

**Regular Meeting Minutes  
Fairfield BoE, January 8, 2019**

**NOTICE:** A full meeting recording can be obtained from Fairfield Public Schools. Please call 203-255-8371 for more information and/or see the FPS website (under Board Meeting Minutes) for a link to FAIRTV.

**Voting Summary:**

Call to order of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Education and Roll Call

Chairman Christine Vitale called the Regular meeting to order at 7:31PM. Present were members Trisha Pytko, Jennifer Leeper (arrived 7:34), Philip Dwyer, Jessica Gerber, Christine Vitale, Jennifer Jacobsen (arrived 7:32), Jennifer Maxon-Kennelly, and Jeff Peterson. Nick Aysseh was not present. Others present were Superintendent Dr. Toni Jones, FLHS student representatives Ms. Coolidge and Ms. Phillips, FWHS student representatives Ms. Solari and Mr. Rivera, members of the central office leadership team, and approximately 25 members of the public.

Mrs. Vitale asked the Board for unanimous consent to switch agenda items 5 and 7A; the Board agreed.

New Business

*Acceptance of FLHS Extension/Alteration, Energy Conservation and Roof Replacement Project #051-0127 as Complete*  
Mr. Peterson moved/Ms. Pytko seconded the recommended motion “that the Board of Education accept FLHS Extension/Alteration, Energy Conservation and Roof Replacement Project # 051-0127, as complete.” Motion passed 8-0.

Old Business

*Adoption of Policy 5141.21, Students – Administration of Medication in the Schools*

Mrs. Vitale asked the Board for unanimous consent to postpone action on this policy until the next BoE meeting; the Board agreed.

*Approval of 2<sup>nd</sup> Location for ECC, September 2019*

Mr. Dwyer moved/Mr. Peterson seconded the recommended motion “that the Board of Education approve Stratfield Elementary School as the 2<sup>nd</sup> location for ECC, beginning in September 2019.” Motion passed 8-0.

Approval of Minutes

Mrs. Gerber moved/Ms. Pytko seconded the recommended motion “that the Board of Education approve the Special and Regular Minutes of December 11, 2018.” Motion passed 8-0.

Adjournment

Ms. Pytko moved/Ms. Leeper seconded the recommended motion “that this Regular Meeting of the Board of Education adjourn.” Motion passed 8-0. Meeting adjourned at 10:31PM.

**Detailed Minutes:**

**Student Reports**

Ms. Coolidge and Ms. Phillips reported for FLHS: The Bella Boutique was a huge success; Career Day hosted multiple speakers; the Pep rally featured a FLHS faculty and staff flash mob which was very entertaining; the Junior Parent meeting is taking place tonight; the Compassion Committee collected over \$2400 in gift cards over the holiday; the

holiday toy drive and pajama fun drives were also successful in helping those in need during the holidays; the senior volleyball tournament takes place on Friday; the wrestling team won 4-1 at Trumbull; and boys basketball beat Prep at the holiday classic game.

Mr. Rivera and Ms. Solari reported for FWHS: Holiday spirit was evident in the Carillon concerts; boys' basketball came in first place at a recent tournament, beating Ludlowe in the final; Warde had a first-place win at the recent wrestling tournament; the pep rally was held; and seniors are preparing to meet the January 15 college application deadline.

#### **Public Comment**

*Jeriann Mitchell*, ECC LSP: Requested an approved centralized ECC long-term plan, prior to approval of the short-term plan that includes Stratfield as the second location.

#### **Acceptance of FLHS Project**

Mr. Peterson moved, Ms. Pytko seconded that the Board of Education accept the FLHS Extension/Alteration, Energy Conservation and Roof Replacement Project #051-0127 as complete.

Mrs. Gerber handed the board a financial summary sheet from Gilbane construction. The project is complete with few remaining invoices.

