

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

The New Fairfield Board of Education held a regular meeting on Thursday, December 19, 2024, at 7:00 pm via zoom.

MINUTES – December 19, 2024

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

ABSENT: Kimberly LaTourette

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, Director of Buildings and Grounds Phil Ross, Director of Technology Paul Gouveia

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 5, 2024 - Regular meeting - Approved by consensus.

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION: Greg Flanagan made a motion to Action Item VIII E (Capital Improvement Plan) to Information Item VII D. Ed Sbordone seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - None

VI. BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

A. Chairman’s Report - Dominic Cipollone spoke of accomplishments made by the district in 2024. He wished everyone Happy Holidays.

B. Superintendent’s Report - Dr. Kenneth Craw spoke of the many successful music concerts and performances this time of year. Dr. Craw wished everyone happy New Year!!

C. Student Representatives’ Reports

Senior Representative Emilia Sedlak spoke of the following:

- The Girls’ Soccer Team is hosting a fundraiser.
- The Senior Class is hosting a “Diaper Drive” throughout the month of December to benefit foster families.
- The 2025 Yearbook is currently for sale on the school’s website. Family and business ads are due by January 28th.
- The Festival of Culture will be held on Saturday, February 1st from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Junior Representative Ella Skogstrom spoke of the following:

- School will be closed for Christmas Break beginning Monday, December 23rd and will resume on Thursday, January 2nd.
- The Concert Choir will be held on January 8th.
- Mid-terms will be given January 16th through January 21st.
- Transition into High School meeting will be held on January 29th.

D. Committee Reports

1. Business Operations/Resource Management - Greg Flanagan noted that this subcommittee met on December 19th and reviewed the following:

- The budget is in line with previous years.
- Locked in a price for heating oil.
- Reviewed information about the solar project.
- Thanked the Food Service Providers for their hard work this year especially with the propane issues.
- Discussed the Capital Improvement Plan.
- Discussed shared services with the Town.
- The propane at the high school is being tested on weekends.
- The Consolidated building has been demolished.
- A letter of intent has been signed for the Rebel turf and the track.

2. Curriculum - Tim Blair noted that the Curriculum subcommittee met on December 16th and discussed:

- The Orchestra program.
- Bilingual service and discussed statistics.
- Middle School World Language opportunities.
- Discussed Adaptive Physical Education overview.

3. Policy - Samantha Mannion noted that this subcommittee met on December 11th and got an update on the following policies:

- Residency policy
- Cell phone policy
- Policy on Student ID tags

4. Field Fees Committee - Ed Sbordone noted that this subcommittee met on December 9th and discussed:

- Stadium lighting replacement was successful and within budget.
- The Rebel turf and track replacement is scheduled to begin in June 2025 and be completed by early Fall 2025.
- Discussed field scheduling for Girls' Softball.
- Drainage issues were discussed.
- There was a discussion of the Field Fees structure.
- The next meeting of the Field Fees Committee will be in January.

E. Liaison Reports

1. Board of Finance - Ed Sbordone gave a summary of recent BOF meetings:

- BOF Regular meeting was held on December 18th and discussed the following:
 - Chairman Thora Perkins thanked Carrie DePuy for sending a 17-page expenditure report for the BOE.
 - Thora Perkins gave an update of the Medical subcommittee that met on December 17th. Tom Kowalchik spoke of the claims for November. He noted that claims were 12.5% over budget for the first five months of the year. They discussed the amount to put into the Medical fund for fiscal year 2025-2026.
 - The audit is due on January 31, 2025.
 - BOF member Cheryl Reedy spoke of the Capital Projects committee and noted that they have met with the BOE and most of the Town departments regarding their capital needs. They will meet again on January 13th and will review all the needs presented to date.
 - Finance Director Vladimir Kan spoke of "Free Cash" otherwise known as the budget surplus. There was a discussion of policies for the budget surplus.

- BOF member Wes Marsh spoke of his meeting with Town Assessor Rich Seman regarding how the revaluation will affect next year's Mil Rate.
- The next BOF meeting will be held on January 22, 2025.
- 2. Parks and Recreation Commission - Ed Sbordone noted that this commission met on December 9th and discussed the following:
 - Approved the meeting calendar for 2025.
 - Approved the water testing for the Rebel Turf pavilion and the beach.
 - Approved an increase for the boat docks.
 - The commission discussed the possibility of allowing "swim at your own risk" during times when the beach is open but no lifeguards are available.
 - The next meeting of the Parks and Rec Commission will be held on January 13th.

