

**Special/Budget Meeting Minutes  
Fairfield BoE, January 17, 2017**

**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/Budget Meeting of the Board of Education and Roll Call*

Chairman Philip Dwyer called the Special Meeting to order at 7:35PM. Present were members Eileen Liu-McCormack, Marc Patten, Donna Karnal, Jessica Gerber, Philip Dwyer, Anthony Calabrese, Jennifer Maxon-Kennelly and John Llewellyn. Trisha Pytko did not attend. Others present were Superintendent Dr. Toni Jones, members of the central office leadership team, and approximately 10 members of the public.

A document with replies to Board questions was left at each Board member's seat and was referenced throughout the meeting.

Mr. Dwyer reviewed upcoming Town Budget meeting dates, which are subject to change: March 7 for the BOS/BOF review, March 27 for the BOS vote, March 30 for the BOF vote, RTM review from April 3-5, and May 1 for the RTM vote. He asked the Board to follow the agenda: Historical Data, Income, Executive Summary and Transportation. He noted that Mr. Ficke was in attendance to address Transportation.

*Historical Data, Pages 1-15*

Mr. Calabrese, Question 33, and page 124 in the Budget book – why are the projections so far off, not the total amount – but where the students ended up? Dr. Jones said Kindergarten is always the most difficult to predict. Mrs. Parks said the consultants are very thorough and derive projections from a combination of factors including birth rates and available properties.

Mrs. Gerber noted 11 additional KDG students since September 1. Mrs. Parks added that registration normally slows by October, but this year has been different – many students are still registering.

Mr. Patten, page 14 – Can we determine the cost of PPT Attendance by Paras? What is the procedure, do other paras replace them? Ms. Leonardi said this mandate went into effect for this year, but occurred after last year's budget was approved. The cost is less in dollars and more in time lost for children's services; we want to keep trained people in the classroom with students – building this redundancy is a daily challenge. Mrs. Leffert said she would look into the cost of subs.

Mr. Llewellyn

1. Pages 8 and 38 in the Budget book, what is the difference in magnet tuition among the various schools? Mr. Dwyer directed him to the reply in Question #29.
2. Is 6-6 all day? Dr. Jones said it is 6am-6pm.
3. How do students get recruited? Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly referenced the recently reviewed policy for on-campus recruitment, as required by statute.
4. Questioned absence of an increase in tuition that we receive, such as for Open Choice. Dr. Jones said, similarly to the magnet program, the Open Choice numbers could go up or down and we don't want to count on that revenue, about \$56K. Mr. Dwyer asked if the same rationale was used for WFC and was told it was.

5. Is there a waitlist for Open Choice? Mr. Cummings said there was no indication that seats offered by Fairfield were not being claimed.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack requested the chart shown on page 3 be updated with DRG B information. On page 4, she asked how much has been spent and how much will be spent on PD training for implementing elementary math – is \$8K the total amount? Mr. Dwyer and Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly referenced page 146 for the list of professional development.

Mr. Llewellyn:

1. How much of the \$750K for elementary math was spent last year and how, is there more in next year's budget? Mr. Cummings said he would have to get the exact figures on what was spent on texts and PD. There is a continuing need to align new resources with existing curriculum for equitable distribution and expectation. Ongoing PD will support the implementation.
2. How many teachers have formal training with Bridges texts? Does this hit our budget or is this teacher time? Mr. Cummings said all teachers have received formal training; defined as building PD and support. This will affect the budget, for example, there is a need to address staff proficiency in instruction of fractions.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack asked:

1. Wants to understand if the \$750K in elementary math was fully spent and what the \$150K is for. Mr. Cummings said texts and materials were purchased; most was used for grades 3-5; approximately \$80K for K-2 materials is in proposed budget. An additional kit per grade level was purchased, based on enrollment. Dr. Jones referred to page 94, the \$105K includes a portion for recurring elementary math series consumables.
2. Is the training done, what is the plan? Mr. Cummings said this work will never be done due to new staff and new findings.
3. How much was spent for the Bridges training rollout? Mr. Cummings said approximately \$20K was spent on curricular work.
4. Page 4, Is the continued intervention for Math and Reading focused on all levels and how do we quantify how much we have allocated towards these interventions? What is the aggregate in the budget? Ms. Leonardi said students who are struggling to meet the standards benefit from interventions. Approximately \$80K is Wilson Reading, the aggregate is \$200K-\$225K including PD and materials.
5. Do we have interventions for students who need to be challenged? Mr. Cummings said yes. Part of the ongoing PD is to recognize when students need to be challenged. Elementary classroom libraries are stocked with books for all reading levels. Mr. Wakeman added that resources and daily lessons exist in Bridges. They are looking to differentiate in the classroom to benefit all students.

Ms. Karnal asked for a better breakdown of page 7. Wants more detail – how many students take the AP class but not the test; how many 3's, 4's, and 5's; are there certain AP courses in which Fairfield excels? Dr. Jones said this will be provided and Mrs. Gerber said it was already distributed in the fall.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack asked:

1. Page 5, Leadership Capacity – Are we sufficiently allocating monies for external PD and in what disciplines? Dr. Boice said yes and she will provide a percentage. An example is the World Language program - Ms. Frankel brings in consultants for the Chinese teachers. Onsite PD is important and ensures follow-through and embedded practice.

