

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

The New Fairfield Board of Education held a regular meeting on Thursday, April 1, 2021, at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom.

MINUTES – April 1, 2021

PRESENT: Peggy Katkocin (Chairman), Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan (left 7:30 p.m.), Samantha Mannion, Rick Regan, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

ABSENT: Kimberly LaTourette

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, 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, Consolidated School Assistant Principal Karen Gruetzner, Director of Curriculum Alyce Misuraca, Special Education Supervisor Melissa Busnel, First Selectman Pat Del Monaco, New Fairfield Health Director Tim Simpkins and BOF Chairman Wes Marsh

Network Administrator 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. March 18, 2021 - Regular meeting - approved by consensus
- B. March 23, 2021 - Special meeting - approved by consensus

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION: Peggy Katkocin made a motion to change Agenda Item XIII to be “Executive Session to Discuss Contract Negotiations” and to make Adjournment Agenda Item XIV. Rick Regan seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Peggy Katkocin, Samantha Mannion, Rick Regan, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Michelle Brown, Lindsey Mopes, Greg Schwartz and Joel Pardalis all spoke of the benefits of allowing staff members to enroll their out-of-district children in New Fairfield without tuition and encouraged the board not to change this policy.

Student Junior Representative Cayden Walker spoke in favor of allowing staff members to enroll their out-of-district children in New Fairfield without tuition.

Maria Gouveia asked the district to reconsider the decision to move the Kindergarten remote learners to a separate teacher instead of Room and Zoom for the remainder of this school year.

VI. BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

A. Chairman's Report - Peggy Katkocin spoke of the following:

- Thanked everyone involved in with the SEE (Senior Enrichment Experience) project and noted that there are many opportunities for virtual experiences.

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

- Introduced New Fairfield Health Director Tim Simpkins who spoke of COVID numbers related to New Fairfield. He noted that New Fairfield's infection rate continues to be high and is currently 10th worst of the 169 towns in Connecticut. There was a discussion of the possible reasons for the high infection rate. Peggy Katkocin spoke of the amazing job that the vaccine clinic has been doing in New Fairfield. She encouraged eligible people once they are on VAMS to call the Senior Center during the day at (203) 312-5665 to get on the standby list for vaccines. Tim Simpkins encouraged everyone to get vaccinated as soon as an appointment is available.
- Dr. Pat Cosentino noted that Paraprofessional Day is Thursday, April 1st. She thanked all the paraprofessionals in the district and noted that they will be celebrated on Wednesday, April 7th.
- Assistant Superintendent of Schools Julie Luby gave statistics for remote learners as of April 1, 2021. She noted that there are more remote learners in the high school than in the lower grades. She encouraged families considering having their students return to in-person learning to do so as soon as possible. She further noted that high school students will be asked to commit to either in-person or remote learning as of May 3, 2021, for the rest of the school year.
- Julie Luby spoke of the reasons for the change in the Kindergarten model to have the remote Kindergarten learners have one teacher instead of the current Room and Zoom model. She spoke of the benefits of this for students involved.

C. Student Representatives' Report

Senior Representative Nick Thiel-Hudson reported on the following:

- New Fairfield High School College and Career Center will be starting Careers in the Community Series on April 20th. Sign ups will begin next week.

Junior Representative Cayden Walker reported on the following:

- The DECA Fashion Show will be held on Facebook Live on April 7th.
- The Junior Prom will be held on April 30th.
- The Senior Prom will be held on May 22nd.

D. Committee Reports

1. Curriculum - Dominic Cipollone noted that this subcommittee met on March 22nd and discussed the Equity Action Team and specifically a survey regarding equity in the schools. They discussed the Library and STEAM program for grades K-5. Director of Curriculum Alyce Misuraca gave an update on the Math program and spoke of a grant application that would give four days of Math coaching at the high school level.
2. Policy - Samantha Mannion noted that this subcommittee met last week and finished the bylaw audit and review. The conversation regarding the policy regarding allowing out of district staff to bring their children to New Fairfield without tuition was tabled until the April meeting.
3. Special Education Ad Hoc Subcommittee - Stephanie Strazza noted that this subcommittee met on April 1st and discussed the progress of the transition program. They also discussed summer guidance for Summer School. Dyslexia screening will be discussed at the next meeting.

E. Liaison Reports

1. Board of Finance - Ed Sbordone noted that the BOF met on March 31st and discussed the following:
 - Fiscal year 2021-2022 budget.
 - Medical Plan and specifically the possibility of increasing the Individual Stop Loss for the plan.
 - Dr. Sanzo reviewed the \$644,000 operating budget reductions. The Town budget reductions were also discussed. No direction was given at this time.
 - The BOF voted to accept the 2019-2020 audit report and to retain PK O'Connor Davies as the auditor.
 - The April 7, 2021, meeting was cancelled. The next meeting will be held on April 21st.
2. School Security and Safety Committee - Samantha Mannion noted that this committee will meet sometime in April.

VII. INFORMATION ITEMS

A. Equity Action Team Update

Julie Luby spoke of the role and goals of the Equity Action Team and introduced the team which includes both teachers and students. BOE member Stephanie Strazza spoke of the purpose of the team. Students Caitlyn Cennamo, Claire Emerson and Emre Akter spoke of approaches and specific events for the team.

There was a discussion of the survey regarding Equity that will be given to students in Grades 6-12. There will be a separate survey for students in Grades K-5 that will be given through the parents.

