

**Regular Meeting Minutes  
Fairfield BoE, September 8, 2015**

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*Call to Order of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Education and Roll Call*

Chairman Philip Dwyer called the Regular meeting to order at 7:34PM. Present were members Eileen Liu-McCormack (arrived 7:37PM), Marc Patten (arrived 7:36PM), Donna Karnal, Jessica Gerber, Philip Dwyer, John Convertito, Paul Fattibene, Jennifer Maxon-Kennelly and John Llewellyn. Others present were Superintendent Dr. David Title, members of the Central Office Leadership Team, and approximately 50 members of the public.

*Public Comment*

Monique Sudikoff, Fairfield Resident: Disapproval of BOE time spent on procedural matters.  
Lisa Davy, Fairfield Resident: Questions on district-wide initiatives.

*Presentations*

*Fairfield Woods Middle School - History Day Competition Recognition*

Dr. Rosato gave some background on the National History Day Competition that took place at the University of Maryland. He introduced Mrs. Warren, the 8<sup>th</sup> grade FWMS teacher who led the student group with its research. The students, Ethan Rodier, Peter Cullen, Matthew Holden, Mark Handler, and Samir Singh, were recognized for their entry on Igor Sikorsky. They were partially sponsored by the PTSA to attend the competition in Washington, DC. Dr. Rosato also recognized Mr. Sahagian and Dr. Pugliese for their additional support during the rigorous competition process.

Mr. Llewellyn asked if all middle schools participate. Dr. Pugliese said that it is not officially part of the curriculum, but he is looking for ways to expand this; the other schools participated on a smaller scale. Mr. Convertito asked about the participation cost. Dr. Rosato said the PTSA offset the cost by \$150 per student, to attend the national event. Mr. Llewellyn asked if the parents funded a portion and was told yes; parents funded the remainder.

*Osborn Hill Building Committee Update*

Dr. Title prefaced the presentation by thanking the committee members for their service and noted the partnership that occurred between the building committee and OHS staff. The OHS community has been very patient during this project.

Ms. Marshall, OHSBC Chair, said the project is at 99% completion with only minor punch list items remaining. The abatement work accounted for approximately 60% of the contingencies used. The walk-way was re-bid last spring with poor results and the plan is to put it out to bid once more, and use the remaining contingencies. Dr. Title mentioned that when the walkway issue was raised at the RTM, the decision was made to not appropriate more money; any remaining contingencies are returned to the Town, not the BOE. Mr. Dunn, OHSBC Vice-Chair, said it was smart to nominate such a knowledgeable person to lead the project, and that Ms. Marshall was a pleasure to work with. He also recognized Mrs. Gerber for her involvement and dedication. Mr. Dunn added that the window screens came with useless plastic clips and the team had to replace them with metal clips and safety screws; he recommended that future window project teams keep this in mind.

Mr. Patten asked what is left in the contingency and what the bids were. Ms. Marshall said the bids were close to 700K and there is approximately 275-300K remaining.

Dr. Title added that the window sun screens are an excellent security feature and this should be kept in mind going forward with other projects.

Mr. Dwyer thanked the presenters.

#### *Overview of SBAC/CMT/CAPT Results*

Dr. Title thanked Dr. Boice and Mr. Cummings for the rapid turn-around of the recently released test scores, as detailed in the enclosure. Mr. Cummings explained that while still at the point of early discovery, the district's performance vs. the state's performance was very strong and the SBAC testing was largely successful. Free-reduced lunch and English Language Learners may account for some differences in scores among buildings; district and school data teams will be looking at this data in more detail. He cautioned that different assessments are not easy to compare. Dr. Title said that smaller school populations can skew results and patterns will be examined.

Dr. Boice said the curriculum that is currently in place helped the district. The SBAC discrepancy between the 2 high schools does not exist for CAPT, and this will be further analyzed; a process will be outlined for each school to further study the results. Dr. Title added that that he is concerned about the aberration at the high schools and mentioned that students may have mentally opted out. Dr. Boice said that the SAT scores declined very slightly. Warde has a higher AP enrollment, and the same discrepancy does not exist for the AP scores. She gave tribute to the teachers who teach students prior to taking AP classes and said the students are doing a great job.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack asked if future analysis will include comparing scores with our DRG to see if the new curriculum has raised the district in the rankings versus our peers as we would hope. She also asked for a review of the ELA and Math curricula. Dr. Title said the Math K-12 status update is tentatively scheduled for April. He added that the SBAC test window extended from March to the end of May and was much wider than for the CMT. He has concerns about the results across many districts; the extent to which students were prepared is a big factor and he will be happy to share the results of the analysis.

