

**Special Meeting Minutes
Fairfield BoE, September 22, 2016**

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.

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

Chairman Philip Dwyer called the Special meeting to order at 7:36PM. Present were members Eileen Liu-McCormack (arrived 8:05PM), Marc Patten (arrived 8:30PM), Donna Karnal (arrived 7:38PM), Jessica Gerber, Philip Dwyer, Anthony Calabrese, Trisha Pytko and Jennifer Maxon-Kennelly. John Llewellyn was not present. Others present were Interim Superintendent Dr. Stephen Tracy, members of the central office leadership team, and approximately 10 members of the public.

Mr. Dwyer welcomed incoming Superintendent Dr. Toni Jones who was seated in the audience. He received unanimous consent from the Board to adjust the agenda in order to accommodate Board members who will be arriving a late.

Business Items

Public Comment

Suzanne Miska, Ryegate Road: Thanked the Board for the Meet and Greet with Dr. Jones; requested follow-up analysis on state assessments.

Jill Vergara, RTM District 7: Noted the insurance shortfall as shown in the financial report, relative to budgeting for 2017-2018.

Financial Review of 2015-2016 Fiscal Year

Mrs. Munsell presented the financial report as of July 31, 2016. Column 3 shows actual balances; residual balances of \$100K were transferred into the health insurance account and paid to the medical retention fund. Column 4 shows the balance before final transfers of \$72,397 – resulting in a total of \$172K transferred into medical retention at the end of the year. The final balance in column 8 is \$.36; this will be reported on the ED001 and will be audited and finalized before December 31.

Mr. Dwyer said the excess in the medical retention fund was due to projections.

Mrs. Munsell presented the medical retention spreadsheet and focused on the final four columns. Due to the unique year for medical retention, column 16 shows actual figures; the only exception being the IBNR calculated by AON. Column 17 is the close-out of the self-insurance plan. Column 18 shows that \$20M was requested; this was adjusted by the BOS and BOF to \$19.3M. An email sent to the Board previously, explained a possible \$1M insurance shortfall, and this was adjusted to \$740K after the final numbers came in. The email also addressed implications for this shortfall in the 2017-2018 budget. Dr. Tracy thanked Mrs. Munsell for the preciseness of her reports and said this has also been reviewed by the Town.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked for more information on the revenue reduction related to retirees. Mrs. Munsell said the change in the 'retiree payments' line is shown from column 4 to column 13; an approximate drop of \$260K.

Mr. Dwyer asked if this revenue reduction was due to retirees choosing another option and Mrs. Munsell said yes.

Mrs. Maxon Kennelly asked how the Board will hear about this in January. Mrs. Munsell reviewed the budget cuts and loss of revenue and said the difference in the drop in revenue and improvement in expenses is \$742K, as shown in column 18.

Mr. Dwyer asked if getting back to even equals \$750K and Mrs. Munsell said yes, given current information. Mr. Dwyer added that December is the usual timeframe to discuss health insurance and pension. He confirmed with Mrs. Munsell that last year's health insurance expenses may change marginally.

Approval of Policies 3516, 3524.1 and 4115/4215

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly moved, Mr. Calabrese seconded that the Board of Education adopt policies 3516, 3524.1 and 4115/4215.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said she had addressed a few questions and reiterated that this is part of the audit.

Motion Passed: 6-0

Mrs. Liu-McCormack and Mr. Patten were not present for this vote.

Approval of Policies for Deletion

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly moved, Mrs. Gerber seconded that the Board of Education approve the deletion of Policies 3120 and 3120.2.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly reminded the Board that these policies were included in policies that were adopted in June.

Motion Passed: 6-0

Mrs. Liu-McCormack and Mr. Patten were not present for this vote.

First Reading of Policy 4152.6/4252.6 Personnel – Personal Leaves, Family and Medical Leave Act

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said the policy numbers reference both certified and non-certified staff.

Approval of Minutes of the Regular Meeting of September 6, 2016

Mrs. Gerber moved, Ms. Pytko seconded that the Board of Education approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of September 6, 2016.

