

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

The New Fairfield Board of Education held a regular meeting on Thursday, August 20, 2020,
at 7:00 pm. at the Meeting Hill School Cafetorium, 24 Gillotti Road, New Fairfield, CT.
(Also available via Zoom)

MINUTES – August 20, 2020

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

ABSENT: Kathy Baker 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, Pupil Personnel Director Katherine Matz, 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, Meeting House Hill School Assistant Principal Allyson Story, Consolidated School Principal Rob Spino, Special Education Supervisor Melissa Busnel, Director of Curriculum Alyce Misuraca, Athletic Director Mark Ottusch and First Selectman Pat Del Monaco

Network Administrator for the BOE 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 13, 2020 - Special meeting - approved by consensus with the following additions: Add detail to the Building Project Update that cost estimates for each school are running approximately 10% over budget. It was noted that the 10% amount was achieved by cutting space in both schools.

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA - approved by consensus

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Stefanie Marlow spoke of her concerns with the audio piece of the remote learning that could potentially make it difficult for students to hear instruction.

VI. BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

A. Chairman’s Report - Peggy Katkocin noted that school will open in two weeks. She noted that everyone in the district is doing everything they can to make sure that school runs smoothly and safely and asked everyone to be patient.

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

- Excited to open on September 2nd. Everyone in the district has worked very hard to get the schools open. Dr. Cosentino thanked everyone involved.

- She noted that they are trying to work out kinks with Room and Zoom. She asked that everyone be patient.
- Convocation will be held via Zoom on Friday, August 28th.
- First Student is hiring bus monitors for the beginning of the school year. Anyone interested should contact First Student at (203) 746-8883.
- Substitute teachers, cafeteria aides and hall monitors are needed for the district. Information can be found on the New Fairfield School website.
- Spoke of three indicators that Connecticut uses to track the Coronavirus. They include the percent of positivity as a 7-day average by county, the number of new hospitalizations per 1,000 and COVID-19 surveillance. Dr. Cosentino noted that the numbers for the State of Connecticut are low in all indicators.
- Spoke of the percentage of students that have chosen remote learning. Throughout the district 82% have chosen in-person school. The students that have chosen remote learning are broken down to the following:
 - Consolidated School - 26% remote learning,
 - Meeting House Hill School - 21% remote learning,
 - Middle School - 15% remote learning,
 - High School - 14% remote learning.
- Spoke of the difference between distance learning and homeschooling.

C. Committee Reports

1. Business Operations/Resource Management - Ed Sbordone noted that this committee met on August 20th and discussed Summary vs. Projected Year End Expenditure and Encumbrances report for the fiscal year 2019-2020. There is a preliminary surplus of approximately \$577,000. This number will be finalized by the end of the month and will be presented to the BOF. A lot of the surplus is due to expenses not incurred due to COVID. The subcommittee also spoke of budget transfers made by Director of Business and Operations Dr. Sanzo. They spoke of budget vs actual for the current year 2020-2021 and budget considerations for the 2020-2021 reopening plan. It is estimated that extra money may be needed to reopen the school due to COVID. These expenses may be covered by the 2019-2020 surplus.

D. Liaison Reports

1. Board of Finance - Ed Sbordone noted that the BOF met on August 19 and discussed the development of a fraud policy and a conflict of interest policy for both the Town and BOE. They have recently created a Pension and Bonding subcommittee to learn and understand the pension plans and the bonding process. The costs of reopening the schools will be discussed at the next BOF meeting scheduled for September 16th.
2. Parks and Recreation Committee - This committee has not met.
3. School Security and Safety Committee - The next meeting for this committee is scheduled for September 14th.

VII. **INFORMATION ITEMS**

A. School Reopening Plan - Dr. Cosentino reviewed the main points regarding the reopening plan:

- There will be Power School training for parents.
- “Fast Lane” is an app that allows parents to check in for dismissals from their cars. This will be implemented for Grades K-5.

