

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

The New Fairfield Board of Education held a regular meeting on Thursday, August 21, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. in the New Fairfield Community Room, 33 Route 37, New Fairfield, CT.

MINUTES – August 21, 2025

PRESENT: Dominic Cipollone (Chairman), Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Ed Sbordone and Stephanie Strazza

ABSENT: Kathy Baker

ALSO PRESENT: Superintendent of Schools Dr. Kenneth Craw, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Dr. Kristine Woleck, High School Principal James D’Amico, Middle School Principal Karen Gruetzner, Elementary School Principal Allyson Story, Director of Pupil Personnel Services Monika Krepsztul, Director of Business and Operations Carrie DePuy, Director of Technology Paul Gouveia, Director of Buildings and Grounds Phil Ross, Facilities Director Joe Lombardozzi, Selectman Tom Perkins, and Mark Schweitzer (Colliers Project Leaders)

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. June 5, 2025 - Regular meeting - Approved by consensus
- B. June 12, 2025 - Regular meeting - Approved by consensus
- C. June 24, 2025 - Special meeting - Approved by consensus

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA - Approved by consensus

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - None

VI. BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

A. Chairman’s Report - Dominic Cipollone welcomed everyone back to a new school year. He noted that many projects were completed on the school grounds over the summer.

B. Superintendent’s Report - Dr. Kenneth Craw spoke of the following:

- Noted that he was excited for the opening of school.
- Over 20 certified new staff members have been hired.
- The schedule for the opening of school is:
 - Monday, August 25th - Teachers return and Convocation at 8 a.m.,
 - Tuesday, August 26th - K-5 Teacher Meet and Greets 12 p.m. – 3 p.m.,
 - Thursday, August 28th - First Day of School.

Student Representative Report - Senior Representative Ella Skogstrom noted that she is excited for the first day of school on August 28th. She reminded everyone that due to the construction with the track and turf field, only senior students are able to park at the high school.

C. Committee Reports - None

D. Liaison Reports

1. Board of Finance - Ed Sbordone noted that the BOF held several meetings since the last BOE meeting.

- June 9th Audit Subcommittee meeting - The subcommittee voted to recommend the 2023-2024 audit report to the full board.
- June 24th - Medical subcommittee meeting - The subcommittee discussed implementing a policy to establish a required minimum balance for the Medical Reserve Fund.
- June 25th - Regular BOF meeting - The Board approved the Medical ISL of \$200K and an ASL of \$120% for the fiscal year 2025-2026.
- July 2nd - Special meeting - The Board approved to engage the audit firm of PK O'Connor Davies for the fiscal year 2025-2026 at a price of \$79,600.
- July 21st - Medical Subcommittee - The subcommittee discussed how to fund Medical Reserve deficit of \$950,000. They discussed the proposed policy for establishing a Medical Reserve fund minimum.
- July 23rd - Regular BOF meeting - The Board discussed the recommendations from the auditors for improving internal controls. They discussed a letter received from the Board of Selectman regarding increasing non-tax revenue for the Town. A Purchasing Subcommittee of the BOF was established at this meeting.
- July 30th - Special meeting - The Board approved recommending to a Town Meeting an Additional Appropriation of \$950,000 to be applied to the Medical Reserve Fund. The Town Meeting is scheduled for August 28th at 7:00 p.m.
The regular BOF meeting scheduled for August 27th has been cancelled. The next regular meeting of the BOF will be on Wednesday, September 24th.

2. Parks and Recreation Committee

Kimberly LaTourette noted that the Parks and Rec Commission met on July 14th and August 11th.

- July 14th - Discussed projects that were completed over the summer. The commission approved an expenditure for a "text message" system to contact residents.
- August 11th - The commission discussed summer programs including Swim Lessons at the Town Beach and the Day Camp program. The commission will look into installing a "panic button" at the Town Beach. The commission also discussed setting a policy for canceling events if necessary.
Upcoming Parks and Rec events include:
- September 27th - New Fairfield Day,
- October 24th - Trick or Treat,
- November 23rd - Turkey Run,
- November 29th - Santa's Workshop.

VII. INFORMATION ITEMS

A. Building Project Updates

Mark Schweitzer from Colliers Project Leaders gave an update on projects.

