

NEW FAIRFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION NEW FAIRFIELD, CT

The New Fairfield Board of Education held a regular meeting on Thursday, January 15, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. in the New Fairfield Community Room, 33 Route 37, New Fairfield, CT.

MINUTES – January 15, 2026

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, High School Assistant Principal Michael Chapleau, High School Assistant Principal Scott Rohwedder, Middle School Principal Karen Gruetzner, Middle School Assistant Principal Steven Groccia, Elementary School Principal Allyson Story, Elementary School Assistant Principal Jennifer Hilderbrand, Elementary School Assistant Principal Alyce Misuraca, Elementary School Assistant Principal Rob Spino. Director of Pupil Personnel Services Monika Krepsztul, Elementary Special Education Supervisor Alex Lambert, Director of Business and Operations Carrie DePuy, Director of Technology Paul Gouveia, Facilities Director Joe Lombardozi, Athletic Director Mark Ottusch, BOF Chairman Wes Marsh, and BOF members John Arizzi, Brendan Harris, Thora Perkins and Rick Regan

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. December 18, 2025 - Regular meeting - Approved by consensus

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA - Approved by consensus

V. PRESENTATION OF SUPERINTENDENT’S FY 2026-2027 RECOMMENDED BUDGET

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Kenneth Craw spoke of the upcoming budget for 2026-2027. He noted this is a “needs based” budget and an investment in the future. He thanked the administration and staff for all their hard work with the preparation of the budget.

Dr. Craw spoke of Points of Pride, Budget Development, and the Staffing Plan. He spoke of enrollment for the future and program enhancements. He noted that the baseline increase that maintains current programs, services and class sized is 3.15%. An increase of 1.29% is due to Special Education requirements.

The Superintendent’s recommended Operating Budget for 2026-2027 is \$53,591,293 which is a percent increase of 4.44% (\$2,279,374) over the 2025-2026 voter approved budget. The proposed Capital Budget equals \$615,000 for year three of the five-year Capital Improvement Plan.

Budget workshops will be held on Tuesday, January 20th, Wednesday, January 21st and Tuesday, January 27th. The budget presentation and documents can be found on the district website.

VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Jennifer Pappas asked about the status of the propane issue at the high school.

VII. BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

A. Chairman's Report - Dominic Cipollone thanked Dr. Craw and staff for all their hard work on putting the budget together.

B. Superintendent's Report - Dr. Kenneth Craw commended Dr. Woleck and staff on their hard work with the Curriculum website. This website is now available to the community.

C. Student Representative Report

Junior Representative Hailey Lafaro spoke of the following:

- The "Alumni Return Day" held recently at the high school was very successful.
- The Choir, Chorus and Symphonic Band concert was held on January 14th.
- Mid-terms will be held between January 15th - to January 21st.
- There is no school on Monday, January 19th in observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.
- The second quarter ends on January 23rd.
- The Ski Club will be going to Smuggler's Run from January 23rd to 25th.
- Transition into High School night for 8th graders will be held at the high school on January 29th.
- The Tri-M concert will be held on February 4th.
- Yearbooks are currently on sale.
- Final payment for the Junior trip to Washington, DC is due on February 2nd.
- The Junior Class is selling Rebel blankets.

D. Committee Reports

1. Business Operations/Resource Management - Greg Flanagan noted that this subcommittee met on January 15th. There is a possible deficit due to a nursing shortage earlier in the year. The projected deficit for Special Education expenses is lower than originally expected. The 2025 audit was completed. It was noted that the request for a golf cart for the Athletic department was taken out of last year's budget. This golf cart is still needed.

E. Liaison Reports - None

VIII. INFORMATION ITEMS

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

B. Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Budget

Dr. Craw asked BOE members to send any questions for the budget workshops to District office ahead of time. There was a question about budget increase for surrounding towns but there is not enough information available at this time. There was a question about expenses for the bus lot and the propane issue, and it was noted that those projects are still under the purview of the PBC.

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 January 8, 2026, 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. Fiscal Year 2025 Unexpended Funds

MOTION: Ed Sbordone made a motion to recommend that the Board of Education approve the transfer of fiscal year 2024-25 unexpended funds, in the amount of \$65,225, to the Board of Education non-lapsing account for the purpose of covering unanticipated Special Education expenses. Greg Flanagan seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Peggy Katkocin, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, and Ed Sbordone

C. Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Transfers

MOTION: Kimberly LaTourette made a motion to recommend to the full Board of Education the requested FY26 budget transfers as presented. 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

D. Acceptance of Donation - Old Timers Athletic Association of Greater Danbury

MOTION: Kathy Baker made a motion to recommend to the full Board to accept with gratitude the Old Timers Athletic Association of Greater Danbury donation of \$3,500 to be put towards the purchase of new athletic equipment. 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

The Board thanked the Old Timers Athletic Association for their very generous donation.

E. Board of Education Policies

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

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: 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. Greg Flanagan seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Peggy Katkocin, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, and Ed Sbordone

X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - None

XI. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS - Items for future meetings include an update on the propane issue at the high school, an update on the water tanks at the elementary school and subcommittee assignments.

XII. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Kimberly LaTourette encouraged residents to attend the budget meetings and give feedback. She cautioned everyone about getting budget information from social media.

Peggy Katkocin thanked Dr. Craw for a comprehensive budget presentation. She spoke of the new school buildings and the importance of having a budget that reflects the needs of the students.

XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING SCHOOL SECURITY AND SAFETY

MOTION: Kimberly LaTourette made a motion to go into Executive Session at 7:49 p.m. for the purpose of discussing School Security and Safety issues and to invite Director of Business and Operations Carrie DePuy and Director of Buildings and Grounds Joe Lombardozzi into the Executive Session. Peggy Katkocin seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Peggy Katkocin, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, and Ed Sbordone

MOTION: Dominic Cipollone made a motion to exit Executive Session at 8:13 p.m. Greg Flanagan seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Peggy Katkocin, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, and Ed Sbordone

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Dominic Cipollone made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:14 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