

**Regular Meeting Minutes  
Fairfield BoE, January 29, 2015**

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

Chairman Philip Dwyer called the Regular meeting to order at 7:40PM. Present were members Eileen Liu-McCormack, John Convertito, Donna Karnal (left the meeting at 8:40PM), Jessica Gerber, Philip Dwyer, Paul Fattibene, Jennifer Maxon-Kennelly, John Llewellyn and Marc Patten. Others present were Dr. Title, members of the Central Office Leadership Team, student representatives Tyler Shuster, Max Kutsch and Suzanne Finnerty, and approximately 100 members of the public.

*Student Reports*

Mr. Shuster reported for Fairfield Warde High School: Cheerleaders are hosting the FCIAC championships next weekend, next year's course offerings are being presented, Infinite Campus will be used for course selection; the college planning process for juniors is beginning and a math contest will be administered by the Math Department on February 3<sup>rd</sup> - this is a challenging, voluntary mathematics exam, and more than 200 participants are expected this year; the Debate Team tournament is next Saturday, and mid-term grades will be released tomorrow.

Mr. Kutsch and Ms. Finnerty reported for Fairfield Ludlowe High School: winter sports teams have been successful, construction on the new wing has begun, mid-terms went smoothly except for the fire alarm during one of them, the spring musical is Grease and an outside director will be helping with the music.

*Public Comment*

Elizabeth Vancho, Galloping Hill Road: Support of budget.

Nancy Ross, Riverview Circle: Support of reading programs and budget.

Kathy Finlaw, FWMS parent: Support of budget as presented.

Jan Reber, Fairfield resident: Supports by-law amendment 6 but questions timing, opposes minutes as written and questioned when and where they were posted, questioned budget format.

Carolyn Trabuco, Sherwood Farm Road: Support of budget.

Matt Hutzelman, Pansy Road: Support of budget.

Sue Miska, Ryegate Road: Questions trust in budget.

Ed Grzeda, Redding Road: Supports the budget without cuts.

Julie Gottlieb, District 6: Supports the budget in full.

Mary Mayer, Warner Hill Road: Supports budget.

Bonnie Rotelli, Merritt Street: Supports budget and special education initiatives.

Patti Donohue, Congress Street: Support Dr. Title's budget and special education staffing model.

Kelly McWhinnie, Church Hill Road: Supports world language and special education proposals.

*Old Business*

*Approval of By-Law Amendment VI*

Mr. Patten moved, Mrs. Gerber seconded the recommended motion that the Board of Education approve the By-Law amendment to Article VI, per Enclosure No. 1.

Mr. Patten reminded the Board of this amendment's history from last year and mentioned that this ensures Board compliance with Robert's Rules.

Mr. Fattibene said this amendment is unfair for this body and session, but he agrees with the principle of it

Mr. Fattibene moved, Mrs. Liu-McCormack seconded, to postpone the motion indefinitely.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly confirmed with Mr. Dwyer that this motion supports a nay vote to the amendment.

Mr. Fattibene continued his explanation; given the controversial amendments that were recently passed by this body

with a simple majority, that this amendment for a 2/3 majority is unfair, unjust and inappropriate for this body and this session, and should be left for the next body during the organizational meeting, if that Board chooses.

Mr. Llewellyn agreed and felt that the Chair has control of the majority of the board and controlled the last set of by-law amendments and their voting order and in silencing the First Amendment rights of the public to speak on any topic they want and silencing minority Board members who ask for data.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly took issue with previous remarks regarding a recently passed amendment as depriving the public of First Amendment rights; she said that is a mischaracterization of the First Amendment, and the public should look to the RTM, the BOF and the BOS as examples. She also maintained that self-described minority Board members are still free to request information, but now it is done in public to provide transparency.

Mr. Llewellyn responded that requests can be arbitrarily denied.

Mr. Patten said he is against postponing this amendment indefinitely; that would maintain non-compliance with Robert's Rules.

Ms. Karnal asked why this amendment is up for discussion tonight and Mr. Dwyer said this amendment was scheduled for a vote after the presentation of the Ad-Hoc committee recommendations.

Mr. Fattibene said he is unsure why the By-Laws originally had a simple majority. Wouldn't characterize it as an oversight, although some bylaws do require a 2/3 majority.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack discussed earlier versions of Robert's Rules which all had a 2/3 vote requirement to change the rules.

**Motion Failed: 4-4**

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

Oppose: Mr. Patten, Mrs. Gerber, Mr. Dwyer, Mr. Convertito

*(Ms. Karnal was not present for the vote.)*

Mr. Llewellyn moved, Mr. Fattibene seconded to postpone the motion to the next Regular Board meeting.

**Motion Passed 8-0**

*(Ms. Karnal was not present for the vote.)*

*New Business*

*Approval of Technology Grant Proposal*

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly moved, Mr. Patten seconded the recommended motion, that the Board of Education approve the Technology Grant Proposal, RFP#813.