Ms. Liu-McCormack said it would be interesting to see if there was a pattern and felt that relativity is important. She would prefer an elementary curriculum review for ELA and Math in November and discussed a motion to make that happen. She would rather not wait an entire year as the curriculum has already been in place for at least 2 years, that way we would be free to implement something sooner.

Mr. Dwyer said the curriculum review schedule is in the budget book; a 6 member vote is required to add an agenda item.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack moved, Mr. Llewellyn seconded to add an item to the agenda to discuss acceleration of review of the ELA and Math Elementary curriculum to November.

Mr. Convertito questioned the addition of a discussion item to the agenda. His understanding from Mrs. Liu-McCormack is that she wants a motion to put it on the agenda, not to discuss it.

Mr. Llewellyn requested a friendly amendment to remove 'discuss.' This was accepted by Mrs. Liu-McCormack as long as it was clear to all members of the Board.

Mr. Dwyer asked if anyone on the Board objected; no one did.

Mr. Fattibene asked about normal process for ELA review and the interim review cycle. Dr. Title said the normal review cycle is the following year, due to a phased implementation.

Mr. Llewellyn made a friendly amendment to drop the Math and focus on ELA, but this was not accepted.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack said it has been 2+ years since both the ELA and Math curriculum has been implemented. Way too much time will have gone by before we have time to discuss. A discussion sooner rather than later is best for the district.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said the curriculum review will cover K-12 and Mr. Chiappetta confirmed that the secondary curriculum was implemented one year ago.

Mr. Patten was not in favor of adding to the agenda; the staff did not have time to prepare.

Mr. Llewellyn read from the June 2012 minutes that the ELA, PK-5 curriculum was voted on in June 2012. Dr. Boice said she was referencing the secondary ELA curriculum.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack said she was referring to an elementary curriculum review.

Mr. Dwyer said the curriculum had previously been adopted in chunks and is now reviewed K-12 for consistency; the systematic way is the proper way to have a review; he is against the motion.

Mrs. Gerber re-read the motion: to add an item to the agenda to accelerate an earlier review of the ELA and Math Elementary curriculum.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack said the point is that she believes we should have reviews done with more frequency and urgency.

Mr. Llewellyn disagreed with lumping the PK-5 curriculum review with the overall K-12 review, as this would mean a 7 year review cycle for this curriculum as approved in June 2012.

*Public Comment:*

Monique Sudikoff, Lockwood Road: Misuse of the public's time.

Mr. Fattibene questioned allowing public comment on items not currently on the agenda

Mr. Dwyer acknowledged that point but said he will allow remaining commenters since he allowed one already.

Suzanne Miska, Ryegate Road: Importance of adding agenda items in the interest of transparency and accountability.

Gina Luczaj, Fairfield: Questioned whether a review would accelerate change.

**Motion Failed: 3-5-1**

Favor: Mrs. Liu-McCormack, Mr. Fattibene, Mr. Llewellyn

Oppose: Mr. Patten, Mrs. Gerber, Mr. Dwyer, Mr. Convertito, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly against;

Abstain: Ms. Karnal

Mr. Convertito asked for an overview of the differences between the CMT and the SBAC. He disagrees with analyzing the comparison of test results for these 2 tests and felt it would be a waste of time. He said he was worried about the anomaly at the high schools. Dr. Boice said the SBAC is an adaptive test given on the computer; subsequent questions might change depending on the answer provided. Mr. Cummings said CMT questions ask the readers to bring their thinking, while SBAC is more author interpretation. In Math, the greatest impact is the multi-step process and is a more complex level of work. Dr. Boice said the district will move towards a day-time PSAT this year, which will be another good indicator. Dr. Title added that the CMT is going away and the new SAT is supposed to be aligned with the common core. Like Mr. Convertito, Mr. Llewellyn is interested to understand what is driving the discrepancy at Warde. He referenced Mr. Cummings' previous statement about analyzing the impact of tenure on SBAC results by class. He asked when both Warde and the tenure analyses would be reported back to the board because most members of the board and town would like to understand too. Dr. Boice said there is so much data, there is a tremendous amount of work to do. Mr. Cummings mentioned that the district will be looking at all factors that impact classroom instruction; the impact of tenured teachers is just one example.

Mr. Dwyer said it is premature to suggest a target date for a return of this discussion until further study is completed. Dr. Title agreed; the data needs more analysis.

Mr. Llewellyn said that he does not think that the Warde request is off point. He stated that the discrepancy is too wide not to give the board a report on their findings. Dr. Title offered to let the board know when he gets closer to getting information but right now he could not give a timetable on reporting back.

