

**Regular Meeting Minutes
Fairfield BoE, September 11, 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.

Voting Summary:

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 8:07PM. Present were members Trisha Pytko, Jennifer Leeper, Christine Vitale, Jessica Gerber, Philip Dwyer, Jennifer Jacobsen, Nick Aysseh, Jennifer Maxon-Kennelly and Jeff Peterson. Others present were Superintendent Dr. Toni Jones, members of the central office leadership team, and approximately 75 members of the public.

Old Business

Approval of WFC Tuition Program

Mr. Aysseh moved/Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly seconded the recommended motion “that the Board of Education approve the WFC tuition program, per the August 28, 2018 WFC Tuition Program – Update Memo” Motion passed 7-2 (Ms. Leeper, Mrs. Vitale, Mrs. Gerber, Mr. Dwyer, Mrs. Jacobsen, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly, Mr. Peterson in favor; Ms. Pytko, Mr. Aysseh against.)

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly moved/Ms. Pytko seconded to postpone to an October meeting the Discussion of Board Goals. Motion passed 9-0.

Approval of Minutes

Mrs. Gerber moved/Mrs. Vitale seconded the recommended motion “that the Board of Education approve the *Special Minutes* of August 28, 2018 and the *Regular Minutes* of August 28, 2018.” Motion passed 9-0.

Mrs. Gerber moved/Ms. Leeper seconded to suspend the rules and extend the meeting to 11:45PM. Motion passed 6-3 (Ms. Leeper, Mrs. Vitale, Mrs. Gerber, Mr. Dwyer, Mrs. Jacobsen, Mr. Peterson in favor; Ms. Pytko, Mr. Aysseh and Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly against).

Adjournment

Ms. Pytko moved/Mrs. Gerber seconded the recommended motion “that this Regular Meeting of the Board of Education adjourn.” Motion passed 9-0. Meeting adjourned at 11:39PM.

Detailed Minutes:

Following the Pledge, the Board observed a moment of silence in honor of September 11.

Public Comment:

The following spoke in support of keeping ECC centralized:

Gina Hallock, Melissa Travis, Amanda Moitoso, Dr. Heitzman (letter read by Ashley Walsh), Christy Vitale, Matt Wilcox, Katie Flynn, Sally Connelly, Eric Sundman

Frank Sahagain, Chelsea Street: Would be more helpful to use actual enrollment numbers during the budget process.

ECC Facilities and Programming Presentation

Dr. Jones noted that this topic will be back on the agenda in October and November; this is an informational presentation to inform the Board of space issues.

Mr. Mancusi, Executive Director of Special Education and Kristen Bruno, Special Education Coordinator (ECC and KDG), led the presentation. The ECC is at maximum capacity, impacting the ratio of students with disabilities to nondisabled peers as well as special education teacher caseloads. Students enroll in ECC through Birth-3, direct referrals, Child-Find, a Sped-eligible student move into Fairfield, and enrollment of non-disabled peers. ECC classes do not have a maximum enrollment.

In response to increasing ECC enrollment, an additional classroom was added in 2016-2017, and an ECC classroom at Stratfield School was added in 2017-2018. Student programs and services are individually designed based on student needs and may include itinerant services (speech and language, social skills, occupational therapy, physical therapy), and classroom programming. Currently, FPS has a hybrid of centralized (ECC) and decentralized (ECC at Stratfield) programming.

The current challenges are: the ECC facility is at capacity, class sizes are too large, the peer ratio is lower than ideal, the program now operates out of 2 locations, and the transition from preschool to Kindergarten can be difficult. Communication and information gathering is occurring now through meetings with ECC staff and CES consultants, visiting other district programs, and speaking with the Stratfield ECC program parents.

Next steps include more program visits and information gathering at programs outside the district, communicating with SEPTA and ECC parents, and follow up meetings with ECC staff and the BOE. A staffing formula will be developed by October for the Superintendent to review.

Dr. Jones, Mr. Mancusi and Ms. Bruno responded to BOE questions:

Mrs. Gerber asked if a long-term solution might be two ECC's, given the high value placed on centralization and the current capacity issues. Mr. Mancusi said that was a possibility; he was researching centralized vs. decentralized programming in various forms. Staff caseloads impact the integrity of programming, and some are currently higher than optimal. Options for the ECC will be about quality programming done the right way.

Ms. Pytko did not want changes to a model that works and suggested adding a 5's program for students who need an extra year of transition. Ms. Bruno will provide more detailed enrollment numbers for itinerant students.