Motion Passed: 5-0-2

Favor: Mrs. Gerber, Mr. Dwyer, Mr. Calabrese, Ms. Pytko, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly

Abstain: Mrs. Liu-McCormack, Ms. Karnal

Mr. Patten was not present for this vote.

Superintendent Report

Dr. Tracy congratulated the Fairfield Ludlowe High School National Merit Semi-finalist Scholars: Adriana Bay, Paul Jeon and Emily Ji.

The Town has requested the Board consider the approval of electric charging stations at Fairfield Ludlowe and Fairfield Warde at the October 4 meeting. The charging stations are paid for by a grant from the CT Dept. of Environmental Protection and will cost the district less than \$700 per year. Mr. Dwyer noted that the Board had no objections to voting on this item at the next meeting.

Dr. Tracy thanked Mr. Cullen for his work on the Capital Plan, which was presented at the Board of Finance meeting.

Dr. Tracy reviewed the Connecticut Coalition for Justice in Education Funding (CCJEF) court decision, which was lengthy and controversial. The judge concluded that the state has no rational plan to distribute aid and ruled that the state must arrive at a plan to do so by March 2017. Additionally, the judge ruled that the state must submit plans for educational standards, teacher evaluation and compensation, and special education identification; all due by March 2017. However, the Attorney General filed an appeal and the Supreme Court has certified his appeal, resulting in a stay of the order. Dr. Tracy said this is the fourth time that he can recall that this issue has been brought forward and given back to the General Assembly.

Review of State Assessments

Mr. Cummings presented an overview of state assessments and AP exams. Dr. Boice said recently released state percentages were added to Tables 1 and 2; copies of which were placed at the Board table. Data Teams and School Improvement Teams will soon begin to delve into the data in conjunction with other data points down to the student level. Parent reports will be mailed the week of October 10. She explained the outline of the report being discussed; district scores first, followed by school data and AP results. Mr. Cummings added that since this is the second year of the SBA – there will be a better handle on performance over time, and this allows for the development of measures on curriculum and instructional expectations. STAR data will be looked at more closely to see how it aligns with SBA. One of the struggles with the SBA data is that it is not as disaggregated as the CMT and doesn't have the strand level performance that the district is accustomed to. Dr. Tracy said that additional information will be provided at a later date on what this report means towards continuous improvement.

Ms. Pytko asked if any strand data related to Free/Reduced or gender had been reviewed. Mr. Cummings said not yet, but this will be part of the District Improvement Plan update report. The state does not provide a breakdown of the Free/Reduced. Ms. Pytko also asked about whether this information would be available for the teachers' learning objectives and Mr. Cummings said that was the plan.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack expressed some urgency in revisiting this data analysis, and hoped it would be done this calendar year, before budget season; and would also be used for teacher plans. She also asked for a socio-economic DRG-B comparison across the board, and perhaps a comparison for DRG-A as well. We should look at absolute numbers and at our peers. Are we making progress or are others making more progress. She thinks it would be valuable to consider this; what are we doing right and what could we do better. Dr. Tracy said work must first be done with the principals before a more detailed analysis can be presented.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked

- Are raw scores or cut scores used, and have these changed? Mr. Cummings said the SBA is reported in a scale score, which translates across grades, but there is a learning curve to studying this data. Dr. Boice added that getting into this data is a complex and consuming process and we don't want to look at a child based on one test; the real value is to be able to make instructional decisions that benefit the student. Taking the test on a computer may have an impact on the result.
- Are we receiving no strand data? Dr. Boice said that very detailed information is received on PSAT and SAT, but not with the SBA.
- How is the data brought to teachers? Dr. Boice said that Dr. Rasmussen and Mr. Chiappetta are working on that now; we are looking for a predictive quality between the PSAT and SAT.
- Regarding Khan Academy – are teachers getting grade-level strand information? Dr. Boice said we can pursue this, but teachers are getting student level data so they can make instructional decisions.

Ms. Pytko asked

- How much computer testing is done at the elementary level; even her 8th grade students had issues using some of the tools. Mr. Cummings said the only other formative assessment at the elementary level that uses the computer is STAR. Student stamina for computer testing is an unknown.
- Where are teachers moving towards with regards to goals? Dr. Boice said teachers are in the process now of writing goals; teachers are always encouraged to have improvement for 100% of students – but this must be based on assessments before the school year ends. Mrs. Leffert said that the state data is not being used again this year in the teacher evaluation plans.

