

**Regular Meeting Minutes  
Fairfield BoE, January 26, 2017**

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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 7:35PM. Present were members Eileen Liu-McCormack (arrived 7:50PM), Marc Patten (arrived 7:37PM), Donna Karnal, Jessica Gerber, Philip Dwyer, Anthony Calabrese, Trisha Pytko, Jennifer Maxon-Kennelly and John Llewellyn. Others present were Superintendent Dr. Toni Jones, members of the central office leadership team, and approximately 20 members of the public.

Mr. Dwyer noted that the student representatives are not in attendance due to exams.

A document with replies to Board questions will be referenced throughout the meeting.

*Old Business*

*Approval of Policy 5145.14 – Students – On-Campus Recruitment*

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly moved, Mrs. Gerber seconded that the Board of Education approve Policy 5145-14 – Students – On Campus Recruitment.”

**Motion Passed 8-0**

*Mrs. Liu-McCormack was not present for this vote.*

*New Business*

*Adoption of a Recommended Budget for the 2017-2018 Fiscal Year*

Mr. Calabrese moved, Mrs. Gerber seconded that the Board of Education approve an operating budget in the amount of \$168,757,490 as presented, to be forwarded to the Town of Fairfield.

Mr. Dwyer asked if Board members needed any clarification.

Mr. Llewellyn

1. What are the ages of computers being replaced? Dr. Jones said they are 5 years or older and referenced page 4 of the questions document. Ms. Byrnes said this is calculated going backwards as shown on the chart. The intent is to keep equipment up-to-date. She can provide a complete list of the robust inventory.
2. Noticed 264 document cameras were requested; he felt this contradicted the reply to his question on the number of requests. Ms. Byrnes said she was referring to the number of requests by line-item and apologized for the misunderstanding.

Mr. Calabrese said the budget is lean; he recommended approving the budget as proposed.

Mr. Dwyer - Agreed with Mr. Calabrese. Concerned about budgeting to the exact number for elementary staff, retirements and health insurance and requested Board comments on the addition of a \$500K contingency line to cover unknowns. If unused – will get returned to the Town. Also concerned about additional ECS cuts; trying to build in flexibility.

Mr. Calabrese liked the idea but said the economic climate won't support it – it will become a bulls-eye for future cuts. While the budget is lean, it is the superintendent's proposal and he supports it.

Mr. Patten suggested \$250K.

Ms. Pytko questioned the whether Town attorney should be consulted. Mr. Dwyer said BOF and BOS can make this decision.

Ms. Karnal – Does a past practice exist for this? Mr. Dwyer said no.

Mrs. Gerber recalls Boards adding money for an item, not for a contingency. Does not think this should be done – it wouldn't get past the Town Boards.

Mr. Dwyer said he will not pursue the contingency line due to lack of interest.

Mr. Patten – How many sections are on the bubble, if we budgeted to an average, what would that be? Could add \$300K to teacher salary line for sections on the bubble. Mr. Dwyer said there is a net of 5 sections on the bubble, but will not make a motion due to lack of interest.

Ms. Karnal – Could money be moved from elsewhere in the budget, rather than added? Does not want a contingency item.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly felt the contingency label makes it a target. To pull money from other areas is a signal that those areas are not needed.

Mr. Dwyer asked Dr. Jones to comment on requested items – any reductions are normally discussed in May. Dr. Jones said the staff worked hard to bring in a lean budget while being respectful of the community. This really is a 2.65% budget since we utilized the \$740K, and any cuts would come from the 2.65% amount. Would hope the Board would not reduce this total and is most nervous about the reduction of 13 positions.

Mr. Patten moved, no second to add \$225,000 to line item 101, teaching staff. No discussion or action taken.

Mr. Llewellyn asked if there was any insight into the pension numbers. Dr. Jones said there is a need to coordinate with the Town – it goes beyond what we are able to answer. The actuary will be at the BOF on March 1<sup>st</sup>.

Mr. Llewellyn moved, Mrs. Liu-McCormack seconded to reduce the line 55000 on page 79 by \$28,700; to reduce line 58205 on page 101 by \$25,080; and to then increase line 54120 on page 74 by \$53,780 and request that the money be used by the superintendent to hire a consultant for a programmatic SPED audit and literacy audit.

Mr. Llewellyn said while special education services are important, he hopes to improve efficiency and outcomes – costs rise each year.

Ms. Pytko - Has faith in the administration; they have worked carefully to review services provided. As a parent - would be upset.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack said as a parent she was not upset. New strategies and findings happen constantly; an audit is healthy. There are many unfunded mandates and we can't rely on reimbursements.

