

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

The New Fairfield Board of Education held a regular meeting on Thursday, May 18, 2023, at 7:00 pm via Zoom.

**MINUTES – May 18, 2023**

**PRESENT:** Dominic Cipollone (Chairman), Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

**ABSENT:** Samantha Mannion

**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, High School Principal James D’Amico, Middle School Assistant Principal Cheryl Milo, Elementary School Principal Allyson Story, Elementary School Assistant Principal Steven Groccia, Elementary School Assistant Principal Jennifer Hilderbrand, Supervisor of Special Education Melissa Busnel, Director of Technology Paul Gouveia, First Selectman Pat Del Monaco, and Selectman Khris Hall

Broadcast Coordinator Quintin Flower 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. May 4, 2023 - Regular meeting - approved by consensus

**IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**MOTION:** Amy Johnson made a motion to amend the agenda to add Action Item E “Vote to rescind censure of BOE member at the April 25<sup>th</sup> meeting.” Tim Blair seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

**MOTION:** Dominic Cipollone made a motion to approve the agenda as amended. Kathy Baker seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

**V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Jeff Guiliano spoke in support of the budget and encouraged everyone to vote this Sat. May 20<sup>th</sup>. Rick Regan spoke of the budget and his concerns with the advisory questions on the ballot. Lisa Tramazzo encouraged everyone to vote yes for the budget on May 20<sup>th</sup>.

## **VI. BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS**

A. Chairman's Report - Dominic Cipollone reported on the following:

- Spoke of lessons learned from the budget process. He encouraged everyone to get out and vote.

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

- Spoke of an awards banquet at the at the Amber Room. Four students of the district were awarded the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents award.
- Announced the Elementary School Assistant Principal Steven Groccia will be leaving the district to take a job as Assistant Superintendent for the Cos Cob district. He congratulated Mr. Groccia on this opportunity and thanked him for the work he has done in New Fairfield.
- Announced that Supervisor of Special Education Melissa Busnel will be returning to the classroom as a teacher. A search will be conducted for her replacement as Supervisor of Special Education in the near future.

C. Student Representatives' Report

Junior Representative Brennan Hearty spoke of the following:

- Juniors will be taking NGSS Science testing next week.
- The High School and Middle School Art Show will be next week.
- Final exams will be conducted from June 14<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup>.
- High School graduation will be held on June 16<sup>th</sup>.

D. Committee Reports

1. Business Operations/Resource Management - Greg Flanagan gave the following report: The Business Operations Subcommittee met on May 18<sup>th</sup>. They reviewed the budget from April 30<sup>th</sup> and projected a worst-case scenario deficit of approximately \$391,550. This deficit may be lowered by applying SPED Contingency, School Heating Assistance, Excess Cost Grant, and ARPA and ESSER funds. There may also be other savings in the operating budget to offset this deficit.

The subcommittee discussed the Building Projects and noted that the high school project remains on time and on budget but abatement will cease until the end of the year. The elementary school punch list is still being worked on and the roof is leaking again. The issue with the leak has been identified and will be addressed soon. The playground at the elementary school will be closed for two weeks in the summer for repairs.

The subcommittee reviewed the per pupil expenditure for the district and noted that many factors go into determining this number. They noted that it is not the ideal measurement to compare district costs.

The subcommittee discussed attrition and how it affects the budget.

E. Liaison Reports

1. Board of Finance - Ed Sbordone gave a summary of the BOF meeting from May 17<sup>th</sup>. The following motion were made:

- A motion to require anyone making a public comment to state their names before speaking was denied.
- A motion to approve the Suspense List from the Tax Collector was approved.
- A motion to approve the audit firm of PKF O'Connor Davies was approved.

2. Parks and Rec Commission - Kimberly LaTourette noted that this commission met on May 8<sup>th</sup> and discussed the following:

- A new Field Fees Committee is being formed.

- The pavilion at Rebel Turf is currently run under the auspices of the Parks and Rec Commission. They discussed the possibility of handing this responsibility over to the Board of Education.
- The Sip and Stroll will be held on Saturday, May 20<sup>th</sup>.
- A Waterfront Director is still needed for this season.
- The Day Camp is almost full for the summer. There is a maximum of 150 campers per week.
- There will be Boat Dock Attendants on duty this summer from Thursdays to Sundays.
- The first outdoor movie will be on Friday, June 16<sup>th</sup> at Memorial Field.

## VII. INFORMATION ITEMS

### A. Attitudes and Behavior Survey

Dr. Craw spoke of the Attitudes and Behavior survey designed to give information to the district to provide the safest possible environment for students.

High School Principal James D'Amico spoke of the survey and introduced Kathy Hanley from the Western Connecticut Coalition and Reverend Liz Yoho from the New Fairfield Prevention Council. He also thanked everyone on the follow-up team. He gave a brief overview of the data from the responses.

Behavioral Health Director from Western Connecticut Coalition Kathy Hanley spoke of the role of the coalition and how it supports prevention councils. She spoke of external and internal assets and opportunities for growth. Reverend Liz Yoho from the New Fairfield Prevention Council spoke of four core measures and the Community Asset Challenge in order to promote less risky behavior.