- Materials will be distributed to students that have chosen remote learning.
- The teachers are looking for creative ideas for giving students breaks from the computer.
- All students will be assigned a classroom even if they are remote learners. This will allow all students to be part of a community right away and allow for a smooth transition if they decide to come back to in-person learning.
- Schedules will be sent to students either this week or next.
- Health protocols for students who become ill or become exposed were discussed. It was noted that due to FERPA and HIPPA laws, names of sick students will not be released.
- Questions regarding COVID can be referred to nurses at the respective schools or Health Director Tim Simpkins.
- Encouraged everyone to share information with the district if a student in the district or someone in their family are exposed to COVID.
- Bus monitors are needed for the beginning of the school year.
- It was noted that there is a new policy regarding food allergies in the schools. Food is not allowed to be used as rewards or for celebrations.
- No visitors are allowed in the schools until further notice.
- Heat and humidity will be monitored and early dismissal will be called if necessary.
- The HVAC will be run according to Department of Health guidelines.
- Decisions regarding sports will follow the recommendations of the Department of Health. Athletic Director Mark Ottusch spoke of a meeting today regarding sports and noted that the goal is to get students safely in school first and then resume athletics if it can be done safely.

B. 2020-2021 Staffing Update - Dr. Cosentino noted that the district is in good shape with staffing for the 2020-2021 school year. There is a posting for an additional nurse to assist where needed. Paraprofessionals, substitutes and cafeteria aides are also needed for the district.

C. Budget Considerations for New Fairfield Reopening Plan - Dr. Sanzo spoke of the impact of COVID-19 on the budget. He broke the expenses into categories that included Academics, Building and Cleaning, Student Support, Technology and Transportation. He spoke of the possibility of the need to hire additional staff to fill in for staff members that may need medical leave or to take a leave of absence for child care. He noted that due to the Family First Coronavirus Response Act, this would be a paid leave at 2/3 salary. He spoke of additional custodians that may be needed in the district. Non-payroll items such as PPE and technology will also affect the budget. It is estimated that additional expenses for COVID-19 will be approximately \$1 million, not including additional staff that may be required. He noted that the district was approved for an ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief) Grant in the amount of \$200,000 that will offset some of these expenses. There may be some additional State funding, and there is a BOE surplus from last year of approximately \$575,000. The BOE will ask the BOF for 100% of the surplus to be allocated in a non-lapsing account. Dr. Sanzo will continue to refine these numbers and keep the Board posted on any developments.

VIII. ACTION ITEMS

A. Personnel Report

MOTION: Greg Flanagan made a motion to recommend to the full Board the approval of the Personnel Report for August 13, 2020, as recommended by the administration. Kimberly LaTourette seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Peggy Katkocin, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Rick Regan and Ed Sbordone

B. New Fairfield Public Schools Reopening Budget Transfers

MOTION: Ed Sbordone made a motion to recommend to the full Board approval to authorize the Director of Business and Operations to make line item transfers to the 2020-21 education budget as may be necessary to meet the needs of the district during the COVID-19 pandemic and that a report of such transfers made under this authority be presented to the Board of Education Business Operations/Resource Management Subcommittee on a quarterly basis. Greg Flanagan seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Peggy Katkocin, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Rick Regan and Ed Sbordone

IX. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Tim Smith spoke as a parent of a high school student about his concerns regarding all in person classes and noted that a lot of surrounding towns are doing a hybrid model and suggested that New Fairfield should have a hybrid plan at least to start.

X. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- Approval of July 2 minutes.
- The next meeting of the BOE will be September 3, 2020.

XI. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Members of the Board of Education encouraged everyone to do their part to help stop the spread of COVID-19 by continuing to wear masks and to practice social distancing. They thanked everyone involved in the reopening process and spoke of their appreciation for starting school in person. They encouraged everyone to be patient and to give their full support to the staff.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Peggy Katkocin made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:23 p.m. Dominic Cipollone seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Peggy Katkocin, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Rick Regan and Ed Sbordone

Respectfully submitted,
Suzanne Kloos