

NEW FAIRFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION NEW FAIRFIELD, CT

The New Fairfield Board of Education held a special meeting on Thursday, April 11, 2024, via zoom.

MINUTES – April 11, 2024

PRESENT: Dominic Cipollone (Chairman), Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, 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, Director of Business and Operations Carrie DePuy, Director of Technology Paul Gouveia, High School Principal James D’Amico, High School Assistant Principal Scott Rohwedder, Middle School Principal Karen Gruetzer, Elementary School Principal Allyson Story, Elementary School Assistant Principal Dr. Jennifer Hilderbrand, Elementary School Assistant Principal Rob Spino, Director of Building and Grounds Phil Ross, Director of Pupil Personnel Services Maria Kennedy, Special Education Supervisor Monika Krepsztul, Elementary Special Education Supervisor Alex Lambert, Registrar of Voters Elisa Beckett-Flores, and Selectman Pat Del Monaco

Broadcast Coordinator Rebecca Bitner explained the procedures 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 7:00 p.m.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. INFORMATION/ACTION ITEMS

A. Fiscal year 2024-2025 Budget Update

1. Operating Budget
2. Capital Budget

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Kenneth Craw gave a brief presentation of the effect of a \$1 million cut to the Board of Education Operating and Capital budgets for fiscal year 2024-2025. He spoke of the cumulative effects of the cuts for future years. He noted that the BOF voted down a motion to cut \$250,000 from the operating budget and voted in favor of a \$350,000 cut to the BOE operating cut. They also approved a cut of \$675,000 to the BOE capital budget. This cut came with a commitment from the BOF to use surplus funds from the 2023-2024 budget for the replacement of the Rebel turf and track unless other funding sources become available in the meantime.

Dr. Craw presented the BOE with a list of cuts to the staff and how they affect class sizes and the structure of the staff. He further spoke of how the \$675,000 cut to capital budget will affect the timing of the turf field replacement and the capital needs for the Middle School. It was noted that the BOF will consider appropriating \$75,000 from the unassigned capital budget for these projects.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Dr. Kristine Woleck gave a presentation regarding roles and responsibilities of the assistant principals including meetings with teachers, attending PPT meetings and adhering to state mandates.

Elementary School Principal Allyson Story spoke of the roles of the administrators to work as a team and to support the staff. There was a discussion among the BOE members as to the importance of the administrators at both the Middle School and MHHS/Consolidated School. The Board members discussed the effect of larger class sizes, concerns of losing the gifted and talented programs and possible funding sources for the replacement of the turf field and track.

MOTION: Dominic Cipollone made a motion to recommend to the full board to authorize the Superintendent to request an additional appropriation from the Board of Finance in the amount of \$75,000 for Capital Projects, specifically the Middle School intercom and the Middle School STEAM room. Kathy Baker seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, and Ed Sbordone

IV. ACTION ITEM

A. Reduction in Force (Executive Session)

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

Amber Fidel, Millie Kellogg, Terra Volpe, Jena Alviti, Amanda Levetown, Katherina Fostano, Stephanie Strazza, Katie Williams, Don Kellogg, and Pat Bower thanked the BOE and the school system and spoke of concerns with cuts to the BOE budget.

VI. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Greg Flanagan spoke of concerns regarding cuts to the budget which will impede the ability to sustain a top school district.

Samantha Mannion spoke of the cumulative effects of cuts.

Sue Huwer spoke of concerns to the cuts to the capital budget and asked about the possibility of starting the replacement of the track and field that could be financed with the budget surplus.

Tim Blair spoke in support of the school district and against any cuts.

Amy Johnson spoke against any cuts to the BOE budget.

Kim LaTourette spoke of the need to make sure that the students and staff feel valued and important.

Ed Sbordone spoke in support of the BOE and against any cuts.

Dominic Cipollone thanked the public for their comments in support of the budget.

VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING REDUCTION IN FORCE

MOTION: Dominic Cipollone made a motion to go into Executive Session at 8:43 p.m. to discuss a reduction in force and to invite Superintendent of Schools Dr. Ken Craw into the Executive Session. Greg Flanagan seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, and Ed Sbordone

MOTION: Dominic Cipollone made a motion to come out of Executive Session at 8:57 p.m. Samantha Mannion seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, and Ed Sbordone

MOTION: Kathy Baker made a motion to recommend to the full Board that pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-151, the New Fairfield Board of Education nonrenew the teacher contract of Daniela Nudo and Paloma Moore at the end of the 2023-24 school year as recommended by the Superintendent due to reduction in force. I further move that the Superintendent of Schools be directed to communicate this action of the Board in writing to Daniela Nudo and Paloma Moore and that the Superintendent of Schools be authorized to respond on behalf of the Board of Education to any requests for other data which may be forthcoming from the teacher and/or his/her representative pursuant to applicable provisions on Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-151. Greg Flanagan seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, and Ed Sbordone

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Ken Craw stressed that the contract non-renewals for both Daniela Nudo and Paloma Moore were not performance based but strictly a reduction in force.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Dominic Cipollone made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:59 p.m. Kim LaTourette seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, and Ed Sbordone

Respectfully submitted,
Suzanne Kloos