Mr. Llewellyn said that students who opted out were not counted. Dr. Title added that because the full census was not tested, we now have a sample that might artificially inflate or deflate scores.

Mr. Llewellyn said that while AP enrollment is up, high AP scores are down.

Mr. Patten asked if the table numbers in the enclosure were percentages and was told yes. He asked if the state will consider a uniform SBAC testing cycle; Dr. Title said technology varies widely across the state and the

schedule is not yet available. Dr. Boice added that scheduling students into the computer lab is a logistical nightmare. Mr. Patten mentioned this should be a consideration when discussing the tech budget.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked when individual scores will be available and was told sometime in September. She felt the high school discrepancy was in large part due to apathy, and felt that focus groups should be a starting point of the analysis. She asked if the Math SBAC is more language-based than the CMT. Mr. Cummings said the CMT 4<sup>th</sup> generation became more language-based and the trend is continuing. Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly requested a follow-up report on the review of strand data.

Ms. Karnal welcomed Mr. Cummings and asked about the percent level decrease at Dwight as shown in Table 4. Mr. Cummings cautioned that different groups of students are represented and each student at Dwight carries a greater weight due to the lower number of students there. There is overwhelming evidence that things are working very well in Fairfield but we are always striving to do better.

Ms. Karnal questioned the layout of the AP Results chart; Dr. Boice explained the chart and said it has been historically reported this way. Dr. Title said College Board uses a metric of 3 and higher and that grade 12 as represented in the chart includes all students and not just those in grade 12.

Mr. Convertito expressed concern about the tendency to develop curriculum that might follow the SAT blueprint. Dr. Boice said curricula is not designed for the assessment; it is developed with state standards on what students should know or be able to do; the assessment measures certain pieces of the curriculum. Dr. Title said there is value in looking at sub-strands to see how well the student is achieving.

Mr. Dwyer said it will be 2-3 years before we get comparable data; there is more to evaluating a student than these assessments and a balance must be maintained.

<i>New Business</i>
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*2015-2016 District-Wide Initiatives*

Dr. Title gave an overview of the enclosure and said it was an aggressive priority list that did not include the day to day operations or improvements specific to a particular school or department. Where applicable, the corresponding District Improvement Plan Specific Action is included. Some of the work is ongoing and continuing, some of the work is multi-year.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked:

1. Why was the high school survey not included? Dr. Title said the survey went out over the summer and is a data point.
2. How will the direction for #5 be set? Dr. Title said parents had concern over this and it will be addressed in part through vertical rounds, as stated in #12.
3. What is the status of #10? Dr. Boice said the state has a requirement for student success plans to be in place for grades 6-12, the high schools have started work on this already and the middle schools will have it in place this year. Dr. Rosato said there will be, periodically, dedicated time in the morning where homeroom could be divided into smaller groups and there will be a go-to person within the building to help with the transition from middle to high school.
4. What is the point of focus for #14? Dr. Title said the language was chosen by the Board and is very broad. Ms. Leonardi said the integrated learning model is being implemented. The focus on social and emotional learning will take place in part via community service projects and by implementing positive behavioral supports.
5. Will existing staff be used for #25? Ms. Leonardi said an outside vendor will provide very intense therapeutic supports to keep kids within district. In addition, school-based mental health services have been re-aligned to focus on prevention.

Mr. Convertito asked if that will address those students who, in the school climate survey, reported feeling alienated. Ms. Leonardi said that there is a layered approach. Tier 1 Model serves most, the Tier 3 and 4 Models focus where intense services are offered. The hope is that by additional supports, the staff can focus on prevention and help build resiliency.

Mr. Fattibene asked if this included mental health supports and early intervention resources for students who might not have received support in the past; not necessarily intense supports. Ms. Leonardi said yes.

Mr. Patten asked:

1. What is the academic transition related to #5, particularly to grade 6; will both 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers be involved, such as through instructional rounds? Dr. Title said there will be an academic prep and teachers from both levels will be involved.
2. Would #27 include grade book at the elementary level? Mr. Cummings said that the standards-based report card does not translate well in a daily or weekly update; there will be a progress report as opposed to grade-based progress. This will involve a dialogue with parents. The plan is to use Infinite Campus more often.