Mr. Patten said cutting maintenance projects just kicks the can down the road and disagrees with the tech cut. What is the approximate special education student percentage in similar district budgets? Ms. Leonardi said 23-25%, and we are in line with that.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly

1. Asked for a description of the audit, what is the cost? Ms. Leonardi said a PK-21 programmatic audit will review each IEP, decision, program, service and the way services have been fulfilled. Cost is dependent on charge given to the auditor, but would not be less than \$50K. The number of staff hours to work with the auditor cannot be underestimated.
2. What is the science behind the audit? For example, how was the decision made to use Wilson – it seems an internal audit is constantly occurring to make such decisions. Ms. Leonardi said decades of research on the phonemic aspect of dyslexia shows that systematic code-based instruction is the best intervention, and Wilson was the name brand chosen to address this. She will gladly participate in an audit; she is proud of the work and great things do happen. She cautioned the Board that an audit will often signal a need for significant further investment in programs.
3. Have outside consultants been brought in before to refine and review practices? Ms. Leonardi said yes, particularly when ramping up with something new across 17 schools. Implementation must be done with fidelity.

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4. What would staff not be doing while working on the audit? Ms. Leonardi said secretarial staff and administrators will be heavily relied upon for the duration of the audit.
5. Are you aware of other districts that have been audited? What were the results? Ms. Leonardi said typical results are a list of commendations and suggestions. Usually includes the addition of assistant principals at the elementary schools.

Mr. Dwyer said it is a worthy idea, but would be more in favor of a fully developed concept with staff input; will not support it. Dr. Jones said audits can be helpful; however, they will often determine that more staff is needed and hence potentially increase costs. Auditors look at data in a way that we can't – with a statistician. Would like the Board to support the budget as it is now, and will work with staff to develop this as a future proposal.

Ms. Karnal referred to the Board Questions document and requested clarification on charts shown on Attachment 12. How many students successfully exit? Ms. Leonardi explained the charts, which included percentage of time spent with non-disabled peers. The numbers reflected on the various charts, pulled from the state website, are not necessarily the same students. Connecticut conducts a post-service survey of parents and students but the participation rate is not good. The national employment data on people with disabilities is not that great – it shows they are not receiving needed services and are underemployed. A good data point is the number of college-bound students.

Mr. Llewellyn said it is alarming that we are up 18% in spending and could be up 35% by next year. He requested assurance from Dr. Jones that a programmatic audit will be pursued. Dr. Jones confirmed that she will pursue a programmatic audit and also review document cameras.

Following discussion, Mr. Llewellyn withdrew his motion and the Board gave unanimous consent.

The original motion -- “that the Board of Education approve an operating budget in the amount of \$168,757,490 as presented, to be forwarded to the Town of Fairfield”

#### *Public Comment*

Sue Miska, Ryegate Road: Complimented Dr. Jones and encouraged BOE to support the budget.

#### **Motion Passed: 9-0**

Mr. Llewellyn thanked Dr. Jones for the responsiveness and said the process has been more transparent.

Mr. Dwyer thanked the staff for the hard work and all the information that was readily provided, as has been done in the past.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack said she had long conversations with the Superintendent on what is done with the AP results and some of the ways that curriculum is implemented; Dr. Jones made it clear that it was not budgetary.

Mr. Dwyer said item 6B – regarding the calendar amendment, is withdrawn at this time due to action by the BOS.

#### *Discussion of the Holland Hill Ed-Specs*

Mr. Calabrese said he is not looking to slow down the Holland Hill (HH) project by adding it to the agenda and does not want it to stall at the Board of Finance (BOF). The BOF has made it clear that the lack of detail in the ed-specs is putting this project at risk.

Mr. Cullen explained the attachments; the highlighted pieces in the Riverfield ed-specs are what is missing for HH. Ed-specs are required for state reimbursements. Mr. Morabito manages the projects, attends all the meetings and drafts the ed-specs for review with the Superintendent.

Mr. Llewellyn – Is the objective to re-vote on the ed-specs?

Mr. Dwyer said Mr. Quinn is not requesting a change in ed-specs.

Mr. Cullen said the intention was to use the MGT study and provide an ed-spec to meet the capacity deficiencies. Pages 3-5 of the Riverfield ed-specs were based on the old District Improvement Plan, and Dr. Title felt that should be

removed. Pages 6-8 are very descriptive, while HH only lists capacity deficiencies. According to Dr. Title, the detailed description on page 9 was already known. Mr. Morabito added that:

- Pages 6-8 give define the program; the project goal is defined in the space deficiencies paragraph on page 9. Mr. Calabrese asked why these pages were removed. Mr. Morabito said a full description of the educational program as a reference was thought to overshadow the project. Its removal was meant to clarify that the project was to take care of the deficiencies. The Holland Hill Building Committee (HHBC) did not request any clarification.
- The site development paragraph on page 13 was converted to one bullet point for HH.
- The lower section on page 14 was thought to be redundant; the design professionals would inform us of those code/standards deficiencies. Open Choice would have to be re-evaluated and was removed.

