

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

The New Fairfield Board of Education held a regular meeting on Thursday, May 16, 2024, at 7:00 p.m. via zoom.

MINUTES – May 16, 2024

PRESENT: Dominic Cipollone (Chairman), Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone

ABSENT: None

ALSO PRESENT: Superintendent of Schools Dr. Kenneth Crow, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Dr. Kristine Woleck, Director of Business and Operations Carrie DePuy, High School Principal James D’Amico, Middle School Principal Karen Gruetzner, Elementary School Principal Allyson Story, Elementary School Assistant Principal Dr. Jennifer Hilderbrand, Pupil Personnel Director Maria Kennedy, Director of Technology Paul Gouveia, Selectman Pat Del Monaco and Selectman Tom Perkins

Video Production 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 7:01p.m.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. May 2, 2024 - Regular Meeting - Approved by consensus with the correction of Sue Huwer’s comment during Board Member Comments to read “that she was in support of the administration being sensitive to the parents’ concerns about the performance.”

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA - Approved by consensus.

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Rick Regan encouraged the BOE to address the assertions that were made by the BOF regarding the budget in the May 16th Town Tribune.

Jena Alvitì reminded everyone that the budget referendum will be held this Saturday, May 18th. Absentee ballots are available for anyone that won’t be in town on Saturday.

Terra Volpe thanked the BOE for their hard work. She spoke of concerns with the proposed budget since it uses the bond premium which could cause a deficit for next year.

VI. BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

A. Chairman’s Report - Dominic Cipollone noted that he had a very successful visit to the Senior Center this week which included a discussion of the budget. He encouraged the town to connect students with Senior Citizens.

B. Superintendent's Report- Dr. Kenneth Crow spoke of the following:

- Thanked the student representatives for this year. He congratulated Senior Representative Brennan Hearty on his graduation and wished him well in the future. He thanked Junior Representative Emilia Sedlak for her work this year and noted that the BOE is looking forward to welcoming her back next year.
- Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Dr. Kristine Woleck and Elementary School Principal Allyson Story will present the K-5 Literacy/Reading Resource Report and Findings at tonight's meeting.
- The Strategic Plan will be presented to the BOE in the near future.

C. Student Representative Reports

Senior Representative Brennan Hearty noted that:

- SEE Projects for Seniors will begin on May 20th.
- The SEE Fair will be held on June 11th.
- The Senior Trip to Six Flags will be held on June 6th.
- High School Graduation will be held on June 21st.
- Thanked Dr. Crow and the entire BOE for the opportunity to serve as the student representative.

Junior Representative Emilia Sedlak noted that:

- Junior Prom was held on May 10th.
- Senior Prom will be held on May 18th.
- AP Testing will be held this week.
- The Art Show at the High School will be held from May 21st to May 24th.

D. Committee Reports

1. Business Operations/Resource Management

Greg Flanagan noted that this subcommittee met on May 16th at 6:00 p.m. and discussed the following items:

- A surplus is projected for year end.
- The Field Fees committee met on May 13th. They received a bid for \$886,000 for the turf replacement. Since this bid is lower than expected, the committee discussed the possibility of replacing the lighting on the field too.
- The subcommittee discussed rebranding of the elementary school as one school with one name.
- Director of Human Resources Kara Mehler is retiring in June. This is a shared service with the Town. A search for her replacement has begun.
- A propane update was given to the subcommittee. All levels on the tank were acceptable. They are still awaiting results for the liquid test with the tanks.
- Greg Flanagan stressed that the incident at the high school last week had nothing to do with propane.
- The next meeting of the Business Operations/Resource Management will be held in June.

2. Curriculum

Tim Blair noted that this subcommittee met on May 6th and discussed the following:

- K-5 Literacy/Reading Resource Report.
- The subcommittee spoke of the NEASC update and noted that accreditation has been renewed but they remain on warning for curriculum and community resources for learning. High School Principal James D'Amico spoke at the subcommittee meeting about how the district is addressing this warning and it shouldn't be a problem going forward.
- Dr. Woleck gave the subcommittee an overview of Leadership Guide and Principles.
- There was a request for more research for the curriculum for K-5 for US History.

