

**Special Meeting Minutes, 7:30 PM
Fairfield BoE; February 27, 2019**

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

Chairman Christine Vitale called the Regular meeting to order at 7:40PM. 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, members of the central office leadership team, and approximately 25 members of the public.

New Business

Approval of the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Fairfield School Administrators Association and the Board of Education: July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2023

Mr. Peterson moved/Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly seconded the recommended motion "that the Board of Education approve the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Fairfield School Administrators Association and the Board of Education: July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2023."

Mr. Peterson, as the BoE liaison to the negotiating team, voiced his support.

Motion passed 9-0.

Sherman Building Committee Update

Mr. Eric Lang, building committee chair spoke to the issues regarding Phase Three of the Sherman project. Last month the committee received a cost estimate which came in significantly over budget, so the committee has been working on various ways to rein things in and get the project on track. There are budgetary restrictions on this project due to Sherman's location. The committee has been looking at value engineering or places to reduce scope. They are looking for input from the Board as to what the Board believes the priorities should be for the building committee, knowing that they need to stay within the budget. He provided a handout to the Board that delineated possible changes. Removal of stage addition is one possibility. The driving force behind the cost increases lies with the HVAC and life safety upgrades.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said that her priority would be getting AC at the school. She recognizes the possibility of adding another Phase to complete all the work.

Ms. Pytko agreed.

Mr. Aysseh said that when the Board initially spoke about this project there was discussion regarding which improvements would trigger the FEMA cap and which ones would not. **Mr. Lang** called his attention to the handout the Board had received. The only two things not restricted by FEMA are sitework and soft costs. Items in green are identified as those the BC wants to pursue; the items in white are the ones being proposed to be eliminated. The HVAC controls item at \$240k is the cost to tie in all of the systems for heating and cooling. **Mr. Aysseh** asked about the stage addition and was told that not doing it would make Sherman an outlier. **Mr. Aysseh** also voiced his concerns about the \$240k tied to the AC and why this wasn't made more clear during Phase Two. He also asked about the sitework and the Stop, Kiss N Go and the costs associated with that and **Mr. Lang** provided a lengthy explanation as to how they arrived at where they are at this point. **Mr. Aysseh** said he felt that the primary focus should be on AC as opposed to the Kiss N Go line.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked about the information in the handout and said she was unclear as to the costs related to what has been budgeted. A lengthy discussion ensued regarding the purpose of the BC chair coming to the Board. It was agreed upon that this was a way for the Board to get a sense of the body to give guidance as to what the BC's priorities should be.

Ms. Pytko asked about how many schools have a Stop Kiss N Go line; **Mr. Cullen** said he believed all did. **Ms. Pytko** said that she agreed with **Mr. Aysseh** that changing the stage could be problematic because she wants all schools to be equitable.

Mr. Dwyer said that we shouldn't go over the FEMA cap. Safety of children is paramount, which leads him to believe that AC would be top priority, followed by sitework and stage. **Mr. Lang** said that with the stage – they're not proposing adding a stage in the gym but modifying it in the APR to create more flexibility. **Mr. Dwyer** asked about the Sherman community's reaction to the three options. **Mrs. Vitale** said there were mixed reactions to Kiss N Go from different parents. **Dr. Jones** said she believes that the Kiss N Go changes could be taken out and it wouldn't be a problem. **Mr. Dwyer** said that when this topic comes back to the Board he will ask Dr. Banner if he believes that the changes are what the school community wants.

Mrs. Jacobson asked about the removal of the stage and if it's been accepted by the Sherman community. **Mr. Lang** said he didn't get much

feedback on that, more on AC, life safety and lockers.

Legislative Update

Mrs. Jacobson said that she had provided the Board with a comprehensive update via email. She has been closely following issues that could impact our district. The Board has links to the state budget. Should certain areas move forward there will be an impact on Fairfield. Many committees are reviewing bills that could make possible changes related to education. **Ms. Pytko** asked: what should Fairfielders do in terms of voicing their concerns; whom do they contact. Mrs. Jacobson said that people should contact the state delegation. There will be public hearings; people can submit testimony in advance or attend in person. **Dr. Jones** said that there are still many unknowns; she is keeping an eye on things.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said that people can also contact the First Selectman, who met with the Governor not long ago, so there appears to be an open line of communication. **Mrs. Vitale** said that PTAs can also be a source of information. **Mrs. Jacobson** said to submit testimony in advance of Friday's hearing.