- Why have we not heard about the Special Education audit? Mr. Dwyer said that will be addressed at the 9/25 Board meeting.
- Is there a push to move WFC to the ECC site? Dr. Jones said there are 2 separate issues. ECC has outgrown its facility and the WFC site is in disrepair with its lease up for renewal. Whether those 2 items fit together will be the Board's decision. The Board has toured both facilities and will decide on the best solutions. The Town manages the WFC lease renewal and the BOE will be notified of the lease details.
- Was the entire ECC staff invited to the ECC facility meeting? Mr. Mancusi said yes. Facility challenges were presented, but decentralization was not mentioned.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly thanked staff for the presentation and asked if FPS had committed to decentralization. Dr. Jones said no; proposals need to be brought to the Board. Ms. Bruno clarified that gen-ed students and itinerant students are not included in the classroom enrollment counts.

Mr. Peterson felt the tone was similar to the former topic of splitting the high schools. If there is a model preference, he would like to know that. Is there an option to expand the facility and why is the population increasing? Mr. Mancusi said ChildFind services and targeted evaluations have improved. Mr. Dwyer said expansion is an option.

Ms. Jacobsen thanked the audience for sharing personal and profound stories and asked about the recommended timeline. Mr. Mancusi said the plan is to have a timeline with fiscal analysis prior to the October meeting.

Ms. Vitale thanked the staff and parents for all the emails. Given the concern over caseloads, how proactive is the staff with enrollment? Ms. Bruno said enrollment is obtained in various ways, but caseloads are hard to discern until evaluations are completed. Stratfield PPTs are attended by either Ms. Bruno or Ms. McGoey.

Mr. Dwyer added that the Board made a commitment to address caseloads and is committed to serving students needing Special Education.

Old Business

Approval of WFC Tuition Program

Mr. Aysseh moved, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly seconded that the Board of Education approve the WFC tuition program, per the August 28, 2018 WFC Tuition Program Update Memo.

Mr. Aysseh said his biggest concern was the WFC facility and felt the tuition should be higher than \$35K so as to provide a buffer. He was not comfortable making a commitment, given that WFC enrollment is going down. Dr. Jones said the tuition amount will be a part of the yearly budget process, but we have not yet had any tuition students. Mr. Mancusi said there is a maximum WFC enrollment of 50, without impacting staff or space. The tuition student would be treated as an in-district student with the sending district paying transportation costs.

Ms. Pytko expressed concern over the lack of a nurse at the site, and said she could not vote on this item until more is known about the WFC location.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly wanted to move this item forward. These are gen-ed students and we still need to cover their education; adding a tuition student is a plus to the district. Ms. Vitale, Mrs. Gerber and Mr. Dwyer agreed.

Motion Passed: 7-2

Favor: Ms. Leeper, Mrs. Vitale, Mrs. Gerber, Mr. Dwyer, Mrs. Jacobsen, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly, Mr. Peterson

Oppose: Ms. Pytko, Mr. Aysseh

New Business

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly moved, Ms. Pytko seconded to postpone to an October meeting the Discussion of Board Goals.

Dr. Jones said the goals survey indicated that facilities was the one goal with a Board consensus.

Motion Passed: 9-0

Magnet Program

At the request of the Finance Committee, Dr. Jones gave a short presentation on magnet schools based on 2 themes; STEAM Magnet and International Baccalaureate (IB). Some other CT districts have unsuccessfully attempted to use magnet schools as a solution to Racial Imbalance.

The IB Primary Year Program (PYP) is for elementary students. There is a lengthy process to become an authorized school of this type, and it has costs including annual fees and dues. An approximate first year cost would equal \$87K.

STEAM Magnet programs exist nationwide. One example is the Computer Science Program, with first year implementation costs of \$120K. An option for McKinley is an advanced Elementary Math Academy for 4th and 5th graders. Approximate first year start-up costs would be \$20K, excluding transportation. If the Board is interested in this option, Dr. Jones recommended that staff bring a resolution to the BOE after gathering community and staff input.

Ms. Leeper supported the Math Academy and asked whether the Finance Committee should continue to explore that option. Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked about any impact on staff time, and Dr. Jones said staff could manage additional research, there are already leadership meetings scheduled.

Mr. Peterson, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly and Mrs. Vitale also supported continued research on the Math Academy.

Ms. Pytko felt advanced math students would be better served in their home school's Gifted program, allowing for student-driven learning.

Mr. Aysseh did not support this idea at this time; it is a new focus and no longer centered around Racial Imbalance. The Board is already facing many issues and this would involve additional time with lots of Board and community discussion. Mrs. Jacobsen agreed and also was concerned about equity with the focus on one content area.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked if this conversation fulfilled the requirement regarding discussing a magnet program as it may relate to the Racial Imbalance Plan submitted to the state. Dr. Jones said yes.

