

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

The New Fairfield Board of Education held a regular meeting on Thursday, August 19, 2021, at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom.

MINUTES – August 19, 2021

PRESENT: Peggy Katkocin (Chairman), Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Rick Regan and Ed Sbordone

ABSENT: Greg Flanagan and Stephanie Strazza

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, High School Principal James D’Amico, Middle School Principal Christine Baldelli, Middle School Assistant Principal Cheryl Milo, Meeting House Hill School Principal James Mandracchia, Consolidated School Principal Rob Spino and Consolidated School Assistant Principal Karen Gruetzner

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. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. August 5, 2021 - Regular meeting - approved by consensus

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION: Peggy Katkocin made a motion to add agenda item XI A “Executive Session for the Purpose of Discussing a Leave of Absence Request.” Samantha Mannion seconded the motion.

IN FAVOR: Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Peggy Katkocin, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Rick Regan and Ed Sbordone

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Kim DeBart, Linda Pasquariella, Stefanie Marlow and Millie Kellogg spoke in support of higher wages and a contract for the paraprofessionals. Millie Kellogg thanked the BOE for continuing to require masks for everyone in the schools.

Brittany Tharp read a letter from Amy Foster who was not able to attend the meeting. The letter spoke of concerns regarding the proposed Policy C-19-1250 that restricts visitors and volunteers to the school campuses. This policy would require visitors to obtain permission from the building principal before coming entering the buildings. This proposed policy would be a temporary policy put in place due to COVID concerns and the construction project.

Regina Fritzche asked for clarification regarding the restriction of parking privileges for Seniors at the High School. She also suggested using the parking lot at the Town Beach as parking for the school buses. It was decided that Dr. Cosentino will call Ms. Fritzche to discuss this further.

VI. BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

A. Chairman's Report - Peggy Katkocin spoke of the following:

- Noted that Governor Lamont has issued an Executive Order to be in effect until September 30, 2021, that everyone in all schools must wear masks. Governor Lamont is also expected to sign another Executive Order that require all K-12 teachers and staff to be vaccinated.

B. Superintendent's Report - Superintendent of Schools Dr. Pat Cosentino spoke of the following:

- Noted that all staff members must be vaccinated by September 27th. This includes all staff in the schools including bus drivers and cafeteria workers.
- The next vaccination van in New Fairfield will be held on Monday, August 23.
- All students and staff will be required to wear masks in all buildings. She spoke of the benefits of masks and thanked everyone for their cooperation last year.
- Thanked everyone for all the love and support after the recent passing of her mother.

C. Committee Reports

1. Business Operations/Resource Management - Ed Sbordone noted that this committee met on August 19th and discussed:

- Monthly summary of budget vs. actual expenditures for the previous fiscal year. Preliminary numbers show a surplus of approximately \$51,000.
- Monthly summary for budget vs. actual for the current year.
- The Google vault reconciliation showed no outside access other than to create the report.
- Dr. Sanzo spoke of the high school construction project and logistics of parking.
- The committee unanimously voted to recommend to the full board the approval of \$75,000 from the fiscal year 2020-2021 to the School Lunch program.

D. Liaison Reports

1. Board of Finance - Ed Sbordone noted that the Board of Finance meeting of August 18th was cancelled. The next meeting is scheduled for September 15th. The budget surplus for both the BOE and Town will be discussed at the September meeting.

2. Parks and Recreation Committee - Kim LaTourette noted that the Parks and Rec Commission met in person on August 9th and discussed the following:

- At the time of the meeting there were two vacancies on the commission.
- The Town Beach will close on Aug. 25th unless lifeguards are available for the weekend of August 28th and September 4th (Labor Day).
- Summer camp ended on July 30th. There were approximately 110 campers per week. One week was cancelled due to COVID.
- The Sip and Stroll originally planned for October will be postponed until May 2022.
- New Fairfield Day is scheduled for Saturday, September 18th with a rain date of Sunday, September 19th from 12-6 pm.
- The Turkey Run will be held on Sunday, November 21st.
- The Tree Lighting will be held on Saturday, November 27th.
- Trick or Treat will be held on Friday, October 29th.
- The commission voted to increase the pay for waterfront employees due to the increase in minimum wage.

3. School Security and Safety Committee - Samantha Mannion noted that this committee has not met recently. Their next meeting is scheduled for September 27th.

VII. INFORMATION ITEMS

A. Summer School Update

Assistant Superintendent of Schools Julie Luby gave a brief summary and showed a video of highlights from Summer School for 2021. She thanked Stephanie Taylor, Michelle Brown and Alyce Misuraca for all their hard work with this program. This program was held for three weeks in July and three weeks in August.

B. School Reopening Update

Julie Luby noted that school will begin on August 30th and is continuing to make changes as the COVID situation revolves. She spoke of a Continuity Plan that was put together in the spring. Everyone will be required to wear masks in all buildings and on the buses. Students in Grades K-8 will have assigned seats on the buses. She spoke of current lunch models for all four schools. She further spoke of isolation spaces in each school if necessary and rules for quarantining and contact tracing. It is hopeful that quarantining will be less frequent than last year.

C. Superintendent Goals Draft

Dr. Cosentino spoke of her goals and specifically priorities, action steps, smart goals and progress. She spoke of the health and safety of all students as a top priority. Other goals include curriculum and student achievement especially in Math, increase in rigor for all subjects and the addition of extracurricular activities. Samantha Mannion reiterated the need to close the achievement gap between special education and typical students. Dominic Cipollone spoke of the need to be able measure goals.