Mrs. Vitale said that this was supposed to be a working meeting with a free flow of ideas. Redistricting can be an emotional topic. Would like to say that just because something is discussed tonight does not mean it will happen. No one should assume that just because an idea is broached that it will happen. The Board is trying to be transparent in their discussions.

What problem is the Board trying to solve – the Board members should share their specific ideas and concerns.

Mr. Peterson said that there is a conceptual gap between what the public is seeing and what the Board is discussing. It's difficult to bridge.

Ms. Pytko said she wants to discuss the ECC. She believes that it should operate under one central model. When she first came on the Board there weren't as many issues. She believes redistricting may need to happen. She is concerned that the state will not provide funding for school construction projects.

Mr. Peterson said he has heard all of the public comment on the ECC but wonders if one site is the only answer. IF the initial site was ideal and is now overcrowded, perhaps two sites wouldn't be a bad thing. It's a conceptual idea he's been wrestling with.

Mr. Aysseh said that regarding Sherman, which is over 100% capacity, . He thought that Holland Hill's renovation and expansion lends itself to redistributing student population numbers and making capacity numbers more equitable. Wonders how the MH project also plays into this. If enrollment numbers in the beach area were dwindling. Dwight as a building has many needs but their numbers are lower; what will this mean. Won't advocate for closing a school and losing that building based on past actions. But he isn't opposed to looking at an ECC site in an elementary school. Does the Board want one ECC site or two? If one, an elementary school site may be the only answer. Also mentioned AC in schools – how can the Board deal with this and get all schools equipped with AC? Times have changed and not having AC has become a health and safety concern. Need to figure out prioritization and may have to rework the waterfall chart.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said that Board needs to look at the work of the Strategic Planning Committee and how the school district is impacted by that. Should the Board reach out to the TPZ and the planning and zoning department at Town Hall? And need to talk about structural change issues that the town bodies have asked the BoE to discuss.

Ms. Leeper said that the ECC decision will impact all others. Questioned the increasing enrollment at the ECC in regards to the decision between one and two sites. The program will continue to grow; the Board needs to consider this. Concerned about AC as well in terms of health and safety. Also liked the idea of getting costs to install AC for all schools without and take it to the town to see if there is interest in moving forward.

Ms. Pytko said that WFC campus is also a concern to her. Also asked about Math Academy – if implemented, will those numbers grow. Reiterated her belief that one ECC site is important.

Mrs. Jacobson said that she wants to hear what the Board members' concerns are. Agreed about WFC concerns and AC need.

Mr. Dwyer said that while we all want to do everything we can't. Aligned with Mr. Peterson in that one site for ECC might not be feasible. Concerned about what will happen when the Superintendent and Chair go to Hartford regarding racial imbalance. Regarding redistricting – is this something the Board wants to do. Redistricting regarding the two high schools – should the Board look at this? Also wants to look at ECC decision of one versus two sites. Agrees with Mr. Aysseh that it will be a difficult sell to get MH as a 504 school. Board needs to look at guidelines as they

pertain to neighborhood schools. If MH is only approved as a 378 school should we perhaps look at other ways to spend the capital dollars? WFC is also a concern, though perhaps not as urgent. Sees nothing wrong with putting forth a 15-year proposal of installing AC at all schools, likening it to the effort to get rid of portables, and to increase school security measures. Understands that structural change is a nice phrase but need to understand what type of change you're willing to accept. You can't create efficiencies unless you are willing to have larger class sizes, and even slightly increasing class sizes won't realize significant savings.

Mrs. Jacobson said that we need to understand where the town is building capacity in town. What is being built where.

Mr. Peterson said that it's time for bold change, or at least the Board should discuss it. He has said that the town needs a comprehensive top down redistricting. He won't shy away from it. We are past the point of half measures.

Mrs. Vitale wants to look at Sherman. Concerned about the capacity of the school and overcrowding. How will any future major storms impact the beach area. Adding onto Sherman may not be the most cost-effective measure since there is space in other buildings and other buildings have needs. If Sherman becomes even more crowded where will the students go? They shouldn't have more portables or Art and Music on a cart. Need to look at the infrastructure of our schools and how town development may impact it.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked Dr. Jones that if there are any possible new programs on the horizon that may impact space utilization it would be helpful for the Board to know.

Mrs. Jacobson asked about the possible incentive regionalization regarding SPED services.

Dr. Jones said that everything being discussed is still in the planning stages. Hasn't heard such about regionalized SPED services. We have CES already.