VII. INFORMATION ITEMS

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

Carrie DePuy noted that the propane for the kitchens is now working. It is hopeful that the Science room propane can be fixed soon. The Town Attorney has been contacted regarding problems with the playground at New Fairfield Elementary School. The Consolidated school building has been demolished.

B. Orchestra Program Development and Course Proposal

Dr. Kristine Woleck gave an overview of the Orchestra proposal. She introduced String Teacher Jack Giuliano who talked about the logistics of the program.

C. Board of Education Policy (Second Reading)

1. Policy 2400 - Evaluation of Superintendent
2. Policy 6146 - Graduation Requirements

D. Capital Improvement Plan

Carrie DePuy spoke of the Capital Improvement projects for the district from fiscal year 2023-2024 through fiscal year 2028-2029. The presentation included projects funded and completed in 2023-2024, projects funded and to be completed in 2024-2025 and ongoing capital projects for future years. She noted that \$50,000 will be put each year into the contribution of the turf field replacement for long term replacement needs.

Dr. Craw spoke of possibilities for utilizing space at the Middle School. A schematic plan will be presented in January.

Director of Buildings and Grounds Phil Ross spoke of the plans for the underground oil tank at the Middle School. He noted that the new tank will most likely be an above ground oil tank.

VIII. ACTION ITEMS

A. Personnel Report

MOTION: Kathy Baker made a motion to recommend to the full Board the approval of the Personnel Report for December 13, 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, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone

B. Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Assumptions

Dr. Craw spoke of the budget assumptions for 2026 and spoke of how teacher attrition affects the budget. He noted that \$300,000 per year has been used in the past but as this number is getting increasingly more difficult to achieve, the number will be reduced to \$150,000 over a three-year period. For fiscal year 2025, the turnover savings was budgeted at \$250,000 and will be \$200,000 for next year.

MOTION: Greg Flanagan made a motion to recommend to the full Board the approval of the FY26 Budget Assumptions as presented. Kathy Baker seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone

C. Cybersecurity Grant

Director of Technology Paul Gouveia spoke of a federal grant for Cybersecurity for public funds and municipalities. He spoke of the grant sent to the State of Connecticut asking for these funds and noted that both the Town of New Fairfield and the New Fairfield School District were awarded 100% of the funds requested. Dominic Cipollone thanked Paul Gouveia and his staff for their hard work on this grant application.

MOTION: Kathy Baker made a motion to recommend to the full Board the approval to accept the competitive Cybersecurity Grant from the Connecticut Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security in the amount of \$316,708. Greg Flanagan seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone

D. Unexpended Funds

Dr. Craw noted that over \$200,000 was left over in unexpended funds. Carrie DePuy spoke of a new State statute that allows the Board of Education to use the full amount of unexpended funds for either capital and nonrecurring or educational purposes. There was a discussion of unexpected capital expenses.

MOTION: Ed Sbordone made a motion to recommend to the full Board the approval of FY 24 Unexpended Funds Proposed Allocation in the amount of \$209,768 pending final audit as presented. Kathy Baker seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone

E. Capital Improvement Plan - Moved to Information Items

F. Board of Education Policy

1. Policy 5114 – Suspension and Expulsion/Due Process

MOTION: Samantha Mannion made a motion to recommend to the full Board the approval of the Board of Education Policy listed below as presented: 1. Policy 5114 - Suspension and Expulsion/Due Process. Kathy Baker seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone

G. Board of Education 2025 Policy Subcommittee Meeting Dates

Samantha Mannion spoke of the need to move meeting dates for the Policy subcommittee so as to not be in conflict with budget meetings.

MOTION: Samantha Mannion made a motion to recommend to the full Board the approval of the 2025 Board of Education Policy Subcommittee meeting dates as presented. Kathy Baker seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone

H. New Fairfield School Calendar for 2025-2026

MOTION: Ed Sbordone made a motion to recommend to the full Board the approval of the 2025-26 school calendar as presented. Kathy Baker seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone

I. Acceptance of Donation - Old Timers Association of Greater Danbury

MOTION: Kathy Baker made a motion to recommend to the full Board to accept with gratitude the Old Timers Association of Greater Danbury donation of \$3,500.00 to be put towards the construction of a new storage shed at Rebel Stadium. Dominic Cipollone seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone

IX. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - None

X. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS - There was a request for an update on the bus lot situation.

XI. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

The members of the BOE wished everyone Happy Holidays.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Dominic Cipollone made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:23 p.m. Greg Flanagan seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone

Respectfully submitted,
Suzanne Kloos