Dr. Title said this is an opportunity for the district to take advantage of a technology grant.

Mr. Llewellyn asked why this proposal is presented for a vote without prior discussion, Mr. Dwyer said this is allowed, and Ms. Byrnes said the timing of the grant requires delivery to the state by February 13<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Patten asked if this grant was sought out, and whether there is a downside. Ms. Byrnes said this is similar to last year's grant to support infrastructure for the Common Core; this year we are going after additional technology to support SBAC as well as other programs; funds have to be expended before June 2016; the state intends to review all the RFPs and then it will be bonded; this is the grant application. Dr. Title said there is no downside.

Mr. Fattibene confirmed that this is a way for the state to bring additional equipment to the district. Ms. Byrnes said it will allow the district to stretch its capital.

Mr. Llewellyn asked what will be purchased with the grant. Ms. Byrnes confirmed that additional equipment can be purchased, such as 10 new tablets for the netbook cart to allow for additional SBAC tests; and that this applies to 2015-2016, and she confirmed that the grant allows the district to trade up and get extra computers or tablets.

*Public comment:*

Sue Miska, Ryegate Road: Supports technology in schools.

**Motion Passed 8-0**

*(Ms. Karnal was not present for the vote)*

*Adoption of a Recommended Budget for the 2015-2016 Fiscal Year*

Mrs. Gerber moved, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly seconded the recommended motion that the Board of Education approve an operating budget for the 2015-2016 fiscal year in the amount of \$----- as presented, to be forwarded to the Town of Fairfield.

Mr. Patten thanked the staff for the chart clarifying 6<sup>th</sup> grade staffing and confirmed with Dr. Title that the 2 slots in ELA count as 2 classes.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said all her questions were answered.

Mr. Llewellyn had no further questions.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack asked about the 6 teachers allocated to FWHS, and how the district was addressing the shortage of staffing in the science area. Dr. Title and Mrs. Leffert said this information is provided on page 142; it is a matter of working with existing staff and finding people to fill positions; the FTE is still there.

Mr. Patten asked what .2 FTE is for in Band and was told it equates to 1 period.

Mr. Convertito said he had no proposed amendments.

Mr. Fattibene said he did not have any proposed amendments.

Mr. Dwyer moved, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly seconded to amend the Superintendent's proposed operating budget for 2015-2016 by reducing the pension account by \$293,000 and increasing the health insurance account by \$293,000.

Mr. Dwyer referred to a recent email regarding pension and health; the budget is created with October results; the latest available information from the actuaries showed that \$293,000 less could be put in to the pension fund, and because of the deficit in the health account, this gives an additional \$9,000 towards that that fund. This has no effect on the bottom line of the proposed budget.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said this keeps faith with the request from other Town bodies.

Mr. Dwyer said it is a shifting from one line to the other.

Mr. Convertito asked if correct object codes on page 39 are being used, from 201 to 207. Ms. Munsell said yes.

Mr. Fattibene confirmed that it is a line item change and was told yes.

**Motion Passed: 8-0**

*(Ms. Karnal was not present for the vote)*

Mrs. Liu-McCormack priced out her proposal below, after conferring with staff.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack moved, Mr. Llewellyn seconded to amend the Superintendent's proposed operating budget for 2015-2016 by reducing the budget by:

- \$45,000 for cutting the color copy budget in half
- \$151,377 for cutting Pre-K busing
- \$13,765 for cutting replacement of the Jennings Media Center Carpet
- \$20,707 for cutting replacement of the FLHS Carpet (excluding the Wright House Office)
- \$40,000 for cutting the FLHS Key Unification
- \$43,738 for cutting the Administrator at WFC
- \$155,519 for cutting the Special Ed Coordinator
- Totaling: **\$470,106**

And increasing the budget by:

- \$22,700 for adding 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade Gifted assessment
- \$51,691 by adding 5<sup>th</sup> grade music
- \$40,000 by adding MS Gifted Program Commitment
- \$232,610 by adding 2 days/week for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade world language
- \$109,844 by adding 2 days/week for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade world language
- Totaling: **\$456,845**

Mrs. Liu-McCormack said her intent is to reallocate some of the spending towards student programs, especially those that have been cut. If World language is developed a year at a time it will require redoing the curriculum over and over, and it will be more expensive and less efficient and disruptive. The PK busing money can be spent more effectively, the program costs a lot just to move five kids. \$70,000 per kid is a lot. PK busing isn't required, nor is the program. Would rather reinvest money in World Language that impacts all students.