Marc Donald, FLHS Building Committee Chairman, said the committee charge was to add 4 classrooms, 2 science labs, a new roof and replace and remediate PCB-impacted windows. Over the winter break, finishing touches were completed and only 2-3 invoices remain. It is expected that \$460K will be returned to the town.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly thanked Mr. Donald, Mrs. Gerber and all the committee members for their service and asked for input on the building committee process. Mr. Donald said the process could benefit from having a town building project manager and he would be happy to participate in a process review. Mrs. Gerber recognized Mr. Morabito and Mr. Hatzis for their work and attendance at all the meetings.

#### *Public Comment:*

*Greg Hatzis*, FLHS Headmaster: Thanked Mr. Donald and the committee; students and staff are benefitting from the project in many ways and he recommended approval.

#### **Motion Passed: 8-0**

At the request of the Policy Committee, Mrs. Vitale delayed the vote to adopt Policy 5141.21, Administration of Medication in the Schools. Several outstanding questions need to be addressed.

#### **Approval of 2<sup>nd</sup> Location for ECC**

Mr. Dwyer moved, Mr. Peterson seconded that the Board of Education approve Stratfield Elementary School as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Location for ECC, beginning in September 2019.

Dr. Jones said a majority of the Board has toured Stratfield. PK will be on a 5-day schedule with adjusted bus schedules and a mixed feeder pattern. From a staff perspective of what is available in facilities, the short-term can be defined as 5-10 years; school facilities last for 50 years in the long-term.

Ms. Pytko affirmed that the Board has big facility questions that may take some time and the ECC will be part of the upcoming February discussions. She will vote for the short-term solution in the hopes that it won't be for more than a year, and would like to see a long-term solution. Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly doesn't know if she sees a year being realistic for

a long-term solution given the options that have been mentioned; she looks forward to further discussions. Mr. Peterson said he is confident that children will flourish at the Stratfield facility and agrees that the Board is prepared to work towards a long-term solution. Mrs. Vitale thanked staff for allowing so many Stratfield visits and tours that were extremely helpful. Meetings on February 20 and 27 will focus on facilities; the format of those meetings is still being determined.

**Motion Passed: 8-0**

**Presentation of the Superintendent's Proposed 2019-2020 Operating Budget**

Dr. Jones presented the proposed budget and included the following points:

- Budget preparation work began in September and included examining the need for staffing adjustments, reviewing the District Improvement Plan and gathering new enrollment projection data.
- In the 2018-2019 budget, 62.25% of the budget was in staff salaries.
- In 2016-2017, the average PPE of surrounding towns was 8.5% higher than Fairfield's PPE.
- A self-imposed utility and phone audit reported that Fairfield is being billed appropriately. A self-imposed special education audit reported that eligibility is in line with other districts but the initial evaluation process could be more efficient. A reduction in total gross projected tuition for \$402K is expected, showing that Fairfield is trending in the right direction for providing in-house services.
- Adjusting the technology model in 18-19 saved \$718K over time, and moving to one preschool in 2019-2020 will save \$250K.
- Fairfield student enrollment is projected to be 9,685 in 2019-2020. Student demographics show that 15.4% are eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch, 12.1% are students with disabilities and 265 students are English Language Learners.
- Five fixed cost increases include contracted salaries, benefits, operations/maintenance, contracted services and transportation; totaling \$8.59M.
- Fairfield Public Schools is the largest employer in Fairfield and one of the 100 largest employers in Fairfield County. 53% of staff live in Fairfield; and 90% of staff live in Fairfield, Bridgeport, Milford, Stratford or Trumbull. The 3.12% increase in staff salaries represents 1541.33 FTE staff members in six bargaining units.
- Items that were requested but not included in the budget totaled \$3.7M and included 21 requests for new staff.
- Special Education: Preschool is required by Federal Law for children who have special needs from the age of 3 years old. A 2<sup>nd</sup> ECC location will ease overcrowding, lower caseloads and increase peer ratios. High school evaluation teams will help staff work more effectively; a high school coordinator at each high school will lead the evaluation team. The Complex Learner Cohort for Social/Emotional Learning at the middle school level targets eight social/emotional skills that impact learning; one CLC-S teacher and one CLC-S social worker are required for middle school implementation of this program.
- STEAM K-5 implementation will be complete and work on the Next Generation Science Standards and Vision of a Graduate will continue. ChromeBooks will be distributed to Grades 6 and 7.
- Additional enhancements include Year 2 of the high school IMPACT program, support for NGSS, support for DBT, full implementation of Mind-Up, additional 1.0 in Maintenance, and continued support for SRBI.