B. Board of Education Policies (First Reading)

1. Policy 6146 - Graduation Requirements
2. Bylaw 9324 - Advance Delivery of Meeting Materials
3. Bylaw 9325 - Meeting Conduct
4. Bylaw 9325.2 - Order of Business
5. Bylaw 9325.4 - Voting Recording
6. Bylaw 9325.5 - Request for Information by Board Members
7. Bylaw 9326 - Record of Meeting/Minutes
8. Bylaw 9327.1 - Board Member use of Internet Social Networks
9. Bylaw 9330 - Board/School System Records
10. Bylaw 9350 - Hearings
11. Bylaw 9360 - School Board Legislative Programs
12. Bylaw 9400 - Monitoring Products and Processes

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

Dr. Rich Sanzo gave an update on the Consolidated School building project (CELA) and noted that he and Dr. Cosentino had a meeting with the State Office of School Construction Grants and Review. It is expected that approval to go out to bid will be received in April. The PBC has scheduled a special meeting for Tuesday, April 6th to discuss both school projects including an update on the bus lot, pre-bidding activities and site logistics.

VIII. INFORMATION/ACTION ITEMS

A. 2021-2022 Budget Update

Ed Sbordone noted that the cuts made to the 2021-2022 budget brought the total overall budget to a 3.83% increase. Debt service consists of 2.91% of this 3.83% increase and the increase exclusive of the debt service is 0.92%. An informal poll of the BOF members at the March 31st meeting indicated that the BOF members were in agreement with the 3.83% increase.

Dr. Sanzo spoke of the ESSER II grant and appropriate allocations for this money. Dominic Cipollone thanked everyone for their transparency regarding the budget.

IX. ACTION ITEMS

A. Personnel Report

MOTION: Kathy Baker made a motion to recommend to the full Board the approval of the Personnel Report for March 25, 2021, as recommended by the administration. Rick Regan seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Peggy Katkocin, Samantha Mannion, Rick Regan, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

B. Board of Education Policies

MOTION: Samantha Mannion made a motion to recommend to the full Board the approval of the Board of the Education Bylaws listed below as presented. Kathy Baker seconded the motion.

IN FAVOR: Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Peggy Katkocin, Samantha Mannion, Rick Regan, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

1. Bylaw 9260 - Board Member Protection
2. Bylaw 9310 - Development, Distribution and Maintenance of Manual of Policies, Regulations, Bylaws
3. Bylaw 9311 - Formulation, Adoption, Amendment of Policies
4. Bylaw 9312 - Formulation, Adoption, Amendment of Bylaws
5. Bylaw 9313 - Formulation, Adoption, Amendment of Administrative Regulations
6. Bylaw 9314 - Suspension of Policies, Bylaws, Regulations
7. Bylaw 9320 - Board of Education Meeting
8. Bylaw 9321 - Time, Place, Notification of Meetings, Quorum
9. Bylaw 9321.21 - Board of Education Organizational Meeting
10. Bylaw 9322 - Public and Executive Sessions
11. Bylaw 9323 - Construction of the Agenda/Actions by the Board

X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Amanda spoke of concerns regarding the Open Choice Program and the possibility that this could affect the small classrooms and personal feel for students in New Fairfield.

Maria Gouveia read a letter from her daughter Sabrina Gouveia regarding the change to Kindergarten remote learners at Consolidated and moving the remaining remote students into a separate class for the rest of the school year. She spoke of how this would affect continuity for the students.

Fabio Saccamanno spoke as a recent alumnus of New Fairfield High School and a current UConn student regarding the recent addition of an anti-racism course at UConn. He noted that he would like to see New Fairfield High School implement something similar.

Sheri Anderson asked about the possibility of an adjustment in required community service hours at the high school due to the pandemic. It was suggested that she reach out to High School Principal James D'Amico.

Olivia Micca spoke as a recent alumnus of the Class of 2015 in support of the Equity Action Team.

Joliset Miller spoke as a parent in the district and thanked everyone involved in implementing the Equity Action Team.

Terra Volpe thanked the BOE and everyone in the district for their leadership during the pandemic. She spoke in support of free tuition for children of out of district staff members. She further thanked the Equity Action Team for their hard work.

Annie Rosin thanked the Equity Action Team for their hard work and noted that the survey is a great first step towards being inclusive.

XI. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS - None

XII. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Rick Regan thanked everyone for their work on the budget and thanked the Equity Action Team.

Ed Sbordone noted that the next BOE meeting will be held on **Tuesday**, April 20th instead of the regular Thursday night due to spring break.

Dominic Cipollone thanked everyone involved in the Equity Action Team.

Kathy Baker thanked everyone that participated in Public Comment.

Stephanie Strazza thanked everyone involved in the Equity Action Team, especially the students.

Peggy Katkocin thanked everyone involved in the Equity Action Team.

XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS

MOTION: Peggy Katkocin made a motion to go into Executive Session at 9:14 p.m. for the purpose of discussing contract negotiations and to invite Dr. Pat Cosentino into the Executive Session. Kathy Baker seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Peggy Katkocin, Samantha Mannion, Rick Regan, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

MOTION: Peggy Katkocin made a motion to come out of Executive Session at 9:37 p.m. Samantha Mannion seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Peggy Katkocin, Samantha Mannion, Rick Regan, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Peggy Katkocin made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:38 p.m. Kathy Baker seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Peggy Katkocin, Samantha Mannion, Rick Regan, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

Respectfully submitted, Suzanne Kloos