

NEW FAIRFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION NEW FAIRFIELD, CT

The New Fairfield Board of Education held a special meeting on Tuesday, January 30, 2024, at 7:00 pm at the Community Room at 33 Route 37, New Fairfield, CT.

MINUTES – January 30, 2024

PRESENT: Dominic Cipollone (Chairman), Kathy Baker, Tim Blair (via phone), 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 Kristine Woleck, Director of Business and Operations Carrie DePuy, Director of Buildings and Grounds Phil Ross, Director of Athletics Mark Ottusch, Director of Pupil Personnel Services Maria Kennedy, Secondary Special Education Supervisor Monika Krepsztul and Elementary Special Education Supervisor Alex Lambert

I. CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Dominic Cipollone called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. REVIEW OF THE 2024-2025 BUDGET

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Ken Craw spoke of the upcoming budget for 2024-2025. Topics reviewed at this meeting included the budget for Special Education, Pupil Personnel Services, Facilities, Athletics and Capital Budget.

Facilities and Capital Projects

Director of Buildings and Grounds Phi Ross spoke of completed projects over the last year including:

- The Middle School cafeteria and lobby flooring,
- Dump truck replacement,
- Air conditioning units in four classrooms at MHHS.

Projects in progress include air conditioning for the STEAM room at MHHS and masonry repair at the Middle School. He noted that the majority of maintenance items are done in house, including preventative maintenance contracts, repairs and maintenance, custodial work and project work. The increase in service contracts has increased primarily due to the new high school. Members of the BOE asked questions of Mr. Ross regarding capital projects and timelines. Capital Improvements requests for fiscal year 2025 include:

Replacement of Student Transportation Van	\$50,000
Replace Rebel Stadium Turf and Track (\$630,000 offset from Field Fees)	\$600,000
Middle School Outdoor Recess space	\$25,000
Replace four classroom carpets in the Middle School	\$9,000
District Storage Garage	\$25,000
Create STEM Classroom in previous SOC Location	\$52,250
Intercom System in the Middle School	\$33,327
Total	\$794,577

Athletics

Athletic Director Mark Ottusch spoke of the many accomplishments of the sports teams at the high school, especially the Michael's Cup that was received for the first time in twenty years. He noted that there are 26 athletic teams with over 400 athletes. He compared Athletic Department staff with the staffing of surrounding districts. The cost of "Pay for Play" was increased from \$100 to \$150 per athlete per sport.

Mr. Ottusch spoke of facilities management and supervision for athletic events and the need for support staff. He noted that it is cheaper to hire seasonal staffing with a stipend than to have additional police coverage. There was a discussion of the best option for security at athletic events.

Initiatives for the Athletic Department include continued investments in sportsmanship and programs that give back to the Town. He spoke of the very successful toy drive. There was a discussion of field fees and cost of keeping the school open for extracurricular groups.

Special Education PPS

Director of Pupil Personnel Services Maria Kennedy spoke of Special Education in New Fairfield. There are 367 students currently identified as needing special education services within the district. This is an increase of 18 students since last year. The identification rate is 17.64%.

Maria Kennedy spoke of accomplishments with special education in the past year which include:

- Receiving a grant for Unified Sports for both the Middle School and High School,
- Professional learning opportunities for paraprofessionals.

Priorities for Special Education include building relationships with students, families, staff and the community, building capacity with staff training and development, High Quality Individual Education Plans with SMART goals and District Continuum of Services.

Maria Kennedy noted that the net increase for the budget is \$14,582 in non-payroll expenses over the fiscal year 2023-2024 budget. Increases include Professional Learning, Contingency, Evaluation and Consultation, Speech and Audiological Services, Legal, PPS and Psych Assessments. Non-payroll decreases include in-state tuition and out of district transportation. BOE members asked questions regarding this budget and specifically the optimal amount for BOE contingency.

Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Operating Budget and Capital Budget.

Members of the BOE discussed a potential percentage increase for the 2024-2025 budget. There was a consensus of the Board that the percentage increase should be under 5%. It was noted that it is preferred that these cuts come from non-payroll items. Superintendent Ken Craw will bring a list of potential cuts to the Board of Education meeting of February 1st.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

John McCartney thanked the BOE for all their hard work and thanked the Board of Education for not cutting payroll and making education a priority.

V. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Dominic Cipollone made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 p.m. Greg Flanagan seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Ed Sbordone

Respectfully submitted,
Suzanne Kloos