgeted claims, actual claims and the balance at the end of each fiscal year. They showed charts that show how the Medical Reserve changed over the past six years. The Board discussed the aligning the data with the Reserve policy and how to manage the fund to keep it at or above 20% of Anthem's claims. The Board discussed the optimal amount to keep in the Medical Reserve and end-of -year actual claims projection.

It was noted at the BOF meeting that the BOF audit subcommittee met on January 22nd. Purchasing Agent for Patty Mota for supplying the subcommittee with a copy of the New Fairfield RFP for auditors in 2024. At that point, there were no bidders audit and therefore, the current auditors remained in place. The subcommittee also discussed whether or not it was necessary to go out to bid for an auditor at this time. It was decided to keep the same audit firm for at least another year. There was a lengthy discussion regarding the boat docks and it was decided that more information is needed and this will be discussed at a future meeting.

The BOS and BOE will present their budgets to the BOF on Saturday, March 7th. The BOE will present at 9:00 a.m.

The BOF approved the Debt policy with a minor change. The Fraud policy will be discussed further at a future meeting.

Medical claims for January and there was also a Prescription refund check of \$115,000.

The BOF reviewed the unassigned general fund balance and discussed the estimate for June 30, 2026.

It was noted that there is a current balance of \$739,000 above the required 16.67% of a year's expenditures. The next meeting of the BOF will be on Wednesday, February 25th.

VIII. INFORMATION ITEMS

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

Fire Tanks - Carrie DePuy noted that she received an update for the PBC and the issue regarding the fire tanks is isolated. A plan to repair the fire tanks is forthcoming from the contractor.

Propane Update - Carrie DePuy noted that they may go to litigation for the propane issue at the high school. Information is forthcoming.

Bus Lot Update - The Bus Lot package was submitted to the Zoning Commission on February 4th with some minor updates. It is hopeful that this can go out to bid this spring.

B. Board of Education Policy (First Reading)

1. Policy 6161.12-Library Collection Development and Maintenance, and Library Displays and Programs, and Library Material Review and Reconsideration Policy.

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 January 29, 2026, as recommended by the administration. Kimberly LaTourette seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Peggy Katkocin, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, and Ed Sbordone

B. Board of Education Policy

Suspension of the Rules (referring to Policy 3542.43)

1. Policy 3542.43 - Collection of Unpaid Meal Charges

MOTION: Samantha Mannion made a motion to recommend to the full Board suspension of the rules referring to Policy 3542.43 - Collection of Unpaid Meal Charges Motion. Ed Sbordone seconded the motion.

IN FAVOR: Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Peggy Katkocin, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, and Ed Sbordone

MOTION: Samantha Mannion made a motion to recommend to the full Board the approval of Board of Education Policy 3542.43 - Collection of Unpaid Meal Charge. Amy Johnson seconded the motion.

IN FAVOR: Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Peggy Katkocin, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, and Ed Sbordone

X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - None

XI. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS - None

XII. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Greg Flanagan specified that he is in favor of the budget. Dominic Cipollone spoke of the budget process and encouraged residents to attend budget workshops.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Dominic Cipollone made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:55 p.m. Kimberly LaTourette seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Peggy Katkocin, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, and Ed Sbordone

Respectfully submitted, Suzanne Kloos