

**Special Meeting Minutes
Fairfield BoE, January 26, 2016**

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 7:33 PM. Present were members Eileen Liu-McCormack, Marc Patten, Donna Karnal, Jessica Gerber, Philip Dwyer, Anthony Calabrese, Trisha Pytko, Jennifer Maxon-Kennelly and John Llewellyn. Others present were Superintendent Dr. David Title, members of the central office leadership team, and approximately 20 members of the public.

Business Items

Mr. Dwyer thanked the staff for the Q&A document and for responding to Board member questions so quickly. The budget will be reviewed by section, followed by recommended changes. After the final discussion on Thursday, the budget will be submitted to the Town.

Page 53-105, Budget Detail by Object

Mrs. Gerber, page 54: Why is the number of teachers reduced at RLMS but not the other 2 middle schools? Dr. Title said this is based on an enrollment formula - the same rules apply to every school. Mrs. Leffert said the greatest impact is the reduction in grades 6 and 8, per the projections.

Ms. Karnal - How can we calculate the budget changes when teachers are added; this does not seem to add up in the book. Dr. Title said comparing budget to budget is done by position and the value can change based on the person that is in the position. For example, a higher salaried person might leave and be replaced by a lower salaried employee. Page 107 has more detail. Mr. Dwyer said each school's budget reflects specific teachers. Dr. Title added that the number might vary even more this year as the formula for budgeting retirees has changed. Rather than guessing who might retire, 18 retirements at \$36K are projected and that amount is placed into the staff turnover as a lump sum; it is not reflected in each school's budget line.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack asked why Stratfield only went down by \$23K but lost 3 teachers – that does not seem right. Dr. Title said degree changes and raises factor in; the numbers make sense in the aggregate, but the individual schools will vary due to teacher movement. Mr. Calabrese said large schools have more changes. Mrs. Munsell said it is more of a correlation with the estimated and actual.

Mr. Patten asked if budgeting for retirees was based on a rough estimate. Dr. Title said this is always a difficult prediction and referenced page 74, Staff Replacement – 18 retirees were put here at \$36K per retiree.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly, page 74 – Why is line 52110 at \$998K? Dr. Title said this is the sum of the \$350K non-retiree turnover and the \$648K retiree turnover.

Mr. Llewellyn

Page 55, Line 51, What is the Community Partnership? Dr. Title said this was first budgeted for in 15/16 and was in that budget as well. Ms. Leonardi said this program works with 18-21 year old students who have significant disabilities. The focus is on vocational and life skills. Currently there are 27 students in this program and 10 additional students are expected next year. Non-certified staff has been added with some certified staff for speech and language.

Page 59, The Walter Fitzgerald administrator position has a 15% increase in salary? Dr. Title said this is a new position in the budget. It was budgeted for based on the salary grid, and an existing administrator with more experience filled that position; the proposed amount includes a step increase. Ms. Leonardi referred to page 59, in Pupil Personnel Services, which shows a reduction in the SPED coordinator expenditure due to this move.

Page 68, Info Tech Support, A 17% increase for adding 1 FTE appears to be high? Dr. Title said the FTE count is not going up; an elementary position was moved to secondary which comes with a higher pay grade and the positions will convert from 10 month to 12 month.

Page 69, Part-time Employment – Why does the budget line for special education substitutes show \$0? Ms. Leffert said budgeting for subs is always a guess and changes every year; the idea is to merge sub accounts; money is gained back from salary accounts for leaves of absence.

Page 74, Degree Changes - 14/15 actuals and 15/16 estimates are \$0, and yet we are budgeting \$270K? Could you provide the actuals for the last few years? Dr. Title explained that when there is a degree change, money is expended in that teacher's account; expenditures will never appear here. It is also highly variable. Ms. Leffert said staff has to inform us if they are anticipating a degree change and when; this actual amount is then budgeted for. She will provide the actuals.

Are all retirees moving to the new healthcare plan? Dr. Title said yes.

Page 76, 303, Line 54025 – Is that ESS? Can we get a copy of the ESS contract? Ms. Leonardi said yes, that amount is primarily for ESS – approximately \$100K of that is for other district-wide PK-12 consultative services for students with unique needs. A copy of the ESS contract will be provided.

How many ESS staff are in our schools? Ms. Leonardi said 2 are at each high school and 1 at the WFC. There is one Regional Director that is shared with another CT high school. Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said more information can be found on page 36.

How does IReady protect the privacy of student data without a contract? Ms. Byrnes said she will provide the licensed user agreement that spells this out.

Why does the STAR purchase order only include Language Arts? Ms. Byrnes explained that the RESC (CES) contract is for both Math and Language Arts, but the district, at the time of the purchase order, was only using the Language Arts portion.

Mr. Patten – Will any administrative savings in terms of staff time, be realized for the health insurance? Dr. Title said not initially, he expects the extra transitional work to settle down after a year or so. The ACA requirements will not change.

Ms. Karnal – How many pupils are in ESS? Are there students who can't get in to this program? Ms. Leonardi said 18 seats are offered at each FLHS and FWHS, with 9 offered at WFC. This is a good start-up number and we'll see as the year progresses if more seats are needed.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack – What was the alternative before ESS? Will the program be expanded? Is the idea to have students in this program for one year? Ms. Leonardi said there was no alternative; social workers and other staff were previously spending a lot of time with a small number of students. The ESS program is a therapeutic overlay during the school day, and the program is unique to each student. This will not lessen the number of psychologists or social workers in schools; it will return them to the tier 2 and 3 students and allow earlier involvement to avoid crisis levels.