2. Page 5, Is the continued focus on sharing practices in PK-12 a budget item? Dr. Jones said instructional rounds can have a budgetary impact with subs. Mr. Dwyer noted that pages 4, 5 and 6 use existing resources.
3. Page 7 – Requested a re-chart for AP scores. Mr. Dwyer said this has already been requested by Ms. Karnal.
4. Page 10, What is the dollar amount for the 70% reduction? Dr. Jones referenced page 21. Mr. Dwyer said it is difficult for any BOE to predict what a governor will do.
5. Would like to see unfunded mandates, how that has grown, and the impact on the budget, such as with Excess Cost. Dr. Jones referenced questions 4 and 6 in today’s BOE question packet. Mr. Dwyer referenced pages 21 and 22 for a listing of government grants; about 6% of the budget is funded by government funds. Dr. Jones said she will attempt to provide a complete list.

Mr. Llewellyn – Is the ECS on page 21 current? Dr. Jones said no, it will be less.

<i>Income, Pages 17-26</i>
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Mrs. Gerber – Page 22 – Why the decrease in custodial fees and building rentals? Mr. Cullen will provide this information.

Mr. Patten

1. Requested 2016/2017 building rental actuals to see if we are on track to stay on budget.
2. Page 17 – Any surprises with the Excess Cost since last May? Ms. Leonardi said no; will find out after the March filing.

Mr. Dwyer – Are DDS outplacements an issue that we need to be aware of? Ms. Leonardi said FPS is responsible the education of DDS residential placements for students under 21. DDS has determined it will no longer fund those residential placements and will require school districts to pay the residential cost. This is separate from the excess cost provision but it is a potential risk.

Mr. Llewellyn – Page 150 - How much are we at risk of losing? What is the total dollar amount? Ms. Leonardi clarified that the DDS tuition listed on that page does not include residential; if the decisions are made by March, those DDS-placed students will go into the excess cost provision; a residential program for one student may cost up to \$350K. The total residential amount for the 6 students listed is close to \$1M.

Mr. Dwyer - If multiple districts submit for DDS residential reimbursement, it will reduce the portion that is available for reimbursement.

Mr. Patten – Is the 75% reimbursement rate a state law? How long have we had this rate? Ms. Leonardi said this is an estimate for what the state legislature uses for 169 school districts. The filing takes place on December 1 and estimates which students will exceed the threshold of 4.5 times PPE. Previously, the rate was at 100% after 4.5 times PPE; now there is a statutory cap on that amount; it has been 75-80% the last several years.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack – What is the cost of un-funded state mandates? What are the itemized and aggregate amounts for non-mandated extra programs? Would like to see the number of students participating and the income/revenue statements for the Open Choice, Walter Fitzgerald, PK and Gifted programs – as well as any other non-mandated special programs she is not aware of.

Mr. Dwyer said this may require a high level of research and analysis. Dr. Jones said PK and WFC are mandated for special education; she will try to compile this list.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said the scope of this question seems staggering; there is much that is non-mandated; sounds like an audit of the entire school district.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack disagreed and felt the information should be on hand and will help to prioritize spending.

Mr. Dwyer said this budget must be approved within the next 15 days and timing is an issue.

Mrs. Gerber added that page 111 and the Racial Imbalance report, which the Board had already received, provide much of that information, and added that some of the questions being posed had been asked previously.

Mr. Patten, page 21 – Why the increase in federal grants? Ms. Leonardi said IDEA grants are driven by enrollment and include public school and children with disabilities placed in private schools within Fairfield.

<i>Executive Summary, Pages 28-49</i>
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Mr. Llewellyn

1. Page 31 – Why the 12.1 decrease in paras? Dr. Jones referenced question #24 and page 136.
2. Page 30, 31 – Staff Replacement, are those numbers embedded? Mrs. Leffert referenced page 72.

Mr. Dwyer said there is risk in budgeting tightly for retirees this year as well as not budgeting staff for several elementary sections within 1 or 2 students that may require a new teacher.

Mr. Llewellyn said there are more teachers and fewer sections than last year.

Mr. Patten, page 30-31 – Is the \$36K that is used to show the cost savings for replacing a retired elementary teacher, a current figure? Mrs. Leffert said it is an average.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack, page 39 – What efforts do we use to find efficiencies? Mr. Ficke said the dept. is currently changing to a web-based system. There are some limitations with private school agreements and the number of busses used. In the past, some private school parents were paid to transport their students as it was cheaper than a bus.

Ms. Karnal asked about the 5-year contract. Mr. Ficke said the contract is good through the end of June and he is working on a new RFP. Mr. Dwyer added that the contract is negotiated by the Town purchasing director.

Mr. Patten – Are some of the routes 1 to 1.5 hours? Mr. Ficke said yes. There are 6 buses for Prep, and those students are transported across town.

