

**Regular Meeting Minutes  
Fairfield BoE, November 13, 2018**

**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 8:07PM. Present were members Trisha Pytko, Jennifer Leeper, Philip Dwyer, Jessica Gerber, Christine Vitale, Nick Aysseh, Jennifer Jacobsen, Jennifer Maxon-Kennelly, and Jeff Peterson. Others present were Superintendent Dr. Toni Jones, FLHS student representatives Katie Coolidge and Lily Philips, FWHS student representatives Ellie Solari and JR Rivera, members of the central office leadership team, and approximately 40 members of the public.

**Old Business**

*Adoption of Policies 5144.1 and 5125*

Mrs. Gerber moved/Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly seconded the recommended motion “that the Board of Education adopt Policy 5144.1 Students/Use of Physical Force, and Policy 5125 Student Records Confidentiality.” Motion passed 9-0.

*Approval of 2019-2020 FPS Student Calendar*

Mr. Dwyer moved/Mrs. Gerber seconded the recommended motion “that the Board of Education approve the 2019-2020 FPS Student Calendar.” Motion passed 8-1 (Ms. Leeper, Mr. Dwyer, Mrs. Gerber, Mrs. Vitale, Mr. Aysseh, Mrs. Jacobsen, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly, Mr. Peterson in favor; Ms. Pytko against).

Mrs. Jacobsen moved/Mrs. Gerber seconded to suspend the rules and extend the meeting to midnight. Motion failed 4-5 (Ms. Leeper, Mrs. Gerber, Mrs. Vitale, Mrs. Jacobsen in favor; Ms. Pytko, Mr. Dwyer, Mr. Aysseh, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly, Mr. Peterson against).

Mr. Aysseh moved/Mrs. Gerber seconded to suspend the rules and extend the meeting to 11:30PM. Motion passed 6-3 (Ms. Leeper, Mrs. Gerber, Mrs. Vitale, Mr. Aysseh, Mrs. Jacobsen, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly in favor; Ms. Pytko, Mr. Dwyer, Mr. Peterson against).

**Approval of Minutes**

*Approval of Regular Minutes of October 23, 2018*

Ms. Pytko moved/Ms. Leeper seconded the recommended motion “that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of October 23, 2018.” Motion passed 9-0.

**Adjournment**

Ms. Pytko moved/Ms. Leeper seconded the recommended motion “that this Regular Meeting of the Board of Education adjourn.” Motion passed 9-0. Meeting adjourned at 11:30PM.

## Detailed Minutes

### Student Reports:

Ms. Coolidge and Ms. Phillips reported for FLHS: Field Hockey, Boys/Girls Soccer and Volleyball all made it to the state tournaments; seniors are enjoying the spirit days and had their Halloween parade; the Veterans Day concert featured various anthems; all are looking forward to the upcoming alumni day.

Mr. Rivera and Ms. Solari reported for FWHS: Volleyball, Boys/Girls Soccer, Field Hockey, and Swimming teams qualified for States, and one Cross Country runner qualified for the New England meet; the Thanksgiving FLHS/FWHS football game will be at Warde; the fall concerts are in full swing; the fall drama production *Three Sisters* is underway; the underage drinking and risky behavior forum was held last Wednesday; seniors are having fun with dress up days and the Halloween parade.

Mrs. Vitale asked the students to share a little about themselves. Ms. Phillips is a junior on the combined Fencing team, Ms. Coolidge is a senior and participates in the Mock Trial club, Ms. Solari is a junior in the Best Buddies club, Mr. Rivera is a senior and is the Treasurer of the Science Bowl team.

### Public Comment:

*Sally Connolly*, Tunxis Hill Road: Shared concerns with the SPED audit specifically regarding SLPs.

*Jeriann Mitchell*, ECC SLP: Unique needs of ECC students are best serviced in one facility.

*Frank Sahagian*, FPS teacher and Fairfield Resident: The SPED audit overgeneralizes and places too much emphasis on comparative data.

*Marie Riggs*, RLMS SLP: Read a prepared statement from a group of district SLPs regarding the importance of SLP services.