Mrs. Vitale asked the Board to submit any questions to Dr. Jones as soon as possible so that staff may prepare responses ahead of the January 15 budget meeting. Mr. Peterson asked for information on the utilities audit.

## First Reading to Approve Staff Recommendations for High School Course Credit Weights

Mr. Cummings began the presentation and said staff began work on regulations immediately after the October adoption of the Graduation Policy. That work included addressing concerns over course names and the current GPA scale. Criteria was established to address concerns and establish transparency. Staff worked quickly over the last few months to meet the impending publication of the *Program of Studies* in preparation for the 2019-2020 high school course selection. He thanked staff for their work and noted there are as many varieties of GPA scales as there are high schools.

Mr. Hatzis and Mr. Ebling acknowledged that this is a change to something that has been in place for many years; the resulting proposal came about after many discussions and work with high school leadership. The proposed new scale would assign a 5.33 weight to an A+ in an AP course.

Parents, students and colleges report that current course names are confusing and inconsistent. There was also a need to address the Level 0, used for many electives. Currently, FPS reports one weighted GPA. A survey of colleges revealed that 38% take the GPA at face value, but 62% recalculate FPS' GPA based on their own system.

The proposed GPA scale revisions include: the use of 3 weights - AP, Honors and College Prep; convert all Level 0 core electives to Honors level; convert all Level 0 non-core electives to College Prep; increase weight of Honors and AP; and provide weighted and unweighted GPA on transcripts. The proposed timeline is a transition year in 2019-2020 with full implementation of the new GPA scale in 2020-2021; there will be zero impact to current juniors. New course names will clearly indicate course sequence and rigor.

Mrs. Gerber thanked staff for the presentation and said she did not recall this topic being discussed at the time of the graduation policy. She felt this change was not communicated in the same way as other high school changes, referencing the block schedule and cumulative grading, and said the Board was caught somewhat unaware. Dr. Jones said this work was an outgrowth from the recently adopted graduation policy; staff had to wait until that was approved before work could begin. Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said she was not told about the possible impact to district work and didn't think there should be any connection with the rush to approve this change.

Mr. Ebling said the work began with the intention to change course names and there wasn't much advance notice. The intent is to benefit students and enhance transparency through GPA and transcripts. Mr. Hatzis added that the graduation policy took precedence over the exploratory committee on course names, but that a committee was in the initial stages. Equating the course-renaming work to a building committee, Mr. Hatzis said once they started poking around they realized there were other things that needed work. In general, students' GPA's would be negatively impacted if only Level 0 courses were addressed, keeping all else the same. The district is working under a self-imposed timeline to meet the upcoming publication of the *Program of Studies*. Ms. Montorsi said this proposal will have little to no impact on Naviance scattergrams.

Several Board members expressed concern over what they felt some of the repercussions might be such as:

- Students might strive for higher weighted courses to enhance GPA, possibly foregoing electives
- The Class of 2023 is the only class that gets a bump in GPA
- Only positively impacts AP and Honors enrollment
- Change to Level 0 courses could negatively impact GPA

- Need for PD on new College Prep or Honors
- Core vs. Non-Core designation
- Confusion on the definition of Honors
- How to communicate new GPA scale to colleges and universities

Mr. Ebling and Mr. Hatzis said many colleges disregard FPS' GPA scale and replace it with their own measure, but some take FPS GPA at face value and it is important that students are not at a perceived disadvantage. One example of the current inconsistency in course weights is Level 0, which can result in a baking class having a higher GPA weight than a Level 2 core class such as College Prep Chemistry. New levels would be based on specific criteria. Mr. Cummings added that the district is looking to improve electives and provide good options for students to balance out rigor in their schedules. CAD, select music courses, and electives that require a 4-year commitment might qualify as Honors electives and that will be determined later in the spring. In addition, the National Honor Society cutoff, as well as other honor ceremonies will need to be reviewed.

