

**Special Meeting Minutes  
Fairfield BoE, January 23, 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.

**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 7:30PM. Present were members Trisha Pytko, Christine Vitale, Jessica Gerber, Philip Dwyer, Jennifer Jacobsen, Nick Aysseh, Jennifer Maxon-Kennelly and Jeff Peterson. Jennifer Leeper was not present. Others present were Superintendent Dr. Toni Jones, members of the central office leadership team, and approximately 30 members of the public.

Mr. Dwyer led the budget review and requested that Board members mention any changes they might be considering, to give staff time to respond and make calculations. Responses to Board questions received in advance of the meeting were provided in a 27-page Board Questions handout that was referenced throughout the meeting.

**A. Revenue, Pages 13-23**

Mrs. Munsell responded to Board Questions on Excess Cost and Open Choice.

Excess Cost is in the budget as a net expense. When applied income is removed, the number increases. Income sections include all income received. When grant funding is tied to teaching positions, the district uses it for that purpose.

The number of Open Choice seats did not increase this year. The district is careful not to add Open Choice seats when it would result in the splitting of a section and the hiring of a teacher. Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly and Mrs. Gerber asked how this might impact the state's response to the FPS Racial Imbalance Plan, as the Plan requires additional Open Choice students. Mrs. Maxon Kennelly, Mr. Dwyer, Mrs. Gerber, Mrs. Jacobsen and Mrs. Vitale all expressed support of increasing the number of Open Choice seats available, provided those seats would not increase sections.

Dr. Jones said other districts will be billed in full for special education expenses of their students. The district aggressively pursues grant funding, but much of it is tied to Free/Reduced Lunch. The district could also pursue tuition students at WFC.

Mr. Cullen said most of the building reservations are known and in the system. Any deviation from the current rental parameters could make reservations more costly.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said she was interested in the Board and district looking into corporate sponsorship ideas. Mr. Dwyer said that there would probably have to be a policy regarding that topic.

**B. Staff Salaries, page 29** No questions.

**C. Benefits, page 31**

Mrs. Munsell clarified that AON projected insurance costs when the district was self-insured. Now that the district is insured with Community Partnership Plan (CPP); the premium is the same regardless of experience. New rates are provided in the spring and take effect in July. The current estimated increase is 7%.

**D. Operations and Maintenance of Buildings, page 43**

*Mr. Cullen responded to Board questions:*

The list of maintenance projects remains fairly steady - as projects are completed, more are added. Referencing page 17 in the Questions Document, projects that are frozen in 17-18 could bump other projects scheduled in 18-19, depending on how critical the project is. Mrs. Gerber added that the concern is that all scheduled 18-19 projects could be bumped.

The solar savings chart on page 13 of the Questions document showed that several schools did not realize projected savings. The 18-19 savings will be in the range of \$130K-\$150K. This could be attributed to increased square footage, new equipment, and an increase in heating costs. The high schools went solar later than expected; FLHS was delayed due to solar roof work, and FWHS is currently delayed due to a power issue. Additionally, the UI grid rate is different for each school. The district has a mechanism in place to be alerted to differences in power usage for each school which ensures minimal energy waste.

The boiler repair listed on page 160 is actually a replacement not just a repair and will accommodate Holland Hill's new size. The average life of that particular boiler is 17 years.

The FLHS maintenance item for the concession stand on page 18 of the Questions document stems from a request to renovate the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor storage room to be the football team's meeting room.

The cedar siding at RLMS is starting to rot; the best and most cost-effective way to address it is to install siding over it. This would eliminate the need for costly upkeep. The project was rejected by Town bodies, but is regularly monitored and remains on the list.

Painting is done by outside contractors and is a constant request. The painting schedule changes according to budget. The account is easy to take from during emergencies. It may be possible to do 5 areas out of the 15 areas that were frozen.

### **Transportation, page 37**

Dr. Jones said the transportation bid has not yet been awarded, so the number in the budget could change slightly. A 3% increase is built in. Mrs. Munsell said the Town Purchasing Director was fearful that the increase could have been as high as 20%. Unsure exactly when a contract will be in place.

Extra-curricular transportation costs are part of school allocation, which is at the principal's discretion.

Mr. Mancusi said there are more Outplaced students being transported this year. Having chaired a consortium on sharing Outplaced transportation among nearby districts, he understands the obstacles. It can be done but is difficult to manage due to the constant change in placements. Mrs. Munsell added that this conversation has already begun at CES. Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked for a breakdown of unilateral vs. PPT placements.