*Allison Jacobi*, Morehouse Highway, ECC Paraprofessional: Read a prepared statement in support of a single ECC facility.

### Presentation: Special Education Audit

Dr. Michael Neiman and Mr. John McGuire, Futures Education consultants, presented the special education audit report. One of the primary purposes of the audit was to present pertinent information and provide key findings and areas of opportunity. Specific areas of the review included related services, utilization of para supports, out-of-district placements, continuum of services, preschool program, organizational structure and coordination of programs and services. The methodology included confidential interviews, site visits and document review. Comparative data with surrounding districts was shared. Areas of opportunity were also presented and included several versions of a central diagnostic team. The report listed multiple areas that are working well for FPS and several areas of opportunity.

The following comments were provided in response to the Board:

- Of the 216 confidential interviews, eight were parents.
- Ms. Pytko expressed her concern that the three PPT team models may not be representative of the people who know the student best. Mr. Mancusi said the Elementary Program Facilitator (EPF) will add consistency in terms of delivery of services across the district. The coordinator is part of the student's team and works with the team and the family to develop an appropriate IEP. At the high school level, too many PPT facilitators can compromise the consistency. Mr. McGuire added that 30 minute PPTs are possible through effective communication and training with staff and parents; this could be achieved over a period of time. PPTs should actually be a formalization of what has already been resolved.
- Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked how the models address the issue of lengthy PPTs taking time away from the classroom and servicing other students. With few exceptions, Mr. Mancusi said a PPT with a good facilitator and set agenda should not take more than one hour. The core evaluation team would have the sole job of

evaluating students, freeing up others in the process. How this may affect staffing will be part of a future discussion.

- Ms. Leeper suggested exploring different ways of scheduling PPTs and being open to new ideas; in her previous employment as a coordinator, the PPTs were scheduled after school.
- Raw data on DRG A and DRG B, by town, will be provided. Mrs. Jacobsen asked if the district is spending adequately on Special Education. Mr. McGuire suggested she look to student outcomes such as graduation and achievement gap.
- In general, the consultants have noticed a healthy culture in the district. The district has done very well in creating a welcoming environment for students with disabilities.
- EPFs meet monthly as a group, with a set agenda.
- In the models for PPTs, guidance counselors may be invited as “others as needed.”
- Ms. Leeper asked about caseloads and questioned the statement referencing Fairfield’s PK-12 service average of 64 minutes/week being high, especially in reference to the preschool population. Dr. Neiman said Fairfield’s average is compared with similar districts, PK-12. By itself, the preschool is much more than 64 minutes and is a different bell shape distribution. Mr. Mancusi said he is interested in reviewing grouping opportunities that would allow more student access and simultaneously reduce caseloads.
- The co-teaching model varies according to grade levels. The consultants were not familiar with any model that allows for a co-taught college credit-bearing course, such as AP.
- Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked about trends and budget commitments. Mr. Mancusi said the Board supported IMPACT; the district has done a superb job planning programming for returning students. Grouping models should be reflective of similar needs.
- In terms of best practice, the consultants urge all districts to have clearly articulated, written guidelines for consistency and equity. Unnecessary services rob students of instructional time.

Mr. Mancusi thanked the consultants for all the work and information provided. He also recognized the dedicated Speech/Language staff and looks forward to working with them.

## Old Business

### *Adoption of Policies 5144.1 and 5125*

Mrs. Gerber moved, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly seconded that the Board of Education adopt Policy 5144.1 Students/Use of Physical Force, and Policy 5125 Student Records Confidentiality.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said the changes to Policy 5125 were driven by staff.

### **Motion Passed: 9-0**

### *Approval of 2019-2020 FPS Student Calendar*

Mr. Dwyer moved, Mrs. Gerber seconded that the Board of Education approve the 2019-2020 FPS Student Calendar.

Dr. Jones said three calendars were drafted based on Board discussion, and staff supported the enclosed draft. The revisions include a full day for conferences in October (replacing two half-days and requiring an additional day at the end of the year), and the removal of the May early dismissal.

After some discussion on the availability of evening conferences, Dr. Jones said there would be one evening in the fall and one in the spring dedicated to conferences. These will be noted on the calendar.