Some adjustment to the changes will be needed, similar to when students became eligible to sign up for AP without a teacher recommendation. The rollout of the changes will include meetings with students, PTA meetings and as much communication as possible. Letters explaining the new GPA will be sent to college admissions offices.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked for feedback on the adjustment to the cumulative grading, and raised concern over having another significant change for HS with this GPA weight change.

The Board commented on the prospect of not having a GPA at all. Ms. Pytko added that some schools in CT are moving towards a mastery-based report card. Mr. Cummings said the mastery-based concept would take a lot of work and would be a big change for teachers and parents; there are no plans to do this. Mrs. Gerber and Ms. Leeper supported the no-GPA concept.

Mr. Dwyer thanked staff for the presentation and felt that very few students would be negatively impacted, and most students would be positively impacted.

Mrs. Vitale asked staff to use the Board as a resource, is happy that the work is ongoing and will put this item on the next agenda for approval. Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said she will make a motion to postpone the vote at the next meeting.

Mr. Hatzis thanked the Board and appreciated all the comments and dialogue.

### Approval of Minutes

Mrs. Gerber moved, Ms. Pytko seconded that the Board of Education approve the Special and Regular Minutes of December 11, 2018.

### Motion Passed: 8-0

### Superintendent Report

Dr. Jones reported

- Information on PK enrollment will be provided next week. ECC peer students do pay a fee, which will be easier to track under one program.
- Encouraged all to see the informative PTAC Budget presentation.
- Dwight restrooms are back open.

- The Warde scoreboards have been installed. A special thanks to the Executive Team, especially Mrs. Munsell and Ms. Byrnes for their work on the budget publications and presentations.

### Committee/Liaison Reports

*Mrs. Gerber* reported for MHBC: The January 9 meeting was canceled. Last week, Mr. Quinn provided an update to the BOS and offered tentative town board presentation dates including: BOS on May 1, BOF on May 9, BOE on May 14, and RTM on May 22 for committee and May 28 for full RTM. Ed specs were not discussed. Mr. Dwyer requested the committee provide a project update at the April BOE meeting, prior to their presentations to other town bodies. Mrs. Vitale confirmed with Mr. Quinn that three sizes will be put forward and the Board will rely on Mrs. Gerber for any updates to the timeline.

*Mrs. Jacobsen* reported on upcoming legislation: She attended the CAFE Region 6 legislative breakfast that featured a panel of legislators. The common themes centered on sped co-op and funding and ECS formulas. Senator Tony Hwang mentioned that construction reimbursement rates could change after this year. Representative Laura Devlin is on the Education Committee.

*Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly* reported for the Policy Committee: Work on the Food Allergy and homework policies is continuing.

*Mrs. Vitale* reported for Sherman BC: The Sherman kiss & go area will be in the back of the school.

*Mrs. Vitale* reported for PTAC: The PTAC budget workshop was held last night.

### Open Board Comment:

Ms. Pytko registered for Fairfield's economic outlook breakfast.

Mrs. Vitale thanked staff.

### Public Comment:

*Dorene Herron*, Forest Avenue: Appreciated the GPA presentation; agrees with changing course names; sophomores should be grandfathered and use the current GPA scale.

### Adjournment

Ms. Pytko moved, Ms. Leeper seconded that this Regular Meeting of the Board of Education adjourn.

### Motion Passed: 8-0

*Meeting adjourned at 10:31PM.*

*Respectfully submitted*  
*Jessica Gerber*  
*Fairfield Public Schools*  
*Secretary*