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

Director of Business and Operations Dr. Richard Sanzo spoke of the progress of the building projects for both the CELA project and the new high school and noted the following:

- The Zoning Commission did not approve the Special Permit to allow to use the current Consolidated School as a bus lot.
- The PBC awarded the initial construction packages for the High School project. The overall bids for the high school came in at approximately \$990,000 over the estimated amount. A contingency fund is available for this amount. The PBC discussed some cost savings ideas at their meeting.
- Showed a map of what the construction project will look like in October and spoke of how the project will affect parking at the high school. It is possible that there will be a temporary parking lot for staff members. It is possible that students may be able to park at the dog park. He spoke of the possibility of finding a nearby parking lot for students and then offering a shuttle to the campus. Dr. Sanzo referred to an earlier public comment asking about using the Town Beach for bus parking and noted that this is not a solution since it is not available on a long-term basis.

VIII. ACTION ITEMS

A. Personnel Report

MOTION: Kimberly LaTourette made a motion to recommend to the full Board the approval of the Personnel Report for August 12, 2021, as recommended by the administration. Kathy Baker seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Peggy Katkocin, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Rick Regan and Ed Sbordone

B. Evaluation Flexibilities 2021-2022

Julie Luby noted that due to COVID, the State has allowed for flexibility on evaluation for teachers. She spoke of the current observation plan and allowances made by the State. There was a brief discussion among the BOE members regarding their desire to be able to read and review the plans.

MOTION: Kathy Baker made a motion to table this Action Item until the next regular BOE meeting of September 2, 2021. Kimberly LaTourette seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Peggy Katkocin, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Rick Regan and Ed Sbordone

C. School Lunch Fund Subsidy

MOTION: Ed Sbordone made a motion to recommend to the full Board to approve the transfer of \$75,000 from the FY 2020-21 Board of Education operating budget to the School Lunch Fund. Peggy Katkocin seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Peggy Katkocin, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Rick Regan and Ed Sbordone.

D. Board of Education Policies

Suspension of the Rules referring to Policies C-19-1250, 1250, 1250.1, 3517.3 & 6162.4

1. Policy C-19-1250-Visitors, Volunteers and Access to Campus
2. Policy 1250- Visits to the Schools
3. Policy 1250.1- Classroom Observations
4. Policy 3517.3- Site Access/Closed Campus
5. Policy 6162.4- School Volunteers

MOTION: Samantha Mannion made a motion to suspend the rules referring to Policies C-19-1250, 1250, 1250.1 3517.3 & 6162.4. Kathy Baker seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Peggy Katkocin, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Rick Regan and Ed Sbordone.

There was a discussion regarding Policy C-19-1250 - Visitors, Volunteers and Access to campus, and it was noted that parent volunteers are very valuable and will be welcome in the schools at the discretion of the principals. Visitors and volunteers are welcome to attend outdoor activities and off campus field trips. Dr. Cosentino spoke of the need to limit the number of visitors in order to concentrate on instructional time and to limit the amount of exposure to people during the pandemic. It was suggested that this policy be reviewed again in November 2021.

MOTION: Samantha Mannion made a motion to recommend to the full board the approval of temporary Policy C-19-1250 until November 5, 2021. Peggy Katkocin seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Peggy Katkocin, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Rick Regan and Ed Sbordone.

MOTION: Samantha Mannion made a motion to suspend Policies 1250, 1250.1, 3517.3 and 6162.4 until such time as Policy C-19-1250 is no longer in effect. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Peggy Katkocin, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Rick Regan and Ed Sbordone

IX. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Kim DeBart asked about the possibility of having Middle School students eat in the cafeteria and spoke of the importance of having students socialize.

Amanda Lombard thanked the Board for passing Policy C-19-1250 that restricts visitors in the buildings and agreed that the fewer people in the buildings the better.

Amy Johnson asked about the possibility of asking residents for their feedback for the use of the ESSER funds. She also asked about the possibility of mask breaks and outdoor recess for MHHS. Dr. Rich Sanzo confirmed that there will be outdoor recess at MHHS this year.

Olivia Micca spoke in support of the mask mandate and in support of increased wages for the paraprofessionals.

Eileen Hacaj spoke in support of the mask mandate and in support of increased wages for the paraprofessionals.

Julie Strange spoke of having the Middle School students eat in the cafeteria and noted that students in another district preferred eating in the classrooms instead of the cafeteria since social distance rules changed the experience.

X. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS - Dr. Cosentino noted that the Open Choice Bill was passed in Connecticut. This will be discussed at a future BOE meeting.

XI. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Dominic Cipollone thanked the staff for all their hard work and is excited for the upcoming school year.

Kimberly LaTourette thanked all the administrators and spoke in support of increased wages for the paraprofessionals.

XI. A. EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING A LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST

MOTION: Peggy Katkocin made a motion to go into Executive Session at 9:02 p.m. to discuss a leave of absence request and to invite Dr. Pat Cosentino into the Executive Session. Kimberly LaTourette seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Peggy Katkocin, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Rick Regan and Ed Sbordone

MOTION: Peggy Katkocin made a motion to come out of Executive Session at 9:17 p.m. Kathy Baker seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Peggy Katkocin, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Rick Regan and Ed Sbordone

MOTION: Peggy Katkocin made a motion to grant the Leave of Absence request from Patti Cannale with a return date of on or before October 12, 2021. Kimberly LaTourette seconded the motion.

IN FAVOR: Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Peggy Katkocin, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Rick Regan and Ed Sbordone

XII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Peggy Katkocin made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:18 p.m. Kimberly LaTourette seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Peggy Katkocin, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Rick Regan and Ed Sbordone

Respectfully submitted,
Suzanne Kloos