Ms. Pytko disliked the number of early dismissals in March. Mr. Peterson appreciated the correct notation of

Washington's Birthday. Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly appreciated the changes and thanked Dr. Jones for being responsive to the Board.

**Motion Passed: 8-1**

Favor: Ms. Leeper, Mr. Dwyer, Mrs. Gerber, Mrs. Vitale, Mr. Aysseh, Mrs. Jacobsen, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly, Mr. Peterson  
Opposed: Ms. Pytko

*ECC Programming Update*

Mr. Mancusi presented an update on ECC Facilities and Programming. ECC at Fairfield Warde is at maximum capacity. Enrollment is projected to increase, which will impact teacher caseload and the ratio of students with disabilities to non-disabled peers. Information gathering on preschool programming has included parent focus groups, staff meetings, site visits to potential external locations and other district PK programs, FPS leadership meetings and school site feasibility analysis. Parent focus groups expressed the importance of feeling a sense of community and having opportunities for play (among others). They also discussed several possible solutions to the facility issue including redistricting and leasing commercial space. Focus groups with ECC Staff, Elementary leadership and consultants also discussed a host of important factors in Preschool programming and prospective solutions to the facilities challenges. Next steps include developing a proposed Preschool schedule for 2019-2020 and making a recommendation to the BoE on potential short and/or long-term solutions.

Mrs. Jacobsen moved, Mrs. Gerber seconded to suspend the rules and extend the meeting to midnight.

**Motion Failed: 4-5**

Favor: Ms. Leeper, Mrs. Gerber, Mrs. Vitale, Mrs. Jacobsen  
Oppose: Ms. Pytko, Mr. Dwyer, Mr. Aysseh, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly, Mr. Peterson

Mr. Aysseh moved, Mrs. Gerber seconded to suspend the rules and extend the meeting to 11:30PM.

**Motion Passed: 6-3**

Favor: Ms. Leeper, Mrs. Gerber, Mrs. Vitale, Mr. Aysseh, Mrs. Jacobsen, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly  
Oppose: Ms. Pytko, Mr. Dwyer, Mr. Peterson

Due to the late hour, the Board agreed to halt discussion on this item and submit remaining questions via email to Dr. Jones.

**New Business**

*Project Update*

Dr. Jones said Holland Hill is on schedule and Sherman is on track. From a staff perspective, Dr. Jones says she doesn't believe the Mill Hill Building Committee will meet the June 30 state filing deadline, but the project may still move forward depending on funding.

Mrs. Jacobsen asked if other items on the waterfall would be delayed as a result of Mill Hill not meeting the June 30 deadline. Dr. Jones said she didn't think that other items would be impacted. Mr. Dwyer suggested that missing the June 30 deadline actually may have an impact; it is questionable whether town bodies would move a project forward without knowing the reimbursement rate. Several Board members agreed.

Mrs. Gerber voiced her concern that subsequent years in the waterfall may be impacted if the project is delayed; does it make sense to move forward other projects? Mr. Dwyer and Mr. Aysseh had the same question and requested more

information on which projects would be feasible to move. Dr. Jones said she will send out a clarifying note and will try to get an answer on this before December 1.

#### *First Quarter Report*

Mrs. Munsell said the first quarter numbers are preliminary. There has been an increase in staff of 5.9 teachers and 4.7 paras, due to classroom and/or student needs. As of September 30, there is currently not sufficient savings in retirements and turnover to balance budgeted salaries; the shortage is currently \$150K. This will be monitored closely so that a course of action can occur in a timely manner.

Mrs. Vitale asked:

- What is the technology integration specialist? Dr. Jones said it is a .5 at each high school.
- Is the increase in paras due to new students? Mr. Mancusi said it was twofold; new students and additional need.

Dr. Jones added that the district has the best teacher retention rate it's had in a decade. The district is also right where it should be with a positive balance of \$340K in pupil personnel expenses. While that number will change, the district is spot on this year thanks to Ms. Deasy's legal work, Mr. Mancusi's team and the Board's support of IMPACT and CLC-S; eleven students are back in district. Last year at this time, the district had a negative balance of one million dollars due to outplacements alone.