Mr. Calabrese confirmed that private school transportation comes out of the Town side of the budget and while efficiencies should be found there, there is a state law requiring school transport. Mr. Ficke said yes, all those not in walk zones must be transported. Any transport done for public school must be done for private schools – Prep's drop off is 8:20, so those buses can't transport for other schools.

*Public Comment:*

Mike Jehle and Christine Jewel, Fairfield History Museum: In reference to page 148 in support of the District Improvement Plan, the Fairfield History Museum has been working with FPS to provide high quality and award-winning programming for Social Studies. It would be best to apply this consistently across all schools.

Sue Miska, Ryegate Road: Thanked the Superintendent for the concise budget book, would like more information on pension numbers, Bridgeport does not transport students.

Mr. Dwyer said AON presented to the Board in December and he referenced question #12 in the packet; we are bound by the Town's Pension Board.

Mr. Llewellyn:

1. Page 32 and 33 – Why the huge increase in pension? Can you bridge the difference in numbers from last year? Mrs. Munsell referenced page 134 – the schedule for the settlement of contracts. As contracts are settled, new hires go into 401a; based on turnover and hard to predict. An average was taken over the last 3 years. One of the biggest turnover groups is paras.
2. 25% yearly turnover for paras? Ms. Munsell said yes, they participate immediately, are matched up to 4%, but 5 years is needed to be vested.
3. Town is funding both pension and 401a – why are costs higher? Mrs. Munsell said we still have to fund retirees and also immediately for new hires. Mr. Dwyer recalled that as bargaining unit employees transitioned over, it was estimated to cost more short-term, but provide savings long-term.
4. Does not understand why this is a double cost. What is the average percent pension contribution based on salary? Mr. Calabrese offered that we are still paying the pension, but also paying and matching new people for 401a. Mrs. Munsell said the contribution is based on an actuarial calculation. Mr. Dwyer suggested formulating a question for the Town, since the Town manages this.
5. Has the Plan 2.0 given any indication of an increase, since AON had suggested 7%? If there is a surplus does it stay in our budget? Ms. Munsell said the Plan says the increase will be 5-7%. This year's was underfunded and the reserve was applied to the expense. If there is a surplus, it will stay in our budget.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly - Will the State Plan numbers change based on additional experience? Mrs. Munsell said the state sets those rates in the spring, which still gives time for Town bodies to adjust the budget if necessary.

Mr. Llewellyn, page 34 – What is the difference between Homebound for special education and non-special ed? Ms. Leonardi said this is a placeholder for potential liability. The state is considering legislation regarding obligations to provide the same hours of instruction for expelled students.

Mrs. Gerber, page 31 – What is the 2.5 clerical support for? Mrs. Leffert said a .5 clerical position was added at each high school to address clerical responsibilities surrounding PPT's.

Mr. Llewellyn, pages 35 and 73 – #303, Explanation of the Consultation Services? Ms. Leonardi said this is purposefully underfunded due to Excess Cost. Also need additional support for several students with complex needs. Mr. Dwyer referenced question #25.

Ms. Karnal

1. page 34 – What is the detail on the increase in #303? How many students are covered under 303? Ms. Leonardi said it is a combination of a number of things for increased services. One could argue that every special education student benefits from this.
2. Page 36, #307 – What are the 'Other Services?' Ms. Leonardi said this is for psych, neuro, and complex tech evaluations; areas of expertise that may be required; private nurses; and other unique needs; most capture funding in the excess cost provision. Will provide the number of students serviced here.

Mr. Patten said he is looking to enhance the budget on page 41, #321; What would be the cost of adding 1 or 2 PD days over the summer related to improving instructional methods for teachers? He will find off-sets.

Mr. Dwyer said teachers will have to be paid to come in over the summer.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly questioned whether teachers would agree to this.

Mr. Llewellyn, page 45, line 429 – is the \$47.5K increase different from the plumbing issue at Dwight on page 156? Mr. Cullen said yes and referenced question#18.

Mr. Dwyer said there are budgeted maintenance projects on page 154 and each school has a maintenance line for ongoing, and there is also non-recurring.

Mr. Patten, page 45 –Any data on predicted savings from the solar projects? Mr. Cullen said this data will be available after a full year’s implementation, which should be very soon.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly reminded the Board that while we are seeing savings, the space has also been expanded.

Mr. Dwyer reminded the Board to submit additional questions by Thursday night and cc the entire Board to avoid duplicates. Requested budget changes should be brought forward at the next meeting.

Mr. Llewellyn requested receipt of answers the night before the next meeting. Dr. Jones said senior staff addresses questions as soon as they are received – most questions in tonight’s handout weren’t received until this morning.

Mrs. Gerber added that CJ from Woods came in 2<sup>nd</sup> on the Chopped Championship.

Mrs. Gerber moved, Mr. Patten seconded to adjourn the meeting.

**Motion Passed: 8-0 (10:28 pm)**

*Jessica Gerber  
Fairfield Board of Education  
Secretary*