

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

The New Fairfield Board of Education held a regular meeting on Thursday, April 7, 2022,  
at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom

**MINUTES – April 7, 2022**

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

**ABSENT:** None

**ALSO PRESENT:** Superintendent of Schools Dr. Pat Cosentino, Director of Business and Operations Dr. Richard Sanzo, Assistant Superintendent of Schools Julie Luby, Director of Instructional Technology and Communications Dr. Karen Fildes, Pupil Personnel Director Katherine Matz, High School Assistant Principal Scott Rohwedder, Middle School Principal Christine Baldelli, Middle School Assistant Principal Cheryl Milo, Meeting House Hill School Principal James Mandracchia, Consolidated School Principal Rob Spino, Director of Curriculum Alyce Misuraca, Special Education Supervisor Melissa Busnel, First Selectman Pat Del Monaco, Selectman Khris Hall and Board of Finance 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 Dominic Cipollone called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

**II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A. March 17, 2022- Regular meeting - approved by consensus

**IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**MOTION:** Dominic Cipollone made a motion to amend the agenda to add an update on the Parks and Rec Commission under Committee Reports and to add Paraprofessional Leave of Absence Requests #3 and #4 in Executive Session. Greg Flanagan seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

**V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

John McCartney and Grace Smyth spoke in support of the BOE budget and their disappointment that the BOF did not approve sending the budget to the taxpayers as presented at their April 6<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**VI. BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS**

A. Chairman's Report - Dominic Cipollone spoke of the following:

- Spoke of his visit to the high school and thanked everyone for the warm welcome.
- He spoke briefly of the budget and encouraged everyone to consider what is best for the students.

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

- Congratulated Middle School Principal Christine Baldelli on her retirement effective June 30<sup>th</sup>.
- Congratulated Paraprofessionals and Occupational Therapists in honor of Paraprofessional and Occupational Therapist Month. All staff will be celebrated in May.
- All students and staff will receive a COVID test kit before Spring Break. Everyone is asked to take an at-home test before returning to school on April 25<sup>th</sup>.
- High school students going on the Florida trip will also receive a COVID test.
- Wished all Spring Athletes Good Luck.
- Thanked everyone who has spoken in support of the budget.

C. Student Representative Report - None

D. Committee Reports

1. Curriculum - Stephanie Strazza noted that this committee met on March 28<sup>th</sup> and discussed the future of the Music Strings Program. There was a demonstration by Julie Luby about changes made to the website. The committee further discussed the Math Program.

2. Policy - Samantha Mannion spoke of three policies that were discussed that are on tonight's agenda for first reading. They include Nondiscrimination, Grade Weighting and Class Rank and Electronic Communications among Board Members. She also spoke of another policy regarding Hate Crimes and Bias Incidents in the Schools. There is a plan to vote to suspend the rules to bring this policy to the full Board tonight.

3. Special Education Ad Hoc - Stephanie Strazza spoke of the new location on Library Street in Danbury for the STRIDES program. There will be a ribbon cutting ceremony in May. She also clarified the eligibility for the ELC program for typical children who are old enough to attend Kindergarten and noted that they cannot be accommodated at ELC if the parents decide to hold their child back for a year.

4. Field Fees - Ed Sbordone noted that the Field Fees committee met and went into Executive Session to discuss vendors for the turf and track replacement.

5. Parks and Recreation Commission - Greg Flanagan noted that the Parks and Rec Commission met on March 28<sup>th</sup> and discussed installing a batting cage and shed at Memorial Field. The Sip and Stroll will be held on May 21<sup>st</sup>. The next meeting will be Monday, April 11<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m.

E. Liaison Reports

1. Board of Finance - Ed Sbordone noted that the BOF met on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, March 30<sup>th</sup> and April 6<sup>th</sup>.

- March 23<sup>rd</sup> BOF meeting - The BOF discussed the medical plan and the capital plan. A motion was made to send the budget to the taxpayers without any additional cuts and to use \$1.2 million of the bond premium. The net result of this proposal would be a Mill Rate increase of 3.68%. This motion was amended to decrease the Town budget by \$50,000 and the BOE by \$150,000. Both the amendment and the original motion was denied.
- March 30<sup>th</sup> BOF meeting - The BOF discussed the medical plan and the optimal amount of reserves for the plan. No decision has been made yet regarding ASL or ISL.
- April 6<sup>th</sup> BOF meeting - The BOF discussed the final mark up. A motion was made to send the budget to the taxpayers without any additional cuts and to use \$1.2 million of the bond premium. The net result of this proposal would be a Mill Rate increase of 3.68%. This motion failed by a 3-3 vote. Another motion was made to reduce the BOS budget by \$25,000 and reduce the BOE budget by \$400,000 and to use \$1.2 million of the bond premium. This would result in an overall Mill Rate increase of 2.89%. This motion also failed by a 3-3 vote.

It was decided that there will be a special meeting held on Wednesday, April 13<sup>th</sup> to do the final mark up.

2. School Security and Safety Committee - Samantha Mannion noted that this committee met on March 28<sup>th</sup> and discussed an overview of the master plan for security and the SPEAK UP program in Executive Session.

