

NEW FAIRFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION NEW FAIRFIELD, CT

The New Fairfield Board of Education held a regular meeting on Thursday, April 3, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. in the New Fairfield Community Room, 33 Route 37, New Fairfield, CT.

MINUTES – April 3, 2025

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

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 Assistant Principal Steve Groccia, Elementary School Principal Allyson Story, Director of Pupil Personnel Services Monika Krepsztul, Selectman Tom Perkins and BOF Chairman Thora Perkins.

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 20, 2025 - Regular meeting - Approved by consensus.

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA - Approved by consensus.

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

John McCartney asked about the plans for the bus lot. He further spoke in support of the budget increases and noted that if the budget doesn’t pass, there could be cuts to the BOE.

BOF Chairman Thora Perkins spoke in support of the budget increases and clarified that no one on the BOF said that future cuts will be taken from the BOE budget.

VI. BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

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

- Acknowledged paraprofessionals during Paraprofessional Week. He further thanked the school librarians in honor of “Library Week.”

B. Superintendent’s Report - Dr. Kenneth Craw

- Spoke briefly of the proposed budget for 2025/2026 and will give up update later in the meeting.

C. Student Representatives’ Reports

Senior Representative Emilia Sedlak spoke of the following:

- Spring Break will be from April 14th to 18th.
- Yard signs for Seniors are for sale with orders due by April 15th.
- The PTO is selling decals for each class. The orders are due by April 22nd.
- The Fine Arts Booster Club is holding a clothing drive on May 5th.
- Senior Prom will be held on May 17th.
- DECA is selling customized lawn signs for student athletes and extracurricular participants.

Junior Representative Ella Skogstrom spoke of the following:

- Junior Prom will be held on April 26th.
- The Chamber Singers concert will be held on April 29th.
- The Symphonic Band and Wind Ensemble concert will be held on April 30th.
- AP Exams will be held from May 5th to the 16th.
- There will be a Middle School Chorus concert on April 8th.
- The Middle School will host the Gifted Student Reach program on May 1st.

D. Committee Reports

1. Curriculum - Tim Blair noted that this subcommittee met on March 24th and discussed:

- The Vision of the Learner.
- How to measure objective criteria.
- The Elementary school master schedule and possible future schedules.
- The Honors program at the Elementary School.

2. Policy – Samantha Mannion noted that the subcommittee met on March 20th. They discussed Policy 5131.911- Connecticut School Climate Policy which is on tonight's agenda for a first reading. They also discussed a policy for Alternative Education and it was decided that this policy needs to be rewritten.

3. Special Education Ad Hoc - Kimberly LaTourette noted that this subcommittee met on April 3rd. They discussed professional development, quality of IEPs, and modernizing assessment tools. The subcommittee discussed the transition process for moving up to new schools. She further noted that all schools are fully staffed with nurses. Director of Pupil Personnel Services Monika Krepsztul spoke to the subcommittee about the increase in the special education referrals.

E. Liaison Reports

1. Board of Finance - Ed Sbordone spoke of the following meetings of the BOF:

At the March 26th BOF meeting, it was noted that the audit has been completed for 2023/2024. They discussed proposed changes to the 2025/2026 budget including the medical reserve funding, reduction of the debt payment but the amount of the remaining bond premium, the adjustment to property taxes, and changes to elected officials' salaries. The proposed increase as of March 26th is 7.56% for the 2025/2026 fiscal year.

At the April 2nd BOF meeting, the Board did not make any changes to the March 26th numbers and voted to recommend to the BOS an increase of 7.56%. They further voted to put an article in the Town Tribune written by BOF Alternate member John Arizzi. The BOF encouraged taxpayers to support this budget.

VII. INFORMATION ITEMS

A. Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Budget

Dr. Craw gave a review of the budget process. He noted that it is driven by the strategic plan. The main points of the budget are maintaining class size, investing in the Arts, supporting a range of student needs, improving curriculum and instruction outcomes and investing in capital needs. He encouraged taxpayers to support this budget.

B. New Fairfield High School /Consolidated School Building Project Update

No updates at this time.

C. Board of Education Policy (First Reading)

1. Policy 5131.911 - Connecticut School Climate Policy

Samantha Mannion spoke of changes to the Connecticut School Climate policy. Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Dr. Kristine Woleck noted that the changes were developed by CAFE and focus on challenging behavior and bullying.

VIII. ACTION ITEMS

A. Personnel Report

There was a brief discussion about hiring BCBAs (Board Certified Behavior Analyst).

MOTION: Ed Sbordone made a motion to recommend to the full Board the approval of the Personnel Report for April 1, 2025, as recommended by the administration. Kim LaTourette seconded the motion.

IN FAVOR: Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone

B. Non-Renewal of Long-Term Certified Substitute Educators

MOTION: Kimberly LaTourette made a motion to recommend to the full Board approval of the non-renewal of long-term certified substitute educators as presented. Tim Blair seconded the motion.

IN FAVOR: Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone

C. Acceptance of Donation

1. New Fairfield Elementary School PTO

MOTION: Greg Flanagan made a motion to recommend to the full Board to accept with gratitude the New Fairfield Elementary School PTO donation of \$2,472.18 to purchase tack strips for the Art Department to display student artwork. Samantha Mannion seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone

IX. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Selectman Tom Perkins spoke of the importance of the Arts in education and thanked Dr. Craw, Dr. Woleck, the BOE and the administration for recognizing this and putting resources into the Arts.

John McCartney spoke in support of the budget and thanked the BOE for their hard work.

Jennifer Pappas asked about potential federal cuts to New Fairfield.

X. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Sue Huwer asked if the BOE could discuss types of remediations for students not at grade level for Math and Reading.

XI. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Kim LaTourette thanked everyone who worked on the budget and encouraged taxpayers to support the budget at referendum.

Ed Sbordone spoke in support of the budget.

Greg Flanagan spoke in support of the budget.

Sue Huwer asked if there is a policy for parents that want to “opt out” of having their students participate in an assembly with outside speakers and if they can be given alternate work instead. Dr. Woleck and Allyson Story spoke of a recent assembly about empathy and conflict resolution.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Dominic Cipollone made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:08 p.m. Greg Flanagan seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone

Respectfully submitted,
Suzanne Kloos