

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

The New Fairfield Board of Education held a special meeting/public hearing on Thursday, August 1, 2019, at 7:00 p.m. in the New Fairfield High School Auditorium, 54 Gillotti Road, New Fairfield, CT.

MINUTES – August 1, 2019

PRESENT: Peggy Katkocin (Chairman), Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Rick Regan, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

ABSENT: Kathy Baker, Kimberly LaTourette and Samantha Mannion

ALSO PRESENT: Superintendent of Schools Dr. Pat Cosentino, Assistant Superintendent of Schools Julie Luby, Director of Business and Operations Dr. Richard Sanzo, Director of Curriculum Lori Ferreira, Director of Instructional Technology and Communications Dr. Karen Fildes, Pupil Personnel Director Kathryn Matz, Director of Buildings and Ground Phil Ross, High School Assistant Principal Scott Rohwedder, First Selectman Pat Del Monaco, Selectman Khrist Hall, Selectman Kim Hanson, BOF Chairman Wes Marsh, BOF Member Brian Shea, Permanent Building Committee Chairman Pete Viola, State Representative Ken Gucker, Rusty Malik (QA+M) and Angela Cahill (QA+M)

I. CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Peggy Katkocin called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and noted that the purpose of this public hearing was to give information and get feedback regarding the proposed building projects for Consolidated School and New Fairfield High School.

Members of the BOE and staff introduced themselves.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. PUBLIC HEARING - NEW FAIRFIELD HIGH SCHOOL AND CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL EARLY LEARNING ACADEMY BUILDING PROJECTS

Director of Business and Operations Dr. Rich Sanzo gave a brief overview of the project, specifically the history of capital improvements for both the high school and Consolidated School. He spoke of the NEASC accreditation study and the facility study and working with architects and community leaders to come up with an optimal plan for the buildings. He noted that the State is only willing to give reimbursements for new buildings and that they won't support renovations of the buildings.

Angela Cahill from Quisenberry Arcari Malik, LLC (QA+M) spoke of the conditions of both the schools and the need for upgrades to the buildings, as well as the need to "right size" the buildings to accommodate existing enrollment. She spoke of the different options and also noted that the State is unwilling to support renovations, and will only allow for reimbursement of new construction. She spoke of the challenges of renovating the buildings, specifically the need to house students during construction. She noted that with new construction, students can remain in the old schools until the buildings are completed.

Dr. Sanzo spoke of the costs of the projects, specifically hard costs and soft costs and how it would affect taxes. He spoke of operational savings that will be realized with new buildings. The cost of a new building for Consolidated School is approximately \$29,185,907, with a reimbursement from the State of \$10,883,747 that will yield an approximate cost to the taxpayers of \$18,352,160. The approximate cost of a new high school would be \$81,214,908, with a reimbursement from the State of \$22,576,336 with an approximate cost to the taxpayers of \$61,638,572. He spoke of the five year tax analysis based on average home values. He noted that new buildings would have a positive impact on home values and would be favorable with the NEASC accreditation.

Rusty Malik from QA+M spoke of the cost of capital improvements and renovations and noted that this option would be more costly than building new.

BOE Chairman Peggy Katkocin noted that these proposed projects were approved unanimously by all the members of the BOE, BOF and BOS. This presentation will be available on the school's website starting August 2nd. Tours of the schools will be given to the public on August 21st at 6 p.m. and September 19th at 7 p.m. There will be a Town Meeting regarding the projects on September 26th at 7 p.m., with an anticipated date for referendum of October 5th. If anyone would like to attend a tour of the schools but is unable to make either date, they should contact Dr. Sanzo or Mr. Phil Ross for special arrangements.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jim Mellett asked about the possibility of solar panels on the buildings. He also suggested that air conditioning be put in the buildings.

Eric Alviti asked about the reason for the different reimbursement rates for each school. Dr. Sanzo gave a brief explanation. Mr. Alviti thanked Dr. Sanzo, Dr. Cosentino, and all the members of the BOE, BOS and BOF for all their hard work to date. He encouraged residents to speak to their friends and neighbors to get the word out about the need for new buildings. He noted that he is starting an Action Committee to market the projects and encouraged anyone interested to contact him.

Selectman Kim Hanson asked about interest rates and it was noted that Dr. Sanzo worked with bond counsel regarding this. He also asked specific questions about the configuration and amenities of the new band room and auditorium and spoke of the possibility of renting out the facility to outside groups.

Nicholas Thiel-Hudson spoke of his concerns regarding the tax increases and whether or not the state reimbursement was guaranteed.

Stephanie Hill asked if the district had a backup plan in the event that the referendum does not pass. Dr. Cosentino spoke of the possibility of bonding small projects over several years. Jeremy Hill spoke in favor of the proposed projects.

Rob Carlucci spoke of his concerns of the cost of the projects and inquired as to why money wasn't set aside in previous years to fund this project.

Tara Volpe spoke in support of the projects and asked about the child development program.

Monika Thiel spoke of concerns regarding tax increases and asked about the possibility of repurposing some of newer science classrooms and the newly renovated culinary department. It was noted that it may be possible to reuse some of the furniture and equipment.

Katie Williams asked about the possibility of having two separate referendums or possibly two questions on the ballots to give taxpayers the option of choosing both or either one of the buildings.

Jeff Alviti spoke in support of the projects and encouraged taxpayers to take a tour of the building.

Sarah Opdahl asked about the possibility of splitting the questions on the referendum so that taxpayers have the option of supporting either one or the other or both projects.

Lisa Weir spoke of her concerns regarding tax increases and asked about the timeline for paying off the debt service.

BOF Chairman Wes Marsh thanked Dr. Cosentino, Dr. Sanzo and the BOE for the clear presentation. He spoke of the hidden costs of disruption to the students and staff if capital improvements and repairs are done instead of building new schools. He specifically spoke of the cost of portable classrooms that must be factored into the cost.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Peggy Katkocin gave a brief description of the history of the original building of the high school and noted that there were problems with the structure shortly after it was built.

Ed Sbordone responded to Mr. Marsh's comment about portable classrooms and noted that the Town of Tolland recently spent \$9 million for portable classrooms.

Greg Flanagan spoke in support of new buildings and noted that they would be equipped with state of the art security.

Stephanie Strazza spoke in support of the projects and of educational mandates and 21st century learning.

The BOE thanked everyone for participating in the public hearing and encouraged everyone to stay involved in the process.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Greg Flanagan made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:42 p.m. Peggy Katkocin seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Peggy Katkocin, Rick Regan, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

Respectfully submitted,
Suzanne Kloos