Members of the BOE thanked the Prevention Council. A calendar of Prevention Council meetings will be made available and all members of the public are encouraged to get involved.

### B. Safety and Security Update - Executive Session

## VIII. INFORMATION/ACTION ITEM

### A. Fiscal Year 2024 Budget

Dr. Craw gave an updated scenario of the budget reductions for the 2023-2024 budget. These reductions include \$800,000 from the operating budget and \$100,000 from the Capital and Nonrecurring budget. He spoke of how the resignation of Steven Groccia affects the budget and how some programs can be restored.

**MOTION:** Tim Blair made a motion to accept the 2023-2024 budget scenario as presented, pending the outcome of the budget referendum. Stephanie Strazza seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

## 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 16, 2023, as recommended by the administration. Kimberly LaTourette seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

B. New Textbook Adoption

Suspension of the Rules - referring to *EdGems* Core Math - Middle School

1. *EdGems* Core Math - Middle School

**MOTION:** Kathy Baker made a motion to suspend the rules referring to new textbook adoption of *EdGems* Core Math - Middle School. Kimberly LaTourette seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

**MOTION:** Kathy Baker made a motion to recommend to the full Board the adoption of the following new textbook: *EdGems* Core Math - Middle School. Stephanie Strazza seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

C. Healthy Food Certification

**MOTION:** Kathy Baker made a motion to recommend to the full Board of Education or governing authority that the Board 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. Ed Sbordone seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

**MOTION:** Kathy Baker made a motion to recommend to the full Board that pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-215f, the Board of Education or governing authority 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, 2023 through June 30, 2024. 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. **OPPOSED:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

D. 2023-2024 STRIDES Calendar

Director of Pupil Personnel Services Katherine Matz spoke of the need to have the calendar for the STRIDES program in order to accommodate students in the STRIDES program that wish to attend classes at Naugatuck Valley Community College. This calendar includes the required 180 days of school.

**MOTION:** Kimberly LaTourette made a motion to recommend to the full Board the approval of the 2023-24 STRIDES school calendar as presented. Greg Flanagan seconded the motion.

**IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

E. Vote to Rescind Censure of BOE Member

Amy Johnson spoke of her desire to have the censure of her at the April 25<sup>th</sup> meeting rescinded. She noted that other members of the Board of Education have made similar comments and she should not be singled out. Tim Blair spoke of his regret in voting yes to censure Amy Johnson at the April 25<sup>th</sup> meeting and noted that there have been questionable social media posts in the past by other Board members. Ed Sbordone noted that if there have been other violations by BOE members, that they should be brought before the BOE.

**MOTION:** Amy Johnson made a motion to rescind the censure made against her at the April 25,

2023, meeting. Tim Blair seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Tim Blair and Amy Johnson,

**OPPOSED:** Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Kimberly LaTourette, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

**X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Kathy Baker spoke of the Post-Grad party that will be held on Friday, June 16<sup>th</sup> at Quassy. She spoke of “Surprise a Senior” and encouraged residents to go onto Facebook page to connect with a high school senior that has yet to be selected.

Millie Kellogg thanked Dr. Craw for the updated budget scenario. She encouraged everyone to vote in favor the budget on Saturday, May 20<sup>th</sup> but to answer “too low” for the advisory question.

**XI. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

Dominic Cipollone asked for a report of the SEE Project for the High School Seniors. He asked for an overview and a comparison of the SEE Project with other districts. He suggested that his report be sent to the Curriculum Subcommittee first. The SEE Fair will be held on Tuesday, June 13<sup>th</sup>.

Greg Flanagan asked for a report regarding if other districts charge spectators for athletic events.

**XII. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

Kimberly LaTourette noted that High School Senior Ryan Fitzpatrick will be holding a wheelchair basketball tournament on May 24<sup>th</sup> at 5 p.m. in the high school to raise funds for the National Wheelchair Basketball Association Junior Team. Donations for this event are welcome.

Ed Sbordone asked about the attendance of Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance members at tonight’s meeting. It was noted that First Selectmen Pat Del Monaco and Selectman Khris Hall were in attendance. No members of the Board of Finance were in attendance.

Stephanie Strazza thanked Dr. Craw for considering student needs in restoring some of the programs in the budget.

Dominic Cipollone encouraged everyone to engage with and get to know young members of the public.

### **XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**MOTION:** Dominic Cipollone made a motion to go into Executive Session at 8:31 p.m. to discuss a Safety and Security Update and to invite Superintendent of Schools Dr. Kenneth Crow and Director of Business and Operations Carrie DePuy into the Executive Session. Kathy Baker seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

**MOTION:** Dominic Cipollone made a motion to come out of Executive Session at 8:47 p.m. Greg Flanagan seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

### **XIV. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** Dominic Cipollone made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:48 p.m. Kimberly LaTourette seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

Respectfully submitted,  
Suzanne Kloos