Page 107-123 – Budget by School and Departments, Program

Mr. Llewellyn – Where are the legal expenses? Dr. Title referenced page 76, the Superintendent line. Mr. Dwyer added that many reports have been previously provided on this.

Page 125 - 177 – Support Information

Mr. Patten, page 140, Staff Changes – Can you speak to the shift in teaching staff and salaries from elementary to secondary? Dr. Title said the teachers are moved to where the kids are and we budget to that. We hire experienced people at all levels.

Mrs. Gerber, page 155 – How do the psychologists split their time at the high schools and CPP? Is ESS involved here? Ms. Leonardi said high school psychologists are the sole people responsible for conducting psycho-educational evaluations at the high school level. Much is required; psychologists average 50-60 comprehensive evaluations per year, and this takes them away from performing direct services. Triennial evaluations and evaluations done at the request of colleges are also done.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack, page 151 – Felt that a Math curriculum review should take place before approving the funding of an elementary Math text; must the text be common-core aligned? Dr. Title said the Math status update, as it is listed in the budget book, will take place this spring; the text has to be common-core aligned. A status update has been done once before for Art.

Mr. Dwyer said the Math book has been budgeted for but not yet selected. A Social Studies text has been selected but the purchase is deferred for the Math text. If we don't select a Math text, however, we could use those funds to purchase the Social Studies materials and texts.

Mrs. Gerber, Will the Social Studies texts be purchased for grades 6-8, as well as the 2 new courses at the high school? Dr. Title referenced page 150 – it also includes US History.

What about the other Social Studies high school courses that need new texts? Dr. Title said that going this path will balance the purchase of the texts to lessen the financial impact.

Mr. Patten, page 161 – What is the non-repairable equipment and is it an average? Is it mostly projectors? Ms. Byrnes said it is an average amount per year, and is mostly projectors and printers. As equipment dies, it is replaced. Multi-media projectors have a life of 3-5 years; there hasn't been a replacement plan for those units since we are still working on getting them in to all classrooms. Additionally, more mobile devices are being purchased; extended warranties on those don't make economic sense.

Mr. Patten, page 163 – Can the Holland Hill maintenance projects wait until the renovation? Dr. Title said no, these are needed repairs and he referenced detail on pages 168 and 169 – they can't wait 3 years. Mr. Cullen agreed and said the playground is rusting, the portable roof is failing, and the LMC carpet should be replaced.

Mr. Calabrese – Can we get a copy of the Playground reports that you previously mentioned? Mr. Cullen said yes.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack, page 150, would like a review of the existing World Language texts. Dr. Title said that will be on the May or June agenda. Dr. Boice said the World Language coordinator, Ms. Frankel, is gathering information on this; we are under no obligation to use the same series for new texts.

Mrs. Gerber, page 172, Will the acoustical ceilings be for the entire school and are the ceilings at the end of their useful life? Mr. Cullen said yes to both. Page 175, How old is the TMS flooring? Mr. Cullen said it is irreparable and the project is being re-bid. Page 176, Mrs. Gerber said it's nice to see the boiler projects as they have been completed.

Mr. Llewellyn had a few questions in the handouts, the Board Q&A:

1. Is the health plan that we are joining – is it a self-insured pool? Dr. Title said they are, but we are treated as fully-insured.
2. Could the legal expenses account be updated with encumbrances? Mrs. Munsell said yes. Dr. Title added that the account also has more in it than legal fees.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack – Can responses to her unanswered questions in the handouts be provided by Thursday, as she understood the information she requested was readily available? Mr. Dwyer said that was unlikely; a complete special education program review will not be done. Dr. Title added that all readily available information has been provided; some information requested might appear readily available but is in fact not.

Mr. Dwyer asked the Board to present any ideas for changes to the budget early enough to be vetted by the staff.

Ms. Pytko said she took ample time reviewing the budget and came prepared. She gave credit to those who did all the work and respects the staff; she hopes the Board echoes that as well.

Public Comment:

Stephanie Siford, Westwood Road: Questioned the elementary Math text amount of \$550K on page 153. Mr. Dwyer responded that it came from an average.

Trudi Durell, Woodcrest Road: Supports Holland Hill Playground project.

Mr. Llewellyn, page 161, Is this the Capture system? Dr. Title said no; document cameras are not included in the budget.

Mrs. Maxon-Kenelly – Said she will raise the issue of PSAT testing for grade 9.

Mr. Patten – In reference to the January 19 Board Q/A –the maintenance projects that are not funded - why is a large repair listed for the WFC – a leased space? Mr. Cullen said Priority 2 projects are listed and are not funded for next year. The referenced repairs at the WFC are considered cosmetic, the old carpet is on vinyl asbestos tile.

Mr. Dwyer reminded the Board that Thursday is a regular meeting, and asked the Board to review the Friday Packet memo from Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly regarding the deletion of Policy #5515.

Ms. Karnal moved, Mr. Patten seconded to adjourn the meeting.

Motion Passed: 9-0, Meeting adjourned at 9:24 PM

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