Mr. Calabrese asked who removed the 3 pages from the ed-specs? Mr. Cullen said the initial HH ed-specs were marked up by Dr. Title; he removed the 3 pages in question.

Mrs. Gerber said while the goal may have been to streamline, it became more confusing. Mr. Cullen added that the thinking was to list what was needed, not what was wanted. It was done this way to save money and let the Building Committee make decisions.

Mr. Patten, page 4 of HH – confirmed that 1 special education room was requested, as HH already has 3. He agreed that more detail is needed – What is the procedure to add back in?

Mr. Dwyer asked staff to present newly drafted HH ed-specs for the Feb 14 BOE meeting based on this discussion. He would like to add a statement that the new ed-specs are for clarification only so that the building committee and architect are assured that nothing has changed.

Mr. Patten – Can we vote on this on February 14? Do we need a special meeting?

Mr. Calabrese said he would like to make a motion to add items back in to the HH ed-specs.

Ms. Karnal said she would like an explanation on the cost escalation.

Mr. Calabrese moved, Mrs. Gerber seconded to add a business item to the agenda to give guidance to staff.

Mr. Dwyer said he will ask the HHBC Chair to come to the February meeting to bring the Board up to date on the escalating costs; due in part to extensive site work, environmental work and the use of a higher inflation rate.

Ms. Karnal asked about the site work – who does it? Mr. Dwyer said the building committee manages the project, but as engineers discover issues, the cost increases. Specific questions can be forwarded to the HHBC in advance.

Mrs. Gerber – Would adding the pages back in create any problem, such as a delay? Can we say that we are putting this in for clarity and not go back to Town bodies, does the Board need to vote on this? Mr. Morabito said an explanation would be needed so the building committee would know the scope has not changed. Mr. Dwyer said a vote is needed since they have been submitted to the state. Mr. Cullen said new HH ed-specs could be drafted prior to the next BOE meeting.

Mr. Llewellyn requested clarification on what will be inserted and suggested highlighting new or existing items.

Mr. Calabrese confirmed with Mr. Cullen that all 504 schools are the same, and will all have the same amenities.

Mr. Llewellyn noted that the Riverfield ed-specs state there are Open Choice students. Mr. Morabito said that was correct at the time of filing.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack asked if there was an expectation to get Open Choice and other reimbursements, as the state has been cutting back. Posed additional questions on redistricting, as related to Racial Imbalance – do we need a 504 school, is this premature? Mr. Morabito said he will file for reimbursement as the law allows; he is not aware of any pending legislation to the contrary.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said the old Riverfield ed-specs language doesn't quite fit for HH and she is hesitant to vote tonight. Other Board members agreed. Mr. Dwyer confirmed with Mr. Cullen that a draft could be prepared by 2/7 for the BOF with the goal of getting it to the RTM by the end of May. Mrs. Gerber asked about the project filing. Mr.

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Morabito said the project filing will work with that schedule; portables were filed as a separate project. The only thing missing in the filing is the funding.

Mr. Patten reviewed some of the sections that he felt should be included and questioned if page 9 and part of 10 should be a supplement.

Mr. Calabrese confirmed that the newly revised ed-specs will be circulated as a draft to the BOE prior to submitting to the BOF on 2/7.

Ms. Karnal said she wasn't sure if page 9 should be used as a template and asked Mr. Cullen why there has been so much push back on these ed-specs. Mr. Cullen said he couldn't answer that.

Mr. Calabrese moved, Mrs. Gerber seconded to add a business item to the agenda to give guidance to staff.

**Motion Passed: 7-1**

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

Oppose: Mrs. Liu-McCormack

*Mr. Llewellyn was not in the room at the time.*

Mr. Calabrese moved, Mrs. Gerber seconded to direct staff through the Superintendent to revise the Holland Hill ed-specs to include the information in the Learning/Educational Activities, Educational Space Requirements Summary, and site development summary pages; to get a draft of the revised ed-specs to the Board of Finance for their February 7<sup>th</sup> meeting, and then to the Board of Education for their February 14<sup>th</sup> meeting.

The motion includes a friendly amendment by Mr. Patten – to include “the information from” the Learning/Educational Activities.

*Public comment:*

Sue Miska, Ryegate Road: Has never seen a motion like this before. Town Boards should communicate.

Jason Li, HHBC: Supports adding pages in to the ed-specs.

Nick Aysseh, HHBC: Appreciates the discussion and hopes this will help future projects move forward.

Alex Durrell, RTM District 3: Supports 504 capacity.

Laura Cretella, HH Principal: Curriculum can be delivered consistent with a 504 school.

Ms. Karnal requested clarification on the pages included for the Educational Activities section. Mr. Calabrese said pages 6, 7 and the top part of page 8.

