

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

The New Fairfield Board of Education held a regular meeting on Thursday, September 3, 2020,
at 7:00 pm. at the Meeting Hill School Cafetorium 24 Gillotti Road, New Fairfield, CT.
(Also available via Zoom)

MINUTES – September 3, 2020

PRESENT: Peggy Katkocin (Chairman), Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Rick Regan, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

ABSENT: None

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, Director of Instructional Technology and Communications Dr. Karen Fildes, 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, Athletic Director Mark Ottusch, Selectman Khris Hall, and Board of Finance Chairman Wes Marsh.

Network Administrator for the BOE 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. July 2, 2020 - Special meeting (revised) - approved by consensus
- B. August 20, 2020 - Regular meeting - approved by consensus
- C. August 24, 2020 - Special meeting - approved by consensus
- D. August 28, 2020 - Special meeting - approved by consensus

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA - approved by consensus

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Amanda Lombard praised her children’s teachers for the wonderful job they have been doing to make sure that the remote learners are engaged and included in the classroom.

Stefanie Marlow noted that Room and Zoom is working great but spoke of her concerns about the configuration of the cohorts in the Middle School. She noted that remote learners that choose to go back to in-person learning under this set up will be exposed to twice the number of students. She noted that she would have liked to have more notice about this.

Don Kellogg also noted that Room and Zoom has exceeded his expectations. He expressed concerns with the current set up of the cohort in the Middle School that any remote learners that wish to

become in-person learners would be exposed to more people. He asked that there be more transparency and communications to the parents regarding changes.

Senior Representative Nicholas Thiel-Hudson spoke of changes that have been made to the Early College Experience Humanities class that he is taking this year and noted that he would like to have received more information and communication about the changes.

VI. BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

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

- Welcomed Junior Student Representative Cayden Walker to the Board and welcomed back Nicholas Thiel-Hudson back as the Senior Student Representative.

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

- Schools have been opened for two days. She thanked everyone for all the hard work that has been done to get school started this year. For the most part, everything is going well with only a few issues. She noted that Chromebooks for students were ordered in June but still have not arrived. There is also a back log of Chromebooks that need to be repaired. Staff members will be working on them this weekend.

- Traffic issues for drop off and pick up have been problematic at Meeting House Hill School and Consolidated School. Only about 20% of students are currently riding the buses. She asked that parents consider using the bus for their children's transportation to school. She spoke of the Phone App "Fast Lane" that is used to streamline pick up. All four schools will be dismissed one hour early next week in order to make sure that dismissals run smoothly.

- The district has many mitigation strategies in place to limit the risk of Coronavirus. She encouraged everyone to remain vigilant and safe over the Labor Day weekend.

- Extracurricular activities will be postponed for now until it has been determined that classes are running smoothly.

- Spoke of the cohorts at the Middle School which may require a handful of students to go to other teams for specials and World Language. All COVID-19 precautions are taken for any student that may have to switch classrooms.

- The district is still looking for teachers, paraprofessionals, lunch monitors and bus monitors and encouraged anyone that is interested to apply.

- Dr. Cosentino noted that the students are very happy to be back in the buildings. She thanked all staff members for making this happen.

C. Student Representatives' Report

Junior Student Representative Cayden Walker noted that he is in the second cohort so has not been physically back to school yet but heard that everything seems to be running smoothly so far. He noted that the methods for maintaining distance are working well.

D. Committee Reports

1. Curriculum - Dominic Cipollone noted that the Curriculum subcommittee met on August 24th and got an update on the Math Curriculum and the possibility of piloting unit study. Director of Curriculum Alyce Misuraca gave an update on a curriculum that will start after January. They spoke about assessments and SATs that will be given in the spring. They reviewed some high school courses on Black Studies and Black and Latino Studies that may be in place by the 2022 school year. The subcommittee also spoke of an increase in AP scores throughout the high school.

2. Communications/Community Outreach - Kathy Baker noted that this subcommittee met on September 3rd and discussed the reopening plan and the plan to bring Music back to the schools.

E. Liaison Reports

1. School Security and Safety Committee - The next meeting for this committee is scheduled for September 14th.

VII. INFORMATION ITEMS

A. New Fairfield High School/Consolidated School Building Project Update - Dr. Sanzo noted that both schools are in the second phase of design development. This will be discussed at the PBC meeting next week. He and Dr. Cosentino met with the OSCGR regarding the Consolidated School project. They received great feedback and they continue to support the grant from the State. It is expected that there will be Special Session of the State Legislator sometime this month to approve the grant that was delayed due to COVID. BOE Member Rick Regan asked if the Board could be apprised of any major design changes to the buildings. Dr. Sanzo noted that he will incorporate this request into future updates. Anyone wishing to get more information can attend the PBC meeting on September 8 via Zoom. There was a brief role of the BOE regarding the school building projects.

B. Opening of Schools Information - Dr. Cosentino spoke of the reopening and reminded everyone that the COVID situation is fluid and that plans change quickly.

High School Principal James D'Amico noted that the high school students have taken all the rules and regulations seriously. He noted that a lot more students have decided to come back for in-person learning. He suggested that there be a hybrid model with two cohorts for at least another week in order to figure out logistics especially during lunch waves. There was a discussion of students opting to do remote learning but then coming to school anyway. It was noted that this is not sustainable and there needs to be a policy that students cannot go back and forth. Director of Instructional Technology and Communications Dr. Karen Fildes spoke of the problem of many parents not submitting the paperwork regarding remote learning.

Middle School Principal Christine Baldelli spoke of the changes to the cohorts at the Middle School and the challenges of keeping the classes small. Some students needed to be switched in order to keep classes smaller. She asked for patience from parents and students.

C. Fall Sports Update - Athletic Director Mark Ottusch noted that conditioning started on July 6 with cohorts of 10 people or less. The CIAC and the Department of Public Health met to make recommendations. He spoke of high risk sports such as volleyball which is currently practicing outside. Football is going through drills without any contact. There will be an update from the Department of Public Health on September 18 regarding football and if the metrics dictate, there will be six football games. Guidelines for this will be on the Athletic Department website. No spectators will be allowed to attend games for any sports but there should be live stream access. He spoke of the process for contact tracing and noted that there will be a list of everyone attending the games including players, coaches and officials.

Mr. Ottusch noted that they have applied to have a co-op with Newtown for Ice Hockey and a co-op for golf with Abbott Tech.

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 August 28, 2020, as recommended by the administration. Dominic Cipollone seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Peggy Katkocin, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Rick Regan, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

IX. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Jessica Smith noted that she is a proponent of athletics in the schools, but spoke in support of performing arts and theater and asked that the district allow performing arts to happen with socially distant guidelines. She noted that theater and performing arts students will find creatively ways to work within the restrictions.

Junior Student Representative Cayden Walker spoke from the perspective of a student about the challenges of remote learning and the many advantages of in-person learning. He asked that the district try to have as much in-person learning as possible.

X. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Discussion of restarting of performing arts will be discussed at a future meeting.

XI. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Members of the Board of Education spoke of how good it is to see students back at school. They thanked everyone for all their hard work with the logistics of starting school. Members of the Board commented on the importance of performing arts and how they give some students a sense of teamwork and inclusion. Board members reminded everyone that it has only been two days of school so far and it is important to be patient.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Samantha Mannion made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:32 p.m. Greg Flanagan seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Peggy Katkocin, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Rick Regan, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

Respectfully submitted,
Suzanne Kloos