### **F. Dues and Fees, page 47: No Questions.**

Following discussion of specific agenda items, the Board focused on ESS, CLC, the ELL Academy and the budget process in general.

Mr. Mancusi attributed the ESS cost differences in the Questions documents to DBT training and summer services. ESS transition planning is taking place. Meetings with parents will be scheduled and a survey with open-ended responses will be offered. Parent, family and student anxiety about the change is well understood and is taken seriously. DBT was rolled out to the high schools this year and is in the budget to be rolled out to the middle schools next year. Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said she is interested in a report on how well ESS did. Dr. Jones added that the ESS change is overwhelmingly driven by staff.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked Dr. Jones to review items that leadership had requested, but were not in the budget – similar to the maintenance priority list. Dr. Jones said the budget accomplishes a great deal and addresses what teachers feel is important - despite the fact that it is lean. Among other things, the budget will do more for ELL, structure differently with the Elementary Facilitator, prepare for the STEAM assessment and move the district forward.

Mr. Cummings said the ELL Academy takes family support into consideration. The idea is for students to spend 12-15 weeks at the Academy, but it may be longer for middle and high school students due the curriculum. There is also an increase in the number of ELL students entering the district with little or no formal schooling.

Mr. Cummings said outside PD has not been reduced due to the budget. The headmasters added that cutting PD could mean limiting the maximum amount of PD per staff member, or sending fewer people to the same PD. Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said it would be tragic if teachers stop requesting PD due to the budgetary concerns. Mrs. Vitale added that the PTAC would be open to staff requests for anything that would enrich the lives of students.

Mr. Mancusi said the TMS CLC would start with 3 students, and full staff would not be hired until it was filled. At Riverfield, the district is looking for 2-1 staffing. Mrs. Deasy referenced page 140 to help explain the staffing differences with certified and non-certified. Mrs. Gerber asked why the costs for the TMS and Riverfield CLCs doubled from what was presented in November. Dr. Jones will research those numbers.

Mr. Mancusi said consultants for the Special Education audit will be in Fairfield from February 5-7, and he will be reaching out for parent, Board and staff participation.

Mrs. Deasy noted that ECC staff did not decrease. It has the same number of classes, but one is housed at Stratfield Elementary. Ms. Pytko expressed concern about the staffing numbers on page 11. Mr. Mancusi will look into that.

Mr. Dwyer reviewed the insurance savings and said the district implemented the State Plan early, resulting in savings. Dr. Jones was grateful to the bargaining units during the change. Because of that, the district has close to \$1M in savings, allowing the Board to pre-purchase items for next year, possibly textbooks. The \$2.3M that is held in reserve is a different issue altogether. Those funds will be used for sped cost overruns and maintenance projects.

Several Board members expressed concern on pre-purchasing texts but remained interested in restoring the 20% allocation. Mrs. Vitale suggested pre-purchasing Chromebooks as an alternative, if suitable science texts are not available.

Mr. Aysseh asked if there might be other areas that the Superintendent would like expand on, not related to the 20% allocation restoration. Dr. Jones said that is always a difficult question, the district can always use more money and more staff. This is a solid budget, with the 20% allocation being a small portion controlled by each school.

*Board members voiced their budget considerations:*

Mrs. Jacobsen and Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly are interested in restoring the full 20% allocation to schools. Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said one approach is to pre-purchase, and the other is to add money back in to the budget.

Mrs. Munsell referenced an allocation chart showing differing levels of allocation. Copier paper was moved into the allocation accounts. The \$1M insurance savings this year is a one-time savings. Future expected savings are already built in to the budget.

Mrs. Gerber and Mrs. Vitale support using some of the insurance savings to pre-purchase materials, allowing restoration of the 20% allocation. Dr. Jones clarified that full restoration would be \$403,602 – some funding was already restored to the high schools due to fixed costs.

Mrs. Gerber, Ms. Pytko, Mr. Peterson and Mr. Aysseh agreed that the budget should remain at the 3.1% level. Dr. Jones added that she is comfortable with the pre-purchase option, despite the possibility of unforeseen costs this year.

Mrs. Jacobsen and Mr. Aysseh are interested in restoring maintenance projects.

Motion to adjourn:

Move: Ms. Pytko

*Approved 3/19/2018*

Second: Mrs. Gerber

**Motion Passed: 8-0**

*Meeting adjourned at 10:11pm.*

*Respectfully Submitted by Jessica Gerber*

*Fairfield Board of Education*

*Secretary*