

NEW FAIRFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION NEW FAIRFIELD, CT

The New Fairfield Board of Education held a regular meeting on Thursday, December 18, 2025, at 7:00 pm via zoom.

MINUTES – December 18, 2025

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, 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, Director of Pupil Personnel Services Monika Krepsztul, Director of Business and Operations Carrie DePuy, Facilities Director Joe Lombardozzi, and BOF members John Arizzi and Rick Regan

I. CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Dominic Cipollone called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Board of Education observed a moment of silence in memory of Special Education Paraprofessional Sandra Robinson who passed away on December 14th.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- A. December 1, 2025 - Special meeting - Approved by consensus.
- B. December 4, 2025 - Regular meeting - Approved by consensus.

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA - Approved by consensus

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Braden Quinn, Tim Blair, Pat Toth, and Eric Alviti all spoke in support of renaming the Varsity Baseball field at the high school “Garbowski Field.”

VI. BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

A. Chairman's Report - Dominic Cipollone spoke of all the accomplishments of the schools so far this year and wished everyone a safe and peaceful holiday season. He further spoke of subcommittee assignments and asked BOE members to let him know which committees they are interested in.

B. Superintendent's Report - Dr. Kenneth Craw spoke of the amazing holiday concerts in the district and wished everyone a wonderful holiday season.

C. Student Representative Report

Senior Representative Ella Skogstrom spoke of the following:

- Congratulated students that were accepted to Naugatuck Valley Community College on instant decision day.
- The Concert Choir and Symphonic Band will have a concert on January 14th.
- The yearbook is on sale until January 1st.
- The yearbook ads are due by January 9th.

- Seniors must select their yearbook photo by December 19th.
- There will be a meeting on December 19th for Seniors to announce the Senior Superlatives.
- There will be a Senior Bagel Breakfast on December 22nd.

Junior Representative Hailey Lofaro spoke of the following:

- There will be an early dismissal on December 23rd. School will reopen after Winter break on Monday, January 5th.
- There will be an Alumni Return Day on January 8th.
- Mid-terms will be held from January 15th to January 21st.
- Second quarter will end on January 23rd.
- The “Transition to High School” night will be held on January 29th for families of students entering high school next Fall.
- Payments for the Washington, DC trip are due by December 19th.
- DECA is selling blankets to help support the Class of 2027.

D. Committee Reports

1. Business Operations/Resource Management - Greg Flanagan noted that this subcommittee met on December 18th and discussed the year-to-date budget. Most line items are on track with the exception of Special Education which has a year-to-date shortfall of approximately \$1.2 million. The administration is taking steps to mitigate this shortfall which was discussed later in the meeting. The subcommittee also reviewed the five-year capital project plan and the potential of a nominal increase to the ELC tuition.

2. Policy - Samantha Mannion noted that this subcommittee met on December 10th and had a presentation from Dr. Woleck about policies regarding the school libraries. The subcommittee decided that it needed more information and decided to table bringing it to the full Board at this time.

E. Liaison Reports

1. Board of Finance

Ed Sbordone noted that the BOF had a meeting on December 17th and discussed the following:

- There is an early estimate of a 5.1% increase in Medical Insurance for next year.
- Information received regarding potential non-tax revenue will be discussed at the January meeting.
- Jessica Sanchez, Brendan Harris and Thora Perkins will serve on the Audit subcommittee.
- John Arizzi will be the liaison for the BOE and Wes Marsh will serve as the Medical liaison.
- The BOF budget for 2026-2027 was approved.
- Town Treasurer Terry Friedman presented four scenarios for the use of approximately \$1.37 million of funds returned from school projects. The BOF decided that this will be spread out over four years which in effect will decrease the debt service for the town.
- The BOF discussed the Medical budget and the Unassigned Fund balance.
- The next meeting of the BOF will be held on January 28th.

2. Parks and Rec

Kimberly LaTourette noted that the Parks and Rec Commission met on December 8th and discussed the following:

- The original footprint for the snack shack at the Town Beach can be used to rebuild. Plans will need to go through the town's permitting process.
- Summer jobs will be posted beginning December 19th.
- The cost for Day Camp for Summer 2026 will be \$250 per camper per week for the full weeks and \$200 per camp per week for the 4 day week.
- There was a vote to increase the boat dock fee to \$1,775 plus tax for the 2026 Summer season.
- There was a discussion of capital projects including demolition and rebuilding of the snack shack and the basketball court.

VII. INFORMATION ITEMS

A. New Fairfield High School/Consolidated School Building Project Update - No update.

B. Special Education Program and Funding Overview

Dr. Craw, Carrie DePuy and Monika Krepsztul gave a brief overview of the Special Education program and ideas to mitigate the budget shortfall.