Mr. Dwyer said that the facilities notebook needed to be updated regarding waterfall. Asked about the building principals. Should Board commit to saying that the information in the book is what drives future facilities decisions? BoE needs to decide most important issue to address and then take it from there and determine other priorities.

Mrs. Jacobson said that some of the info in the notebook is outdated at this time. Should have some updates on enrollment and utilization.

Dr. Jones said that the utilization is based not just on general ed classrooms in a building; need to look at programming.

Mr. Peterson asked about the site acreage for Riverfield; it seems large. Mr. Cullen said the info is current.

Mrs. Jacobson asked if there would be updated enrollment and utilization. She asked to get a by-school programming breakout. **Mr. Dwyer** said that he thought school administrators usually have a clear description of how their schools are utilized. **Dr. Jones** said that she's not sure if they have updated information for this year; she will check

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked about the 273 number for MH; there was a discussion that took place before which said MH was 378. **Dr. Jones** said that this shows the space deficiencies at this school. **Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly** is concerned that having 273 as the number will make it seem that building to a 378 will add enough space. **Dr. Jones** said you are looking at capacity vs. utilization.

Mrs. Vitale said that for MH the 273 is acknowledging the fact that some full sized classrooms are being used for other programs. Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said that to avoid confusion perhaps there should be two floor plans provided.

Mrs. Vitale said that the Board should discuss the ECC.

Ms. Pytko said that she wants to advocate for what's best for our students. Practically all of the staff from the ECC said that one site was optimal; we should listen to them.

Mrs. Gerber said that if one site is all the Board wants to consider then we are looking at moving the ECC to a 504 school and redistricting 100 or more students; or we are looking at moving the ECC to a smaller elementary school and redistricting all of the students (300+). There will also be impact to the MS and HS feeders. IS this type of upheaval necessary or could there be two ECC sites in two 504 schools that will make less of an impact.

Mr. Aysseh said that he doesn't think we could close an elementary school but could repurpose it as an ECC. Thinks that two sites could work if

every effort is made to create equality. Believes that either way the Board needs to start taking action and make a decision sooner rather than later.

Mr. Peterson said that we need to look at the negative impact that could result from repurposing too many general ed classrooms on the elementary level. Wants to know what the optimal number is for an ECC program.

Mr. Aysseh said that Board members need to speak out as to where we stand on the ECC decision. Mrs. Vitale said that the Board won't be voting but needs to start making decisions.

Ms. Leeper is worried about continuing to kick the topic down the road without heading in some specific direction. She would like to get a sense of the body.

Mr. Mancusi said that he visited five other school districts and met with staff and parent focus groups regarding the future of the ECC. The parents and staff predominantly want one site. He and Kristen Bruno looked at all of the facets necessary for a top notch ECC program. He believes that the program in Fairfield can be delivered in one site or two.

Mrs. Gerber asked about the sizes of the ECC sites in other districts.

Mrs. Jacobson asked about the state information providing details on outcome data and how it correlates to the type of ECC sites in each district. Mr. Mancusi said they did not.

Mrs. Vitale asked if the program would change if in one site of over 200 students. **Ms. Bruno** said that no matter the number of sites she would look at providing proper components for an ECC regardless of the size. **Mr. Mancusi** said that if a program continues to grow the staff would continue to grow and perhaps there would be some changes, but they would still strive for the collaborative model.

Dr. Jones said that you're never going to get an answer saying that one model is better than the other. It's about the culture and climate that you create, the resources you provide, all of the components. There is no right way to do it.

Mr. Dwyer asked that if being at an elementary school would help better facilitate the increase of the peer ratio? **Mr. Mancusi** said that increasing the peer ratio was helpful.

Ms. Bruno said she believed that 75% or higher of the students were receiving services. **Ms. Pytko** said that the model we have right now works. The positive impact on students is proof that this model works. **Mr. Mancusi** said that parents at Stratfield ECC also feel that they've gotten the appropriate services and a high-quality program.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked for the number of the preschool enrollment and the number of the students receiving itinerant services. Dr. Jones said that changes constantly.

Mr. Dwyer said that he is always inclined to listen to the staff input. That said he doesn't see the feasibility of doing a one site ECC.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said that she's been leaning towards having one ECC site. She is curious as to, if we went back 15 years, would the Board approve one or two high schools. If we go to two ECC sites, there will be a perception as to one site is better than another, no matter what we do. There is no question that there are two different cultures in our high schools and that those two schools are not as viewed as being the same. She worries that the same will happen if there are two ECC sites. We probably won't hear about this perception until many years from now, but this decision will impact the lives of many parents and students.