Mrs. Gerber asked:

1. What is the timeline for #11? Mr. Cummings said that work has begun and the hope is that the School Improvement Plans will be done by October for alignment with teacher goal-setting.
2. What is #19? Ms. Leonardi said that it is a 6 part series (include sessions with the special education attorney), for administrators in order to address the Special Education processes in an effort to improve day-to-day processes. This is being offered as a result of principal feedback.
3. Will teachers eventually be involved in this? Ms. Leonardi said this already takes place.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack asked:

1. #1 and #4 should specifically say K-5 as previously discussed, the current statements are very broad, she believed it should be brought back to kindergarten and that that was what the Board had voted on. Dr. Title said that while a K-5 program may be developed, it may not be possible to implement all at once; the goal was to look at K-5, but there is no guarantee that it will happen immediately. The World Language enhancements were already presented last year to the Board. Mr. Dwyer said there are budget implications. Mrs. Liu-McCormack asked if K-5 is just going to be discussed or actually implemented. Dr. Title said he is hoping to get a more detailed report for the Board prior to the budget discussion.
2. Does #5 involve note-taking skills and organizational skills? Dr. Title responded that the first phase is to identify the problem.
3. Will this be developed this year and will it be reported back to the Board? Dr. Title said yes, he doesn't expect any major budget implications with this and will be happy to share with the Board.

Mrs. Gerber asked about #9, what percent of PD will address this? Mrs. Parks said this was started last year by first identifying teacher needs. It is now ongoing work. Mr. Hatzis said time management and quality instruction are addressed. Mr. Ebling said that both high schools are establishing collaborative teams around teaching in the block.

Ms. Karnal asked if there was any feedback on the new schedule. Mr. Ebling said students have reported that the day goes faster and they are enjoying it. Mr. Hatzis said the students are adapting and it was one of the smoothest school openings that he has experienced.

Mr. Llewellyn asked:

1. Parents have asked about the Capstone Project. Dr. Title said that while it is not yet a requirement, the district is building towards it, a good explanation of it exists on page 23 in the District Improvement Plan. The idea is a way for students to bring learning together. This is legislation that has been passed and postponed; it has significant educational merit.
2. More information on #20 and #21? Mrs. Leffert explained the 3 day teacher induction that is expanded every year. The New Teacher Academy will be developed internally and qualified applicants will be asked for a sample lesson plan.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked, in terms of a survey, is something being used currently? Mrs. Leffert said that teachers already use a questionnaire and look at evidence for more effective teaching.

Mr. Llewellyn asked if the TIPS line was working. Ms. Leonardi said yes, the fear of false reporting has not proven true. It has been a useful tool.

Ms. Karnal asked how teacher knowledge of subject matter is gauged during the interview process. Mrs. Leffert said all teachers need subject specific assessments to get certified, and current staff also assists with question development.

*Approval of Minutes*

*Approval of Minutes of the August 25, 2015 Regular Meeting*

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly moved, Mrs. Gerber seconded that the Board of Education approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of August 25, 2015.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack said that while she did not attend the August 25 Meeting, she took issue with a statement in the minutes attributed to Mr. Dwyer towards the bottom of page 2. She said she believed that she and Mr. Dwyer never had a discussion about or made comments about the Re-districting Committee commission statement. She believes there is no point in having the statement in there as she did not have a conversation on the commission statement.

Mr. Dwyer said the referenced sentence appears to be a run-on; he did make the comment that Mrs. Liu-McCormack did not provide any feedback on the commission statement.

Mr. Llewellyn asked if Mrs. Liu-McCormack had a proposed change to the language amendment.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack said she believes the comment should be struck because it implies she had a conversation that she didn't have; it is superfluous.

Mr. Dwyer said that he did make the comment at the meeting.

**Motion Passed: 6-3**

Favor: Mr. Patten, Ms. Karnal, Mrs. Gerber, Mr. Dwyer, Mr. Convertito, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly

Oppose: Mrs. Liu-McCormack, Mr. Fattibene, Mr. Llewellyn

Mr. Llewellyn made a point of order and asked Mrs. Gerber that Mrs. Liu-McCormack's previous comment be added to the minutes of the current meeting.

*Superintendent Report*

*Opening of School Update*

Dr. Title reviewed the First Day Enrollment numbers and reminded everyone that the count is not official until October 1. He noted that there are fewer students in the elementary grades and that registrations are ongoing. The numbers at the secondary level are very close as projected.

Mrs. Leffert reviewed the certified staffing update; there is a net change of +9.7 FTE. Some recently hired staff will be joining the district shortly. Dr. Title explained that late hires after August 1 are sometimes held by their previous district for 30 days or until a replacement can be found; this is based on agreements between superintendents.

Mrs. Karnal asked if these positions existed within the budget. Mrs. Leffert said no - there was no choice in hiring due to section additions at the elementary level and an increase in course selection changes at the secondary level.