#### *Capital Non-Recurring Projects*

Mr. Cullen referenced the project booklet and said the eight capital non-recurring projects were already in the waterfall chart. This is one of the largest requests and totals just over \$2.5M. All projects are critical to maintaining facilities:

1. District - I.T. Switch Replacement Project, Phase 2: Ms. Byrnes was instrumental in obtaining significant savings for the district with the federal E-rate grant.
2. District - I.T. Server Network Communication HVAC Controls. An upgrade to the existing network to make it more secure when logging in.
3. District - Security Infrastructure. Phase 5; intrusion panels for interior classroom door panels and large places of assembly such as the APR and Gym.
4. Dwight - HVAC BMS Control. Replacement of outdated system. Will eventually have to be done district-wide and Dwight is a good starting point. A long-term plan exists.
5. FLHS – Six Tennis Courts. The cracks in the courts are too large to fix. The proposal is essentially the same as FWHS to replace the courts.
6. FWHS – Fitts House 50-Ton HVAC RTU Replacement. The unit is old and failing and needs to be replaced. Will require a large crane.
7. Stratfield – Partial Roof Replacement. One of the 15 roofs at this building. Roof is leaking and needs to be replaced. Needs a building committee for reimbursement.
8. WFC – Relocation. Existing property owners are not maintaining the property; this is a placeholder until more is known. Dr. Jones said this will be part of the facilities update in December.

Mr. Cullen said another project under consideration is the TMS flooring that is failing due to the building being extremely old. Some of the newer tile was placed over old flooring and is causing issues. Due to various budget constraints, this project has been avoided for three years. The total cost would be \$435K for the whole building, which was to be done over two years within the operating budget. It may, however, be better addressed as a non-recurring project.

Ms. Pytko asked:

1. Are intrusion panels bulletproof? Bullets can go through intrusion panels but they will not shatter. Ballistic glass for the larger places of assembly would be bulletproof.
2. How will the new HVAC system at Dwight work? The system was last updated in 1991. There is very little equipment at Dwight, so it would be a good test of new equipment.
3. How much was the FWHS tennis court project? Warde's bid came in for \$327K for 4 courts.
4. Is the Fitts House system the same as Dwight? No, this is a replacement of a large piece of equipment.

Mr. Aysseh fully supports all of the non-recurring projects, but has some questions on the WFC move. It is clear that HVAC and AC is a health and safety issue; he asked the Board to consider moving many of these long-term projects to the operating budget, which would essentially increase the BOE budget by about 1.5%. Facilities are in dire need of repair and have been neglected. Ms. Vitale agreed.

Mr. Cullen said he is currently working on a district-wide air conditioning/HVAC proposal.

Mrs. Jacobsen asked about the large percentage of the WFC relocation that was attributed to bathroom upgrades.

*First Reading of Policies 4118.51/4218.51, Social Media and 3240, Tuition Fees*

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked Board members to submit questions to her prior to the next meeting; based on Ms. Pytko's question she will provide the social media policies from other districts that were reviewed.

### Approval of Minutes

Ms. Pytko moved, Ms. Leeper seconded that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of October 23, 2018.

**Motion Passed: 9-0**

### Superintendent's Report

Dr. Jones reported:

- The cost thus far to treat the odor, septic and air quality testing issues at Dwight is \$19K.
- The Board handouts include an ECC/WFC timeline and policy administrative regulations for drone technology/telepresence robots and fundraising.
- Budget drivers include maintenance and custodial to address projects and additional square feet; custodial staff has not been added even though there is an additional 100K sf. There are some shifts in FTE due to enrollment, a CLC-S is needed in middle school, and students have returned from outplacement.

### Committee/Liaison Reports

Ms. Vitale reported for PTAC: The PTAC will meet Nov 19 and the Strategic Planning Committee will attend.

### Open Board Comment

Mr. Dwyer referenced a letter he received from a 6<sup>th</sup> grader who was concerned about plastic bottles in our schools.

Ms. Pytko thanked the Board and district for wearing blue in honor of World Kindness Day.

### Adjournment

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

**Motion Passed: 9-0**, Meeting adjourned at 11:30PM