Director of Pupil Personnel Services Monika Krepsztul spoke of the legal obligations of the district to educate all students. She spoke of the difference between in-district and out-of-district placements and trends in Special Education from the last five years.

Carrie DePuy spoke of the budget process for Special Education expenses and calculation for Excess Cost Reimbursements. She noted that the total unanticipated Special Education expenses for the year is approximately \$1,224,885. State reimbursement is expected to be approximately \$768,747 which leaves a shortfall of \$456,138.00. Strategies for mitigating this shortfall include ongoing monitoring of the Special Education budget, continued implementation of budget controls and exploring enhancement to expand in-district options.

Dr. Craw spoke of current trends in Special Education and how it affects the budget. Monika Krepsztul spoke of the PPT process and how Special Education services are determined.

C. Board of Education Policies (Second Reading)

1. Bylaw 9311 - Formulation, Adoption, Amendment of Policies
2. Bylaw 9312 - Formulation, Adoption, Amendment of Bylaws
3. Bylaw 9313 - Formulation, Adoption, Amendment of Administrative Regulations

VIII. ACTION ITEMS

A. Personnel Report

MOTION: Kathy Baker made a motion to recommend to the full Board the approval of the Personnel Report for December 15, 2025, 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. Facilities and Property Naming

There was a lengthy discussion about the request to rename the baseball field at the High School. Dr. Craw spoke of the process for renaming and spoke of the board's role in establishing fair, consistent, and future-oriented policies. He spoke of key considerations for making decisions. The three scenarios for honoring someone would be recognizing them in the Hall of Honor, naming a facility or hanging a plaque in their honor.

MOTION: Greg Flanagan made a motion to rename the Varsity Baseball Field Garbowski Field in honor of the Garbowski family. Peggy Katkocin seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Peggy Katkocin, and Ed Sbordone. **OPPOSED:** Kathy Baker, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, and Samantha Mannion - **Motion denied.**

MOTION: Kathy Baker made a motion to hang a plaque to recognize Mike and Joe Garbowski for their dedication and volunteerism to the Baseball Program. 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

Kimberly LaTourette commented that a plaque should be viewed as a wonderful and meaningful recognition.

C. New Fairfield High School Graduation 2026

MOTION: Kathy Baker made a motion to recommend to the full Board approval of June 12, 2026, as the graduation date for the NFHS Class of 2026. Samantha Mannion seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Peggy Katkocin, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, and Ed Sbordone

D. Board of Education Policy

1. Policy 1321.2 - Public Videotaping and Educational Activity

MOTION: Samantha Mannion made a motion to recommend to the full Board approval of Policy 1321.2 - Public Videotaping and Education Activity. 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

There was a suggestion of putting a sign as a reminder where videotaping is prohibited.

E. ELC Tuition

MOTION: Kimberly LaTourette made a motion to recommend to the full Board approval to set the ELC tuition rate at \$3750 for the 2026-27 school year. 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

Dr. Craw gave a brief update regarding the increase in ELC tuition.

F. Central Office Relocation Update

MOTION: Ed Sbordone made a motion to recommend to the full Board to allocate the FY25 closeout in the amount of \$81,471.34 from the BOE Capital and Non-recurring account - Fund 306 - for use in the district office project. Kathy Baker seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Peggy Katkocin, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, and Ed Sbordone

Dr. Craw gave a brief update on the process of this project. Facilities Director Joe Lombardozzi spoke of some issues with the HVAC system for this project.

IX. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Braden Quinn thanked the BOE and spoke of his disappointment with the denial of the motion to name the Varsity Field after the Garbowski family.

X. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS - None

XI. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Ed Sbordone welcomed Peggy Katkocin back to the Board of Education. He thanked Greg Flanagan for filling in for him with the BOF update at the December 4th meeting.

Sue Huwer thanked the Administration and staff for the programs regarding the discussion of the book "The Anxious Generation" and noted that was very well done.

Kimberly LaTourette congratulated Dominic Cipollone and Samantha Mannion on being elected Chairman and Vice Chairman of the BOE.

Kathy Baker wished everyone Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Greg Flanagan spoke of the plaque for the Garbowski family. He further sent condolences to the family of Paraprofessional Sandra Robinson.

Dominic Cipollone noted that he appreciates the BOF looking for other revenue sources for the district and suggested that the BOF create a subcommittee to look to identify revenue sources in town.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Dominic Cipollone made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:54 p.m. Kathy Baker 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