Mr. Llewellyn said the intent of the cuts was not to touch teaching, but things that might not have as big of an impact. Color copying is a luxury, not a need; carpet projects can be delayed; capital items that do not impact student learning should be looked at. The need for more administrators is questioned; change in special ed program deserves full Board conversation; the Strategic School Profile as provided to the Commissioner would provide data that is needed instead of an audit. We are right now over \$1 million ahead of budget for teaching staff so there is plenty of room in salary expense so it can be readdressed after we have a chance to assess.

Mrs. Gerber asked if providing World Language in grades 2,3,4, and 5 would present problems with curriculum in upper grades. Dr. Boice responded that World Language curriculum will be presented in May; there is no curriculum prior to grade 4; if World Language were to be added in earlier grades, the biggest adjustment would be 6<sup>th</sup> grade; high school curriculum would not change.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked if AP exams might eventually be taken earlier, and asked about World Language in elementary grades; what is being learned and the effect it might have on reading instruction and staffing. Dr. Boice said that Spanish and French AP exams might be taken sooner; younger grades will expand vocabulary, learn how to speak, and learn grammar in later years. Mr. Rafferty said that elementary school is more flexible than middle school; each school schedule would have to be reviewed to address the reading instruction and staffing; curriculum costs should also be reviewed if World Language is to be introduced sooner.

Mrs. Gerber asked about the additional cost of books and materials if the amendment passed; Mr. Rafferty said there would be curriculum development and materials cost, but no textbook.

Mrs. Gerber asked how the 2 administrative positions in the special education staffing will impact student learning and achievement. Ms. Leonardi explained that special education administrators are able to work with the big picture; leadership is a driving factor that includes accountability; special education administrators are present in PPT's and engage and facilitate the focus for the team of 8-10 professionals and parents; administrators provide technical experience to less experienced staff with a diverse case-load, and assist with special education hearings and all legal proceedings. Not having administrative support is detrimental to overall instruction.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked if an administrator must attend a PPT. Ms. Leonardi said a designee is allowed, however, the designee must be able to approve spending district money and this is an administrative function.

Mr. Fattibene questioned the responsibilities of the Dean at WFC; Ms. Leonardi said the Dean's primary responsibility is to manage the disciplinary system and suspensions, but he does not provide program leadership; the WFC needs an infusion of future thinking such as the provision of online courses.

Mr. Patten felt that taking away color copying is short-sighted; it would be unfair to remove the current PK busing program; he supports the special education proposal that would help the district on so many levels; he does not support the proposed cuts. He supports the World Language plan as a fiscally responsible and a smart educational decision; he will not be proposing any additions.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack is concerned about the perception of funding on the backs of other programs and said that it is not the case, she explained that she is trying to restore gifted, music and World Language programs that students had before; there is nothing more important than to protect programs; the special education program has already been invested in heavily and there is a need to invest in other areas like gifted and world language; thousands of students will benefit from restoring programs; she hates to sacrifice one thing for another, but a great job is being done currently at the WFC, and that can be reviewed next year. We have thousands of students, not just hundreds of students.

*Public Comment:*

Sue Miska, Ryegate Road: Concerns with understanding programs.  
Kelly McWhinnie, Church Hill Road: Does not support amendment.  
Christine Vitale, FLHS PTA: Does not support amendment.  
Stephen Sheinberg, Flax Road: Does not support amendment.

Mr Greg Hatzis, FLHS Headmaster: Supports Special Education Proposal.

Mr. Llewellyn said the fundamental process of the budget is broken; 2 weeks is not enough for a review of 100+ pages; the SPED restructuring info could have come to the Board earlier; the strategic school profile should be used to get a better understanding.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly agrees that 2 weeks is a compressed time, but responded that the process is not flawed; the budget began in September and is a Board responsibility; Board members should be well-aware of the budget process and responsibility per Town charter; Board members are free to meet with Dr. Title at any time; if Board members want programs restored, the addition should not be at the expense of other programs; at-risk students need an administrator at WFC. Improvements in World Language as proposed by staff show that we are moving forward. More discussion is needed prior to cutting PK busing – as this was previously addressed by a task force to solve racial imbalance; unclear what \$40,000 for MS gifted would have been for; more discussion is needed to address the gifted program at the middle school.

Mr. Fattibene will not support any of the cuts or additions.

Mr. Convertito will not support the amendment; it defers a capital expenditure and replaces it with a recurring one; eliminating the PK busing essentially eliminates the racial imbalance program and more discussion is needed to solve it differently; there is an educational gap that must be addressed; there shouldn't be a need to choose between gifted and special education, although he would be happy to further discuss the gifted program.

Mr. Dwyer believes in the PK program which also helps to address the racial imbalance; he supports the World Language Plan; program design should not be done at the Board table; he does not support the amendment.