3. Field Fees Committee

Ed Sbordone noted that this committee met on May 13th and discussed:

- A review of the turf field and track replacement budget and quotes.
- Review of the current Field Fees structure. No decision has been made at this time.
- Discussed the current maintenance structure for the Rebel Pavilion.

E. Liaison Reports

1. Parks and Recreation Committee

Kim LaTourette noted that this committee met on May 13th and discussed:

- The Sip and Stroll on May 4th was very successful.
- They discussed ideas for the Snack Shack at the Town Beach.
- The Beach House will not open this summer.
- The shed for Girl's Softball was installed.
- Outdoor Summer movies will not be shown this year due to lack of staff.

VII. **INFORMATION ITEMS**

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

Mark Schweitzer from Colliers gave an update on the school and noted that vapor samples and liquid samples were taken. The vapor samples all came back at acceptable levels. They are still awaiting results for the liquid samples. There will be a meeting in the near future to discuss next steps.

B. K-5 Literacy/Reading Resource Report and Findings

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Dr. Kristine Woleck thanked Allyson Story and her staff for their work with this project. She gave a summary of the K-5 Literacy Report which included the five components of reading (Phonological awareness, decoding, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension). She spoke of resources that are best for New Fairfield students which also included on the State Resource list.

Elementary School Principal Allyson Story showed a brief video of the students using the resources. She spoke of Literacy Study Questions and how the resources tie into curriculum. She reviewed a timeline and spoke of next steps.

C. Board of Education Policies (*First Reading*)

1. Policy 5141.5 - Suicide Prevention/Intervention

D. Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Budget Update

Dr. Craw spoke of NESDEC projected enrollment and how it affects the budget, and noted that there is projected to be more students for next year than when the budget was first adopted. He spoke of unanticipated costs for the 2023-2024 school year and of cutting non-payroll accounts to meet the unexpected costs. It was noted that not funding capital projects can be problematic for next year's budget.

VIII. **ACTION ITEMS**

A. Personnel Report

MOTION: Kathy Baker made a motion to recommend to the full Board approval of the Personnel Report for May 9, 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. Non-Union Salaries and Benefits - Executive Session

IX. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Kathy Baker spoke of the details of the Post Grad party for Seniors at Quassy. She encouraged residents to participate in “Surprise a Senior”. Details can be found on the Facebook page.

Selectman Tom Perkins noted that he was impressed with the Literacy presentation given by Dr. Woleck and Mrs. Story but questioned the amount of money being spent on the education budget and encouraged a closer look at the number of administrators in the district.

Jena Alviti spoke in support of fully funding the BOE budget.

Terra Volpe encouraged the BOE to stick with a five-year plan for capital projects.

X. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Kathy Baker asked for an update on AP classes.

XI. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Ed Sbordone asked if there have been any requests from the BOF for BOE members to join the Capital Planning subcommittee. He spoke of concerns with cuts to the BOE budget and encouraged taxpayers to vote “No/Too low” at the budget referendum on May 18th.

Kim LaTourette thanked the Student Representatives and wished them both a good summer. She noted that the Board is looking forward to having Emilia Sedlak return next year and wished Brennan Hearty the best of luck in college.

Dominic Cipollone spoke of the budget referendum and reminded everyone that the BOE is trying to do what is best for the entire community.

XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING NON-UNION CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS

MOTION: Dominic Cipollone made a motion to go into Executive Session at 8:22 p.m. to discuss non-union contract negotiations and to invite Dr. Craw and Carrie DePuy into the Executive Session. Kim 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: Dominic Cipollone made a motion to come out of Executive Session at 9:07 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

MOTION: Ed Sbordone made a motion to recommend to the full board approval of the non-union salaries and benefits for the 2024-2025 school year as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools as revised in Executive Session. 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

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Dominic Cipollone made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:09 p.m. 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

Respectfully submitted,
Suzanne Kloos