1. Crosswalk - The warning devices have been installed and are waiting to be programmed.
2. Propane - The propane works at the high school. New lines were installed in the Culinary Department and the Science rooms are expected to get propane lines soon. There was a discussion of the role of the district and the role of Colliers regarding fixing the propane.
3. Playground - There was a discussion of drainage issues at the playground. It is expected to be fixed by the middle of October.
4. Bus Lot - It was decided that the bus lot location will be the old Consolidated School property. The PBC approved the Scope of Services and it will go to the Zoning Board for approval. The next Zoning Board meeting is scheduled for August 26th.

B. FY 2026 Capital Projects Update

Dr. Craw spoke of all the projects that have been done by this year. The entire BOE thanked Phil Ross and his team for all their hard work and wished Mr. Ross all the best in his retirement. Carrie DePuy spoke of “special” projects and capital projects. Phil Ross thanked the entire team and everyone involved in getting these projects done.

1. Turf and Track Replacement - The new track and turf will open on August 22nd. He reminded everyone that it is closed to the public when school is in session.
2. Rebel Stadium Stairs - Replaced old stairs through the operating budget.
3. Middle School Library - A refresh of the Middle School Library as completed.
4. Middle School Server - Reconstructed to make it more efficient.
5. Masonry Wall at the Middle School - Was completed this summer
6. New Fairfield Middle School Oil Tank Replacement - This project was completed this summer.
7. New Fairfield Middle School Classroom Restoration/District Office Construction - Used the old high school entrance space.
8. Music Classrooms - Phase I for this project was discussed.

C. Fiscal Year 2027 Capital Improvement Draft Plan

Carrie DePuy spoke of the progress of capital projects and spoke of projects funded in the 2023-2024 year and projects funded in the 2024-2025 year. She spoke of possible projects for the next three years.

D. District Office Construction Phase II

Carrie DePuy and Phil Ross spoke of Phase II for the District Office project. Dr. Craw spoke of the challenges of having district offices at different locations and the possibility of moving district offices to the lower level of the Middle School. He noted that Phase I was done in the Summer of 2025 and Phase II is scheduled for Fall 2025. It was noted that this can be funded with existing funds and there will be no need to go to the town for additional money.

E. New Fairfield High School Wall of Fame

High School Principal James D’Amico noted that nominations are open for the NFHS Wall of Honor with expanded categories. Nominations will close on Dec. 31, 2025, and candidates will be selected in time for the next school year. A site at the high school has been selected and it will also be able to viewed virtually.

F. Shared Financial Services MOU Update

Dr. Craw gave a brief update on the evaluation from CLA Associates of the Shared Financial Services between the Town and the BOE. The key recommendation was to create a Memorandum of Understanding defining respective responsibilities. Work has been done over the summer between the Superintendent, First Selectman, Finance Director, and Director of Business and Operations for the BOE to define key areas of agreement.

G. Food Services Update

Carrie DePuy spoke of Food Services regarding all three schools. She noted that everything is now and has always been in compliance.

H. Town Solar Project Update

Carrie DePuy noted that the lease for solar is still under review and is being edited. More information will be forthcoming in the future.

I. Negotiations Update

Dr. Craw noted that a tentative agreement was reached with the Para educator union. Once ratified, it will come to the Board of Education for approval.

J. Fiscal year 2026 Staffing Update

Dr. Craw reported that the district is fully staffed with certified positions with the exception of a Speech and Language Pathologist. Openings for non-certified positions include a Middle School Nurse.

VIII. ACTION ITEMS

A. Personnel Report

MOTION: Ed Sbordone made a motion to recommend to the full Board the approval of the Personnel Report for August 20, 2025, as recommended by the administration. Samantha Mannion seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Ed Sbordone, and Stephanie Strazza

IX. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Jennifer Pappas asked the BOE if they have considered how the implementation of affordable housing could affect the schools in the future. She further spoke of concerns with using Colliers Project Leaders for Town projects.

Pat Toth asked the BOE to consider naming the baseball field at the high school after the Garbowski family.

X. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Sue Huwer asked for an update on the Cell Phone Policy and an update on the Summer Reading program.

XI. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Board members welcomed Stephanie Strazza back to the Board of Education.

Greg Flanagan wished Director of Buildings and Grounds Phil Ross the best of luck in his retirement. He agreed with Pat Toth's public comment about naming the Baseball Field after the Garbowski family.

Dominic Cipollone wished everyone a wonderful start to the school year.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Dominic Cipollone made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:27 p.m. Greg Flanagan seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion, Ed Sbordone, and Stephanie Strazza

Respectfully submitted,
Suzanne Kloos