Mr. Llewellyn requested clarification on the timeline, would be helpful to have a calendar with dates. Should be reviewed by BOE before it goes to BOF – seems this is being shoe-horned in. A discussion item all of a sudden became a voting item.

Mr. Dwyer confirmed there will be an action item for February 14 to approve the revised ed-specs to meet the timeframe. Generally, BOS meets first then BOF.

Mr. Calabrese moved to call the question.

**Motion Failed: 3-6**

Favor: Mr. Dwyer, Mr. Calabrese, Ms. Pytko

Oppose: Mrs. Liu-McCormack, Mr. Patten, Ms. Karnal, Mrs. Gerber, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly, Mr. Llewellyn

Mrs. Gerber said this motion shows that the ed-specs are being addressed and are providing more clarification; the BOF has joint budget meetings in March and do not meet again until April.

Mr. Llewellyn said the discussion could have been much improved had the document been provided ahead of time; does not think anyone was prepared to have this discussion.

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Mr. Patten confirmed with Mr. Calabrese that a draft will be given to the BOF, but the BOE will see it first. This has been added to the agenda and the Board is moving forward.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said a direct email request was made to all BOE members to make such a change; all Board members were aware of this discussion item; staff had already spoken to the BOF but more was required; this provides more specificity and does not involve change.

Ms. Pytko added that the entire BOE received the formal request after the 1<sup>st</sup> BoE meeting in January and it is not a surprise.

Mr. Dwyer said Mr. Flynn requested clarification for his Board. Any official request to change ed-specs would come from the HHBC.

Original motion -- "to direct staff through the Superintendent to revise the Holland Hill ed-specs to include the information in the Learning/Educational Activities, Educational Space Requirements Summary, and site development summary pages; to get a draft of the revised ed-specs to the Board of Finance for their February 7<sup>th</sup> meeting, and then to the Board of Education for their February 14<sup>th</sup> meeting."

**Motion Passed: 6-3**

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

Oppose: Mrs. Liu-McCormack Ms. Karnal, Mr. Llewellyn

*Approval of Minutes*

*Approval of the Minutes of the January 10, 2017 Regular Meeting*

Mrs. Gerber moved, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly seconded that the Board of Education approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 10, 2017.

**Motion Passed: 6-1-2**

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

Oppose: Mrs. Liu-McCormack

Abstain: Ms. Karnal, Mr. Llewellyn

*Superintendent's Report*

Dr. Jones thanked the staff for all the hard work on the budget. She encouraged all to visit the teacher and student art exhibition at the Fairfield History Museum.

*Second Quarter Financial Report*

Mrs. Munsell reviewed the second quarter financial report. As of December 31, total expenses are expected to be within budget with designated funds on hold. She concentrated on the summary page with projected expenses, showing the district accounts that have funds in reserve and accounts that have deficits. The projected net balance for June 30 is currently at \$127K. This is being monitored constantly.

Mr. Dwyer asked about the status of ECS funding, and mentioned the Governor will give his address on February 8. Dr. Jones said ECS might get reduced further.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly thanked her for the Projected Expenses page and asked if line 26 – sub accounts – has an offset reflected elsewhere such as in Personnel Services; Mrs. Munsell said yes.

Ms. Karnal asked about legal fees – are any law firms on a monthly retainer? Mrs. Munsell said the legal fees are expected to be within budget. There are no law firms on a monthly retainer.

Mr. Llewellyn –

1. What is a blue voucher? Mrs. Munsell said they are used for small amounts that do not go through as a purchase order.
2. Regarding fixed charges – why does the balance in health insurance appear to be insufficient – is it a timing issue? Mrs. Munsell said it is a timing issue for payroll deductions. Many employees are on a 10-month schedule and don't work in the summer – so double deductions appear in May and June.
3. How are 401a contributions calculated? Mrs. Munsell said there are currently 88 people in it and only 16 were budgeted.
4. Is 401 matching? Mrs. Munsell said yes, there are 88 current new hires.

Mr. Dwyer said para-professionals have the highest turnover. Mrs. Leffert added that paras immediately contribute to 401a, but the match doesn't vest for 5 years. A majority of people being replaced are on the Town pension.

Mr. Dwyer thanked the staff for all the hard work on the budget.

*Open Board Comment*

Mr. Patten said he is grateful to Dr. Jones and her staff, former superintendents Dr. Tracy and Dr. Title, and all the department heads for presenting the budget.

Mr. Dwyer reminded the Board of the upcoming CABE event – Day on the Hill.

Mrs. Gerber thanked Dr. Jones and her staff for the quick turnover of all the questions and all the work that was done.

*Adjournment*

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

**Motion Passed: 9-0**

*Meeting adjourned at 10:42PM*

*Jessica Gerber  
Fairfield Board of Education  
Secretary*