Ms. Karnal noted the drastic change in the number of students tested from one year to the next in some of the younger grades. Mr. Cummings said this is based on enrollment. Ms. Karnal asked for clarification regarding the fact that percentages are being used. Mr. Cummings reviewed the percentages.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack asked if there were any big picture take-aways that should be highlighted, both positive and negative.

Mr. Dwyer referenced the 9/15 memo and asked if there was anything in addition to that. Mr. Cummings said the primary resource of time is a challenge. Not surprisingly, when time is devoted to an issue, the result is a positive change. The struggle of the work is to manage the level of change at once and in different settings with different factors; how do we replicate success? Dr. Boice agreed and added that the teacher has the greatest impact in the classroom. The teacher evaluation, based on Marzano, is a research-based framework that allows for specific conversations; student needs come from the evaluation of data. Secondly, the middle schools have always been provided the same resources and perhaps this should be changed. Science scores at TMS rose significantly and perhaps additional staffing for math support should be considered as well.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack said that certain data pops out for some specific schools, and thinks it would be good to share data from those schools that are successful; the reason for the difference may not be socio-economic. Ideas and best practices from better schools should be shared; less successful schools should be examined. We need to look at strategies for success.

Ms. Karnal asked why the columns didn't always add up to 100% and was told this is due to rounding. Is it not standard to have the teachers' evaluation plans calibrated on this data? What about the principals and headmasters? Mrs. Leffert said that state guidelines exempt state assessments for teacher evaluation plans or for administrator plans; localized standardized tests will be used.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly thanked the staff for the thorough report and list of questions for further study. She appreciated Mr. Cummings' statement that time is a resource, and asked how that will be addressed in the budget. Dr. Boice said the budget planning process remains unchanged.

Mr. Dwyer thanked the staff for the presentation; the data should stay focused on the District Improvement Plan.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack recalled that the District Improvement targets would be absolute - will this be revisited in November? Will there be flexibility?

Mr. Dwyer said when the Plan was adopted, the Board decided to get an update every year, but to wait 2 years to see if any changes are needed. Staff will bring any required changes to our attention. The incoming superintendent will have flexibility to propose changes. Dr. Tracy added that the District Improvement update will take place at the October 4 Board meeting.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly meant to ask this question during the Superintendent Report – how was the presentation to the Board of Finance regarding the Capital Planning Workshop, is there anything the Board should be aware of?

Mr. Dwyer said the Town made it clear that it wants to keep the debt load under 10%, and it is currently at 9.2%. The Board of Finance echoed support to keep Sherman on track and no changes were requested; but the planning document is not a guarantee. The BOF complimented the BOE on the clarity of the reports. Dr. Tracy added that it was a productive meeting; he thanked Mr. Cullen and Mr. Morabito for all the work that was done.

Committee/Liaison Reports

Mrs. Gerber said the Fairfield Ludlowe windows project is moving forward; the windows will be installed next summer. The Osborn Hill Building Committee meets next week.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked if the OHS re-bidding process has taken place.

Mrs. Gerber said the 3rd bid for the corridor connector is in process and she will get more details on the timing.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly reminded Board members to return hard-copy policy manuals to central office; the online version will be available tomorrow.

Mr. Dwyer reported that the Holland Hill Building Committee does not have an early estimate yet, but this may be known within a month or 6 weeks.

Open Board Comment

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly advocated for Odyssey of the Mind and said she is willing to assist schools with this.

Mr. Patten said the Fairfield Woods Middle School Open House went very well; teachers are extremely happy with the World Language and Math texts.

Mr. Dwyer said he is working with the Board of Finance to get dates that do not conflict for the 2017 BOE Meeting dates. He asked the Board for input on availability for a Town Hall meeting; Board input for the budget will be requested at the November meeting.

Adjournment

Ms. Pytko moved, Mrs. Gerber seconded that this Special Meeting of the Board of Education adjourn.

Motion Passed: 8-0. Meeting adjourned at 9:15PM

Respectfully submitted by

Jessica Gerber, Secretary, Fairfield Board of Education