## **VII. INFORMATION ITEMS**

### **A. Fine Arts Update**

Julie Luby introduced the Fine Arts teachers from all four schools. She spoke of the work that they have done this year and of the implementation of a unified districtwide program. She showed a short video of what the department has done recently and presented a schedule of upcoming concerts and art shows.

### **B. Board of Education Policies (*First Reading*)**

1. Policy 4118.11/4218.11 - Nondiscrimination
2. Policy 6146.11 - Grade Weighting and Class Rank
3. Bylaw 9327 - Electronic Communications among Board Members

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

Dr. Sanzo noted both projects are on time and on budget. There was a steel topping ceremony at the high school. Interior work is starting at Consolidated School. There will be a joint meeting between the Permanent Building Committee and the Board of Education on Tuesday, April 12<sup>th</sup> to approve the playgrounds for the MHHS/CELA project. There will be a special meeting of the Zoning Commission on April 25<sup>th</sup> to discuss the resubmission by the PBC to use the current Consolidated School site for the bus lot. Board of Education members are encouraged to attend.

### **D. 2022-2023 Budget**

Dr. Sanzo spoke of the status of the budget with the Board of Finance. He thanked the many members of the public that have spoken in support of the budgets. He further spoke of increased costs that are not included in next year's BOE budget. These include the special education costs in the amount of approximately \$220,000 above and beyond the special education contingency.

## **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 April 5, 2022, as recommended by the administration. Samantha Mannion seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

### **B. New Fairfield Public Schools 2021-2022 Revised Calendar**

**MOTION:** Kimberly LaTourette to recommend to the full Board the approval of the 2021-22 revised school calendar as presented. Kathy Baker seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

C. International Field Trip

1. Canada

**MOTION:** Dominic Cipollone made a motion to recommend to the full Board the approval of the international field trip to Quebec City, Canada for February 17-20, 2023, as presented. Kathy Baker seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

D. Acceptance of Donation

1. Old Timers Athletic Association of Greater Danbury

**MOTION:** Kathy Baker made a motion to recommend to the full Board to accept with gratitude the donation of \$3,000 for athletic equipment or other as needed. Greg Flanagan seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

E. Board of Education Policy

Suspension of the Rules referring to Policy 0524

**MOTION:** Samantha Mannion made a motion to suspend the rules referring to Policy 0524. Greg Flanagan seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

1. Policy 0524 - Hate Crimes and Bias Incidents in Schools

Samantha Mannion spoke of how this policy differs from previous policies and the best ways to implement and enforce this policy.

**MOTION:** Samantha Mannion made a motion to recommend to the full Board the approval of Board of Education Policy 0524 as presented. Kimberly LaTourette seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

F. Paraprofessional Leave of Absence Requests - Four requests were discussed in Executive Session.

G. Paraprofessional Grievance - Executive Session

**IX. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - None**

**X. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

Kimberly LaTourette asked if a discussion of the administration staff at MHHS and CELA can be discussed in the near future.

Dominic Cipollone asked to have the Athletic Director come to a meeting to discuss appropriate behaviors and expectations as sporting events.

**XI. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

Samantha Mannion noted that the Focus Groups for the Superintendent Search will be held on April 11<sup>th</sup>. She spoke of the importance of having as much feedback as possible. She further spoke of her frustration with the BOF regarding the budget.

Greg Flanagan spoke encouraged the BOF members to send the budget to the taxpayers as presented. Stephanie Strazza thanked the public for their support of the budget. She thanked the Music Department and the Fine Arts Department for all their hard work.

Amy Johnson spoke of her excitement that concerts and field trips are back on and thanked the Fine Arts Department for all their hard work.

Kimberly LaTourette encouraged BOF members to send the budget to the voters.

Dominic Cipollone spoke of the responsibility of the citizens to support the district.

## **XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING PARAPROFESSIONAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUESTS**

**MOTION:** Dominic Cipollone made a motion to go into Executive Session at 8:35 p.m. to discuss four Paraprofessional Leave of Absence requests and to invite Dr. Pat Cosentino and Dr. Rich Sanzo into the Executive Session. Ed Sbordone seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

**MOTION:** Kimberly LaTourette made a motion to come out of Executive Session at 8:45 p.m. Greg Flanagan seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

**MOTION:** Stephanie Strazza made a motion to recommend to the full Board of Education the approval of a Leave of Absence request for the following paraprofessionals: Marianne Donovan, Stacie Killian, Sheri Anderson and Pamela McNally. Kimberly LaTourette seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

## **XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING PARAPROFESSIONAL GRIEVANCE**

**MOTION:** Dominic Cipollone made a motion to go into Executive Session at 8:46 p.m. for the purpose of discussing a Paraprofessional grievance and to invite Dr. Pat Cosentino, Dr. Rich Sanzo, Michael Davis, Cynthia Ross-Zweig, Arlene Rollman, Linda Pasquariello, Lisa Marra and Kim DeBartolomeo into the Executive Session. Samantha Mannion seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

**MOTION:** Kimberly LaTourette made a motion to come out of Executive Session at 9:48 p.m. Greg Flanagan seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

**MOTION:** Samantha Mannion made a motion to recommend to the full Board to deny the grievance and authorize the Chair to craft a response consistent with the Board's deliberations. Greg Flanagan seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

## **XIV. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** Kathy Baker made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:50 p.m. Ed Sbordone seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

Respectfully submitted, Suzanne Kloos