

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

The New Fairfield Board of Education held a regular meeting on Thursday, June 6, 2024, at 7:00 pm via Zoom.

MINUTES – June 6, 2024

PRESENT: Dominic Cipollone (Chairman), Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Greg Flanagan (arrived 7:34 p.m.), 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, Director of Business and Operations Carrie DePuy, High School Principal James D’Amico, Elementary School Principal Allyson Story, Director of Pupil Personnel Services Maria Kennedy, Director of Technology Paul Gouveia, Selectman Tom Perkins and BOF member Thora Perkins

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 10, 2024 - Special meeting - approved by consensus
- B. May 16, 2024 - Regular meeting - approved by consensus

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA- Approved by consensus.

V. NEW FAIRFIELD HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT PERFORMANCE

High School Music Teacher Casey Hounsell introduced high school Senior Grace Kelly and spoke of her Independent Study. Grace Kelly showed a brief video of her performance using Music Technology. The entire BOE congratulated Grace on her performance and her success and wished her well in her future endeavors.

VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Former New Fairfield High School Principal Dr. Owen McDonnell spoke of the history of New Fairfield High School and specifically the building of the original high school. He noted that he has a plaque from the original high school and asked if the BOE could find a place to hang it in the new high school building.

VII. BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

- A. Chairman’s Report - Dominic Cipollone thanked Veterans of “The Greatest Generation” on the 80th anniversary of D-Day. He reminded everyone that the third budget vote will be held on Saturday, June 8th.
- B. Superintendent’s Report- Dr. Kenneth Craw congratulated Jeanne Sacridier on her retirement after 45 years as a bus driver for the district.
- C. Student Representative Reports
Senior Representative Brennan Hearty noted that:
 - The SEE Fair will be held on Tuesday, June 11th.
 - High School Graduation will be held on Friday, June 21st.

Junior Representative Emilia Sedlak noted that:

- Final exams begin on June 12th.
- Many theater students received HALO awards.
- Girls' Lacrosse won SWC championships and are headed to State Championships this week.
- "Food for All Initiative" is having a food drive.

D. Committee Reports

1. Curriculum - Tim Blair noted that this subcommittee met on May 28th. They discussed the curriculum for Social Studies and US History. They also discussed the combining of the two elementary schools and how that will affect curriculum. They discussed a proposed France Study trip for 2025.

2. Policy - Samantha Mannion noted that this subcommittee met on June 5th and discussed policies related to Increasing Educator Diversity, Student Activity Account and Nonresident students. She noted that the Nonresident student policy will require landlords and renters to fill out an extra form when registering their children for school.

3. Special Education Ad Hoc - Kim LaTourette noted that this subcommittee met on June 6th. Pupil Director of Pupil Personnel Services Maria Kennedy gave a review of what was accomplished this year with the STRIDES Program. They discussed the STRIDES calendar and noted that it follows the calendar for Naugatuck Valley Community College. The subcommittee discussed Unified Sports and Unified Theater and activities and events for next year. There will be an Early Learning Center Information Night for parents in the near future.

E. Liaison Reports

1. Board of Finance

Ed Sbordone noted that the BOF met on May 22nd. They approved an Additional Appropriation of \$41,672.99 from the General Fund to the Unreserved BOE Capital and Nonrecurring fund. This must be approved at a Town Meeting.

Ed Sbordone announced that the second budget referendum on May 18th failed. He further noted that the BOF voted to recommend to the taxpayers a reduction of \$250,000 to the BOE requested increased operating budget and to add \$100,000 back to the debt expenditure from the proposed BOF recommended budget of April 29th. This will be sent to the taxpayers for a third referendum.

VIII. INFORMATION ITEMS

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

Director of Business and Operations Carrie DePuy gave an update on the high school building project. She spoke of "pickling" the propane tanks and noted that it can start once school is out for the summer.

IX. INFORMATION ITEMS/ACTION ITEMS

A. District Priorities Progress Report

Dr. Craw spoke of four district priorities that include:

- Teaching and Learning,
- Healthy Learning Environment,
- Resources to Support Learning,
- Strategic Plan Development.

Dr. Craw announced that there will be a joint meeting of the Board of Education, Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance and Permanent Building Committee on Thursday, June 13th at 6:30 p.m. to discuss solutions for the Bus Lot.

B. NFPS Strategic Plan

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Dr. Kristine Woleck spoke of Strategic Planning Team and goals and committees with a timeline for action. She spoke of Instruction Action Steps to Wellness Action Steps and Summer Projects. There was a brief description of how to measure progress.

MOTION: Ed Sbordone made a motion to recommend to the full Board the approval of the NFPS Strategic Plan as recommended by the administration. 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

C. Elementary School Structure

Elementary School Principal Allyson Story spoke of the process for combining Consolidated School and Meeting House Hill School into one K-5 school. She spoke of focus groups from staff, students and families and the benefits of becoming one school.