Mr. Mancusi said that we get an annual performance report from the state including Early Childhood outcome data. He believes we can provide our youngest learners an excellent program for one site and for two sites.

Mrs. Vitale asked for a sense of the body. Ms. Leeper, Mr. Dwyer, Mrs. Gerber, Mrs. Vitale, Mr. Aysseh, Mrs. Jacobson, Mr. Peterson all leaned towards supporting two while voicing the complexity and difficulty in coming to that decision; Ms. Pytko and Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly supported one.

Mrs. Vitale said that the location of the ECC sites would probably have to the next topic that the Board could discuss, with input from Dr. Jones and staff.

Ms. Pytko asked that staff come up with a list of buildings and any limitations and have tours for Board members should they desire them. Mrs. Vitale said that there are many issues regarding the ECC that need to be examined and discussed in the future.

Mr. Dwyer said that the Board is giving the staff direction to look into what

two sites might be optimal, and then allow the Board to vote on that. Ms. Pytko, Mrs. Gerber and Mrs. Vitale discussed the different criteria that would be viewed as ideal for ECC sites in schools; Dr. Jones mentioned the rubric that had been put together in looking at sites and said it and the results could be shared with the Board. Dr. Jones said that the Board now needs to decide if they are willing to redistrict, as that decision will impact which schools would work for an ECC site.

Mr. Aysseh said that the Board needs more information regarding the possible ES sites for an ECC site or sites. Now that the majority of the Board has indicated an interest in moving forward with two ECC sites that somewhat changes the focus of the discussion regarding which elementary schools would work for an ECC site in the long run. Perhaps the waterfall chart should be revamped. The Board needs guidance to move forward with a discussion on which sites to use. He said that Holland Hill or Mill Hill could both be possibilities for a number of reasons but he would still like to get some staff input.

Mrs. Jacobson said that since some Board members have expressed interest in a top down redistricting it might be premature to come up with sites for ES ECCs. That said she does think that at least one site if not both should be centrally located. Looks forward to hearing staff recommendations. Is hesitant to say where, although Holland Hill could be an option for a number of reasons.

Mrs. Vitale is looking for Board input at this point.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said that McKinley and Holland Hill or McKinley and Burr were two pairings she had thought about. Would like to avoid having ECCs reflect the two high school districts. Having two sites in close proximity could be helpful for a number of reasons.

Mr. Dwyer said he heard Dr. Jones mention rubrics being used to evaluate sites; he will rely on analysis of the rubrics

Ms. Leeper said she is interested in the Mill Hill idea for an ECC site.

Mr. Aysseh said that the site could be viable, but not sure it necessitates a 504 capacity.

Mrs. Vitale said that the more info Board members share the better.

Mrs. Jacobson asked whether there was one school that was more or less represented at the ECC; Dr. Jones said that only Dwight didn't have

significant representation; all other schools were pretty much represented the same.

Ms. Pytko said that the feeder plan should be considered in discussions regarding the ECC.

Dr. Jones mentioned the information provided for Board members regarding busers.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly mentioned some schools that don't have any walkers and asked if Mill Hill was one of those; Dr. Jones said that MH only has 11 walkers.

Mr. Dwyer mentioned that Burr is listed as having 50 walkers, which he thought was odd considering Burr's location.

Mrs. Vitale said that for next steps, the Town Hall will be Tuesday, April 30. Is open to suggestions from the Board as to what else the BoE should be doing.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly mentioned the possibility of reaching out to TPZ or Strategic Planning representatives.

Mrs. Gerber said that getting info about potential ECC sites could be a good next step.

Mr. Dwyer said that the redistricting question has to be on the top of the list for next topics to be discussed. The consultants need to get clear directions.

Mrs. Vitale asked if we should go through the redistricting principles or have more public input. She said she would put the redistricting principles review on the next meeting agenda.

Mrs. Gerber said that the Board has many meetings coming up and the Board should not overload their schedules.

Mrs. Jacobson asked for an update on WFC. Also how will the MH size play into these discussions?

Adjournment

Approved by BOE 4/9/19

Ms. Pytko moved/Ms. Leeper seconded the recommended motion "that this Special Meeting of the Board of Education adjourn." Motion passed 9-0. Meeting adjourned at 10:59PM