The Board decided to not pursue the option of a magnet school, but the Finance Committee will continue to research the Advanced Math Academy.

Mrs. Gerber moved, Ms. Leeper seconded to suspend the rules and extend the meeting to 11:45PM.

Motion Passed: 6-3

Favor: Ms. Leeper, Mrs. Vitale, Mrs. Gerber, Mr. Dwyer, Mrs. Jacobsen, Mr. Peterson

Oppose: Ms. Pytko, Mr. Aysseh and Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly

District Improvement Plan

Dr. Jones reviewed the revised District Improvement Plan (DIP), dated September 11, 2018. She asked the Policy Committee to review the 2 new educational goals listed on page 6, and noted the added section for Vision of a Graduate, the updated list of Performance Indicators and the additional Facilities and Safety/Security sections under 'Specific Actions.'

The Board discussed whether some of the original language should be updated. Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly requested that completed items be marked as such and would also like the School Climate Survey and World Language credits added to the list of data points on page 21. Mrs. Jacobsen requested a formal review of the DIP and felt it confusing to assimilate the Work Plan, the Crosswalk and the DIP.

Dr. Jones said updated language is included in the Work Plan, which provides more detail on how things are getting accomplished. Some of the data points in the original DIP are no longer used in district, such as IReady. Extra-curricular participation is another data point without a system for easy data retrieval.

Mr. Dwyer felt the DIP was accurate with a few adjustments. The Board will vote on the Plan and the Superintendent will choose the initiatives. The Board will vote on the DIP when it is ready; not necessarily at the next meeting.

Approval of Minutes

Mrs. Gerber moved, Mrs. Vitale seconded that the Board of Education approve the *Special* Minutes of August 28, 2018 and the *Regular* Minutes of August 28, 2018.

Motion Passed: 9-0

Superintendent's Report

Summer Projects Update

Mr. Cullen highlighted several completed summer projects at multiple sites; overall there were 67 projects. The Warde turf grass is down and should be ready and usable next week. The TMS and MH flooring are items that were cut and will

be carried over to the 19/20 budget. Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly requested a definitive list of all items that will affect the budget.

Mrs. Gerber said the FLHS parking lot and tennis courts look great. Mr. Dwyer thanked the staff for all their hard work and it is much appreciated.

Opening of School Update

Dr. Jones said she would like a 10-year plan to get air conditioning in the schools. The heat presented a challenging start to the school year. Mrs. Gerber agreed and was told in 2013 that the cost to air condition FLHS would have been \$8M; she suggested this be discussed at the Capital Planning Workshop.

Mrs. Gerber asked about the Newcomer Academy. Mr. Cummings said the biggest changes are at Warde, where staffing has been increased to support classroom teachers with ELL students. At McKinley where most ELL students reside, we are continuing to implement, strengthen and improve the services. No students have moved to McKinley, TMS or Warde to participate in the Newcomer Academy.

Mr. Dwyer thanked the Town building department for performing the final inspection at Holland Hill, on short notice.

Opening of School

Dr. Jones said the enrollment is within range of the projections, with a total of 9790.

Committee/Liaison Reports

Mr. Peterson reported for the BOF: The Capital Planning Workshop has been moved to OHS on Monday, 9/17. The BOF approved \$750K for police body cameras, which has presented an issue for police in schools and how to best manage records and confidentiality. The BOF was very interested in the Warde turf progress and Chromebooks.

Mr. Dwyer said the Mill Hill Building Committee will report to the BOF first and then to the BOE and BOS.

Ms. Leeper reported for the Finance Committee: The corporate sponsorship idea is continuing; the software to enable the Board to be paperless is not ADA compliant and is on hold for now; window blinds are a safety item and should be funded properly in the budget.

Mrs. Vitale reported that the PTAC event was well attended and the Sherman Building Committee is meeting tonight with architects.

Public Comment:

Kathleen Joy Ross, Beach Road: Requests more data on ECC.

Laura King, Unquowa Road: Recommends a separate ECC transition to KDG PK program for students.

Bonnie Rotelli, Merritt Street: Supports centralized ECC program, likes the idea of a 5's program.

Adjournment

Ms. Pytko moved, Mrs. Gerber seconded that this Regular Meeting of the Board of Education adjourn.

Motion Passed: 9-0

Meeting adjourned at 11:39PM.

*Respectfully submitted by
Jessica Gerber
Fairfield BOE Secretary*