

NEW FAIRFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION

NEW FAIRFIELD, CT

The New Fairfield Board of Education held a regular meeting on Thursday, May 15, 2025, at 7:00 pm via Zoom.

MINUTES – May 15, 2025

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

ABSENT: None

ALSO PRESENT: Superintendent of Schools Dr. Kenneth Craw, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Dr. Kristine Woleck, High School Principal James D’Amico, Middle School Principal Karen Gruetzner, Elementary School Principal Allyson Story, and Director of Business and Operations Carrie DePuy

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. May 1, 2025 - Regular meeting - Approved by consensus.

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA - Approved by consensus

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Robyn Campagnuolo spoke of the need for zero tolerance for incidents in New Fairfield schools and asked that parents be notified of any incidents in a timely manner.

Jennifer Pappas spoke of concerns with vandalism and possible threats of violence at the schools.

VI. BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

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

- The Teacher appreciation luncheon held last week was very successful.
- Encouraged parents to monitor their children’s use of TikTok.
- Noted that tonight was Senior Representative Emilia Sedlak’s last meeting. The Board thanked Emilia for her hard work and dedication and wished her well in the future.

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

- Spoke of the BOE discussion regarding social media and the mental health crisis. He suggested creating communication about the risks of social media and spoke of the possibility of “One Book/One Community” with the suggestion of “The Anxious Generations” by Jonathan Haidt.
- The NEASC Accreditation Report was extremely positive.
- High School Principal James D’Amico noted that NEASC has taken the district off warning for both Curriculum and Community Resources for Learning.

C. Student Representatives’ Reports

Emilia Sedlak thanked the BOE for the opportunity to be the Senior Representative for the past two years. She reported on the following:

- The Connecticut CELP Biliteracy award was earned by 34 students.
- Candlewood Lake Clean-up Day will be held on Saturday, May 17th.

- DECA is hosting a car decal fundraiser to support the PTO.
- Senior Prom will be held on Saturday, May 17th.

D. Committee Reports

1. Business Operations/Resource Management - Ed Sbordone noted that this subcommittee met on May 15th and discussed the following:

- Reviewed the monthly summary of actual expenses and encumbrances vs. the projected expenses and encumbrances. The accounts are in line with prior years' spending. A surplus is expected for this year.
- Discussed the Town Solar Project and noted that the Town is moving forward with the solar lease and panels will be put on the high school.
- They discussed summer projects and noted that all projects are on schedule.
- Carrie DePuy is currently working on four State audits for town projects.
- The subcommittee discussed the Bus Lot.

E. Liaison Reports

1. Parks and Recreation - Kimberly LaTourette noted that the Parks and Rec Commission met on May 12th.

- The Beach House is expected to be completed by Friday, May 16th. There will be a Grand Opening on Monday, May 19, 2025 at 3 p.m.
- The Boat Dock replacement fund has a balance of \$369,000.
- There have been some incidents of vandalism at the pavilion at Rebel Turf. There will be a meeting among various members of boards and commissions to determine who will be responsible for the upkeep of the pavilion. There was a suggestion of installing ring cameras at the pavilion.
- Upcoming events: Memorial Field concerts - June 26th, July 10th, July 24th and August 7th; Friday, July 11th - Boat Parade; Saturday, September 27th - New Fairfield Day; Friday, October 24th - Trick or Treat; Sunday, November 23rd - Turkey Run; Saturday, November 29th - Santa's Workshop.

VII. **INFORMATION/ACTION ITEM**

A. Bus Lot Update

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Ken Craw noted that there was a multi-board meeting between the BOE, BOS, BOF and PBC on Monday, May 12th. The BOE and the PBC approved the site at the old Consolidated School based on the engineer's recommendation. He spoke of the next steps in the process and noted that it is hopeful that this will be completed for the 2026-2027 school year.