MOTION: Kathy Baker made a motion to recommend to the full Board the approval of the consolidation of the two elementary schools under one name, New Fairfield Elementary School, beginning with the 2024-25 school year. 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. Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Budget Update

Dr. Craw noted that the third budget referendum will be held on Saturday, June 8th. He spoke of the impact of the reduction of \$500,000 from the BOE approved operating budget. He spoke of the cumulative effects of cuts and how they affect the capital budget, the operating budget and debt service. He noted that according to NESDEC, enrollment is expected to increase.

E. Audit Update

Carrie DePuy noted that the State did an audit of old building projects and as a result, approximately \$200,000 will be given back to the Town.

X. **ACTION ITEMS**

A. Personnel Report

MOTION: Kathy Baker made a motion to recommend to the full Board approval of the Personnel Report for May 30, 2024, as recommended by the administration. Greg Flanagan 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. Increasing Educator Diversity Plan

MOTION: Samantha Mannion made a motion to recommend to the full Board the approval of the Increasing Educator Diversity Plan as presented to submit to the CSDE and to authorize the Superintendent to make modifications to the plan if the CSDE sends it back for revision. Ed Sbordone seconded the motion.

Dr. Craw gave a description of what defines diversity and how it affects education in New Fairfield. There was discussion as to the pros and cons of this plan and the need to hire the best possible candidate for each position.

MOTION: Ed Sbordone made a motion to call the question on the previous motion and to stop discussion. Kathy Baker seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR OF CALLING THE QUESTION:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone **OPPOSED:** Greg Flanagan. **IN FAVOR OF MOTION AFTER THE QUESTION WAS CALLED:** Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone. **OPPOSED:** Sue Huwer. **ABSTAINED:** Tim Blair

C. Board of Education Policy- Suspension of the rules referring to Policy 5141.5, Policy 4111.3 and Policy 5118

1. Policy 5141.5 - Suicide Prevention/Intervention
2. Policy 4111.30 - Increasing Educator Diversity
3. Policy 5118 - Nonresident Students

MOTION: Samantha Mannion made a motion to suspend the rules referring to Policy 5141.5, Policy 4111.3, and Policy 5118. 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

MOTION: Samantha Mannion made a motion to recommend to the full Board the approval of the Board of the Education Policy 5141.5 - Suicide Prevention/Intervention. Kathy Baker 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: Samantha Mannion made a motion to recommend to the full Board the approval of the Board of the Education Policy 4111.3 - Increasing Educator Diversity. Kathy Baker seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone **OPPOSED:** Tim Blair and Sue Huwer

There was a discussion of the pros and cons of this policy and the desire of the district to hire the best possible candidate for each position.

MOTION: Samantha Mannion made a motion to recommend to the full Board the approval of the Board of the Education Policy 5118 - Nonresident Students. Kathy Baker 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. International Field Trip

1. NFHS France Study Trip

World Language Teacher Heidi Edel spoke of student exchange trip to France for February 2025. This trip would be in combination with students from Joel Barlow High School. Members of the BOE asked questions of Ms. Edel about the vetting process and the number of students that would be able to go.

MOTION: Kimberly LaTourette made a motion to recommend to the full Board the approval of the international field trip to France as presented. Greg Flanagan seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone

E. STRIDES 2024/2025 Calendar

MOTION: Kimberly LaTourette made a motion to recommend to the full Board the approval of the 2024-25 STRIDES calendar with the following amendments: Spring semester start date of January 24, 2025, and Spring recess dates of March 17-21, 2025. 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

XI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

High School Principal James D'Amico thanked the New Fairfield Community and everyone that contributed to scholarships that were distributed at Scholars' Night on June 5th. He noted that over \$100,000 worth of

scholarships were awarded to New Fairfield students. He further spoke of the success of Unified Sports and Unified Theater in the district.

XII. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

A summary of open building projects will be discussed at a future meeting.
The next regular BOE meeting will be held on Thursday, August 15th.

XIII. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Greg Flanagan spoke of the success of Scholars Night and thanked everyone involved.

Sue Huwer welcomed former High School Principal Dr. McDonnell to the meeting and noted that it was good to see him.

Kathy Baker wished everyone a good summer and reminded everyone to vote.

Samantha Mannion reminded everyone to vote.

Ed Sbordone encouraged everyone to vote “No/Too Low” at the budget referendum.

Tim Blair spoke in support of the original budget brought forth by the BOE and encouraged everyone to vote “No/Too Low.”

Dominic Cipollone encouraged everyone to vote “No/To Low” and spoke of concerns of money wasted by having multiple referendums.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Kathy Baker made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:22 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 and Ed Sbordone

Respectfully submitted,
Suzanne Kloos