Mr. Dwyer added that the Superintendent is tasked with budget adjustments in these cases to balance the budget. Dr. Title explained that the Board has a long standing practice of class size limits for the elementary level and district-wide equity is maintained.

Ms. Karnal moved, Mr. Llewellyn seconded to add a topic of exit interviews to the agenda.

Ms. Karnal wants to understand why teachers are leaving the district.

Mr. Llewellyn asked for the number of resignations and retirements for the last fiscal year. Mrs. Leffert

responded that there were 22 retirements and 44 resignations. Mr. Llewellyn asked why such a significant number, particularly the spike over the last 4 years?

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly fully supports the topic of exit interviews, but does not support adding it to the agenda at the late hour of 10:35 without the staff having any preparation.

Mr. Llewellyn made a friendly amendment, accepted by Ms. Karnal to add this item to the next agenda.

Mr. Dwyer asked if anyone objected, no one did

Mrs. Gerber re-read the motion, "to add a topic of exit interviews to the agenda of the next regular Board meeting"

Mr. Convertito was not clear on the motion and asked if it was a discussion item to be added; procedurally, this is not proper to add to a future agenda.

Ms. Karnal wanted to better understand what administration work would be needed.

Mr. Dwyer said the motion is for the current agenda per the By-laws; future agendas are prepared by the Superintendent in consultation with the Board Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary.

Mrs. Gerber re-read the motion: "to add a topic of exit interviews to the agenda."

Mr. Llewellyn asked if he could add it to the next agenda, Mr. Dwyer said he wanted to deal with the motion on the table, and said to add a topic to the next meeting's agenda would be changing the By-laws.

Ms. Karnal said she was not looking to change bylaws, and reiterated her question of what administration work is required, Mr. Dwyer said it is acknowledgement that staff may have to do work, but first the motion is on adding an agenda item.

Mr. Llewellyn made a point of order to ask whether a 2/3 vote of the Board can add a topic to a future agenda, and expressed his frustration at trying to add an item to the agenda, which has been attempted before.

Mr. Dwyer said no.

Mr. Convertito said he would have to consult the policy manual.

Mrs. Gerber re-read the motion: "to add a topic of exit interviews to the agenda."

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked for the sake of consistency whether public comment would be allowed and Mr. Dwyer said no, in keeping with Mr. Fattibene's previous comment that public comment should only be invited for current agenda items.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack said point of order, this was not being consistent.

Mrs. Gerber re-read the motion: "to add a topic of exit interviews to the agenda."

Mr. Convertito said he does not support the motion but is willing to review this and also review hiring practices in policy committee. He believes the hiring practices are in the policy manual and those would have to be amended.

#### **Motion Failed: 4-5**

Favor: Mrs. Liu-McCormack, Ms. Karnal, Mr. Fattibene, Mr. Llewellyn

Oppose: Mr. Patten, Mrs. Gerber, Mr. Dwyer, Mr. Convertito, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly

Mr. Llewellyn asked how the pink sheet should be read with regards to sections added or dropped – is it done September vs. June? Dr. Title suggested he look in the budget book to see the budgeted sections by school and Mrs. Leffert said the net was 4 sections.

#### *Committee/Liaison Reports*

Mr. Convertito said the first Redistricting Committee meeting was held and is currently in the process of reviewing older guidelines and principles.

Mr. Llewellyn said he attended the CES meeting. They went through a lot of good information with the Commissioner regarding testing. The state is working on its 5-year strategic plan, the theme is equity and excellence. Parents and staff are invited to participate in focus groups.

Mrs. Gerber said the FLHSBC will have the first meeting tomorrow in the teacher's lounge.

Mr. Dwyer said the Board of Finance Town-wide Capital Planning Workshop takes place on 9/15.

*Open Board Comment*

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said the retirement party for Mr. Jim Coyne will take place on 9/24 at the Brooklawn Country Club. Those wishing to attend should RSVP.

Mrs. Gerber mentioned that she attended the FLHS National Honor Society induction in May and read a list of schools where some of the students will be attending including Georgetown, MIT, Lehigh, Carnegie Mellon, Brown, and Duke among others. Additionally, the Fairfield Living magazine features outstanding Fairfield students in the latest issue.

*Adjournment*

Mr. Convertito moved, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly seconded that this Regular Meeting of the Board of Education adjourn.

**Motion Passed: 9-0**

Meeting adjourned at 10:51PM

*Respectfully Submitted by  
Jessica Gerber  
Fairfield Board of Education  
Secretary*