VIII. **INFORMATION ITEMS**

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

Director of Business and Operations Carrie DePuy spoke of the following:

- The playground will be repaired over the summer, and the drainage issues will be addressed. The warranty for this has been extended.
- The PBC received a report regarding the propane issues at the high school and will review it soon.
- Topsoil is being put in at the old Consolidated school site.
- Carrie DePuy noted that Director of Buildings and Grounds Phil Ross suggested that the decorative rock from Consolidated be brought up to the high school to assist with safety issues. Carrie DePuy asked for suggestions as to what to do with the rocks from Consolidated School and MHHS.

B. Board of Education Policy (*Second Reading*)

1. Policy 6172 - Alternative Education Programs

C. District Goal Progress Report

Dr. Craw spoke of the five main priorities for the district which include Curriculum, Instruction, Wellness, Student and Staff attendance, and Resources for Learning. He gave a brief presentation on Student and Staff

attendance and Resources for Learning. He noted that the rate of attendance is 96.4% after three quarters. This is an improvement of 92% over last year.

Dr. Craw spoke of Resources for Learning and noted that the budget passed on the first referendum this year. Most positions are currently filled for next year's staff. He further spoke of capital projects that improved facilities including the removal of the Middle School Oil Tank and identifying spaces for certain classes at the Middle School. Improvements to the track and field are scheduled to begin in mid-June.

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 May 15, 2025, as recommended by the administration. Kimberly LaTourette seconded the motion.

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

B. Board of Education Policy

1. Policy 5131.911 - Connecticut School Climate Policy

MOTION: Samantha Mannion made a motion to recommend to the full Board the approval of Policy 5131.911 Connecticut School Climate Policy. Kimberly LaTourette seconded the motion.

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

C. Healthy Food Certification

MOTION: Kathy Baker made a motion that pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-215f, the New Fairfield Board of Education certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction, and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, culinary programs, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or non-school organizations and groups. Ed Sbordone seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone

MOTION: Kathy Baker made a motion that the New Fairfield Board of Education will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards and beverages not listed in Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the food and beverage items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An "event" is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The "regular school day" is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. "Location" means where the event is being held and must be the same place as the food and beverage sales. Kimberly LaTourette seconded the motion **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone

D. Non-Union Salaries and Benefits and Contracts - Executive Session

X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - None

XI. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS - None

XII. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Kim LaTourette thanked the teachers during Teacher Appreciation Week. She further thanked the School Resource Officers in honor of Police Officer Appreciation Day.

Ed Sbordone reminded everyone there will be a special BOE Self Evaluation meeting on May 22nd at 7:00 p.m.

Sue Huwer asked about the possibility of addressing questions from the public during public comment and suggested that someone be appointed to answer the questions for the residents and report it back to the Board members.

XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING NON-UNION CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS

MOTION: Dominic Cipollone made a motion to go into Executive Session at 7:45 p.m. to discuss non-union contract negotiations and to invite Superintendent of Schools Dr. Ken Craw into the Executive Session. Samantha Mannion seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone

MOTION: Dominic Cipollone made a motion to come out of Executive Session at 8:34 p.m. Greg Flanagan seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone. (Sue Huwer did not return from Executive Session and did not vote on this motion.)

MOTION: Samantha Mannion made a motion to table the approval of the non-union salaries and benefits for the 2025-2026 school year as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools pending adjustments and redraft. Kimberly LaTourette seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone. (Sue Huwer did not return from Executive Session and did not vote on this motion.)

MOTION: Samantha Mannion made a motion to table the approval of the Assistant Superintendent's contract for the 2025-2026 school year as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools pending adjustments and redraft. Kimberly LaTourette seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone. (Sue Huwer did not return from Executive Session and did not vote on this motion.)

MOTION: Samantha Mannion made a motion to table the approval of the Director of Business and Operations' contract for the 2025-2026 school year as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools pending adjustments and redraft. Kimberly LaTourette seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone. (Sue Huwer did not return from Executive Session and did not vote on this motion.)

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Dominic Cipollone made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:37 p.m. Greg Flanagan seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone. (Sue Huwer did not return from Executive Session and did not vote on this motion.)

Respectfully submitted,
Suzanne Kloos