Mrs. Gerber felt the PK busing does help with the racial imbalance and many students benefit from this program in other ways; the World Language plan as it was presented to the Board in November is a good first step, with more steps to come; she does not support the amendment.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack said student programs deserve to have their time; she will continue to discuss these issues and bring them forth, she is concerned they will be forgotten unless we bring them forth; she has requested updates on programs such as music and gifted; these topics have been brought up last year, she did a lot of work and research on them; the PK program has not worked well enough to solve the racial imbalance at McKinley, we have to reconsider the issue, we need to think about it practically. How do we prioritize spending. There's always two sides to every discussion. World Language is important for the future of our students.

### **Motion Failed 2-6**

Favor: Mrs. Liu-McCormack, Mr. Llewellyn

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

*(Ms. Karnal was not present for the vote.)*

The original motion that the Board of Education approve an operating budget for the 2015-2016 fiscal year in the amount of \$160,848,061 as presented, to be forwarded to the Town of Fairfield.

Mr. Llewellyn requested earlier dialogue on the budget and adding discussion on the budget to meeting agendas.

### **Motion Passed 6-2**

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

Oppose: Mrs. Liu-McCormack, Mr. Llewellyn

*(Ms. Karnal was not present for the vote.)*

Dr. Title thanked the members of staff and the public for their engagement and he looks forward to working with all Board members in advocating for the children and families of Fairfield.

Mr. Dwyer thanked the staff.

*Approval of Minutes*

*Approval of Minutes of the Regular Meeting of December 9, 2014*

Mrs. Gerber moved, Mr. Patten seconded the recommended motion that the Board of Education approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of December 9, 2014.

**Motion Passed 5-3**

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

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

*(Ms. Karnal was not present for the vote.)*

*Approval of Minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 13, 2015*

Mrs. Gerber moved, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly seconded the recommended motion that the Board of Education approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 13, 2015.

**Motion Passed 5-3**

Favor; Mr. Patten, Mrs. Gerber, Mr. Dwyer, Mr. Convertito, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly

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

*(Ms. Karnal was not present for the vote.)*

*Superintendent's Report*

Ms. Munsell reviewed the Quarterly Financial Report and the Food Services Financial Report.

Mr. Llewellyn requested district costs for Food Services, and the impact a loss may have on the recently-approved budget. Ms. Munsell said the district costs are costs the district is responsible for, but are funded out of the Food Services budget, they have nothing to do with BoE budget; the secretary salary would fall under this as well as repairs and maintenance. He said he doesn't see a budget with the district's costs. Asked about the \$170k guaranteed profit. Mr. Dwyer offered that Ms. Munsell could provide the exact number for the sum total of the risk and send it out to Mr. Llewellyn. Ms. Munsell said that there is a guaranteed profit regardless of whether or not Whitsons makes money.

At 10:55PM, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly moved, Mrs. Gerber seconded to suspend the rules and extend the meeting to 11:15PM.

**Motion Passed 7-1**

Favor: Mrs. Liu-McCormack, Mr. Patten, Mrs. Gerber, Mr. Dwyer, Mr. Fattibene, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly, Mr. Llewellyn

Oppose: Mr. Convertito

*(Ms. Karnal was not present for the vote.)*

Mr. Convertito asked if there is a lag with reimbursement in the Year to Date report and was told there was.

Mr. Dwyer asked Mr. Llewellyn to define his concern more explicitly, as this has been an ongoing discussion for a year.

Mr. Llewellyn said his concern was budgetary impact and cash balance. Is this something we need to worry about next year.

*Committee/Liaison Reports*

Mrs. Gerber attended the BOS meeting; funding was approved for OHS windows and the gym; it now goes to the BOF and RTM.

Mr. Dwyer mentioned that the Jennings boilers were not approved, and the security project was divided into 2 years.

Mr. Patten asked if we were still on track for the security amount in the budget and was told yes.

*Open Board Comments*

Mr. Patten thanked the staff for all the hard work with the budget.

Mrs. Gerber thanked the staff for being so helpful, all the extra time is appreciated.

Mr. Llewellyn requested a sense of the body to discuss an analysis of the foundation of the budget process at the next Regular Meeting in February. He feels the process could be smoother if the Board could get more information earlier.

Mr. Dwyer said it has been 3 years since the budget process was changed; this is typically addressed at the October meeting.

Mr. Convertito suggested this take place via Board goals and a Special working meeting, Mr. Llewellyn said he was talking about a bigger picture than mechanics and Board goals and more about the bigger picture.

Mr. Dwyer said he will get a sense of the body on this to address at an appropriate time. He also suggested calling a meeting on February 28, from 9:30-12pm to address the budget in a public forum much like the BOF, to allow for dialogue. This will not be a mandatory meeting.

Several members said they had to confirm the meeting in their calendars.

*Adjournment*

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

**Motion Passed 8-0**

*(Ms. Karnal was not present for the vote.)*

*Respectfully Submitted  
Jessica Gerber  
Fairfield Board of Education  
Secretary*