

**Regular Meeting Minutes  
Fairfield BoE, November 15, 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 Regular Meeting of the Board of Education and Roll Call*

Chairman Philip Dwyer called the Regular Meeting to order at 7:27PM. 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 Interim Superintendent Dr. Stephen Tracy, FLHS student representatives Catherine Behjati and Sean Oppenheimer; FWHS student representative Brittany Shuster; members of the central office leadership team, and approximately 25 members of the public.

*Student Reports*

Ms. Shuster reported for Fairfield Warde High School: The student body was thankful for the administration's response to the racial slur incident; Homecoming was a fun event; the seniors dressed in costumes for Halloween; congratulations are extended to Jes Bollman for his participation in the NAFME 2016 All-National Honor Ensemble in Grapevine, Texas; French exchange students were warmly welcomed; students are beginning the second marking period.

Mr. Oppenheimer and Ms. Behjati reported for Fairfield Ludlowe High School: The students were proud of the administration's response to the racial slur incident and they hoped students would learn to be kind; the Freshman forum will take place on Thursday and will cover various topics including social media and addiction; students behaved in a civil manner after the presidential election; there was a great turnout for Homecoming; the seniors are having fun with spirit week; the Sticks for Soldiers one-day fundraising event for wounded soldiers takes place on November 26 and both FLHS and FWHS are participating.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked, where does the money from the Sticks for Soldiers event go? Can you characterize the aftermath of the election at Warde? Ms. Behjati said 2 soldiers are honored at the Sticks for Soldiers event, but the money raised goes to multiple organizations that help wounded soldiers. Ms. Shuster said Warde students are talking through the election results.

Ms. Karnal requested the website for the Sticks for Soldiers and it is: [www.sticksforsoldiers.org](http://www.sticksforsoldiers.org)

*Public Comment*

*Kelly Socol*, York Road: Supports the plan to address racial imbalance.

*Bob Smoler*, FEA President: Read a prepared statement voted on by faculty leadership – it included the statement that the quality of education delivered at all Fairfield Public Schools at all levels is equally high and among the best in the country. Diversity in an educational environment is an important component of preparing students for the real world.

*Susie Byrne*, Fairfield Resident: Questioned the cost analysis of adding Open Choice students. Stated that a public hearing on the Racial Imbalance Plan, as required by state statute, has not been scheduled.

*Sally Connelly*, Tunxis Hill Road: Supports the McKinley community.

*Mike Jehle*, *Christine Jewell*, Fairfield History Museum: The new Social Studies Framework provides an opportune time to ensure a uniform experience for all Fairfield students at the Fairfield History Museum.

*Suzanne Graceffa*, York Road: Supports Racial Imbalance Plan including expansion of Open Choice.

*Jennifer Barahona*, McKinley Parent: Proud of McKinley, encourages diversity and global thinking, supports the proposal.

*Anna Wood*, Knollwood Drive: Need to educate the Fairfield area about the benefits of McKinley.

*Gina Jeanty*, Lenox Road: Very happy with McKinley.

*Approval of the Racial Imbalance Plan*

Mrs. Gerber moved, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly seconded that the Board of Education approve the Racial Imbalance Plan dated November 10, 2016.

Dr. Tracy said the proposed plan is essentially the same but now includes highlighted clarifying language. This is an interim plan to make modest progress. He thanked Mr. Cummings for his help in drafting this plan.

Ms. Pytko moved, Mrs. Gerber seconded to amend the motion by adding the following language at the end of the motion: “excluding adding any additional Open Choice students, as stated in Item 2, pages 6-7.”

Ms. Pytko said she was concerned with funding additional students during a time when the district is facing the loss of ECS funding, and is in the midst of 2 large construction projects.

Mrs. Gerber agreed that there are budget concerns but she feels the Open Choice program provides a great service to the district.

Mr. Calabrese acknowledged Ms. Pytko’s fiscal concerns, but feels the Open Choice program is a great benefit to the district; it enhances the educational program and that is the greater goal; he will not support the amendment.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly appreciates the amendment but will not support it; the referenced budget implications come with the PK addition to Stratfield, not the Open Choice program – according to the wide range of information provided by Dr. Tracy.

Mr. Patten echoed the sentiments of Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly. He would love to show the state that people love McKinley; he is not in favor of the amendment.

Mr. Llewellyn disagreed with Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly.

- He referenced reimbursement of extra services and 2 students in particular whose costs exceeded \$18K; the sending school should be reimbursing for any costs over \$3K but Fairfield is billing for costs over \$18K, presumably the average cost of \$15K plus \$3K. Dr. Tracy confirmed that and said he will recommend that Dr. Jones review the billing practices and take advantage of an opportunity in the law to ask for more money.
- Said he understood that the number of Open Choice students needing extra services was 15% vs. the district’s 11%, and there was no billing for any services between \$3K and \$18K. Dr. Tracy confirmed that and said Fairfield only billed for services not readily available, such as paraprofessionals.
- Asked previously about the separate billing for ECS services, what was the sum of that value? Is it fair to say it is not “no cost?” Dr. Tracy said he did not have that figure at hand, but could provide it; the cost is not zero.
- Can you address the impact of Bridgeport charging us for its magnet programs?

Mr. Dwyer said he would rule Mr. Llewellyn out of order and asked him to speak only to the amendment.

Mr. Llewellyn said 23½ cents on every dollar is spent on extra services; cannot say there is no cost. He has a huge issue with Bridgeport charging us but not paying us.

Mr. Dwyer reminded the Board the strongest possible plan should be submitted to the state to prevent forced redistricting; the Racial Imbalance Plan is based on maintaining neighborhood schools and voluntary participation. What is the reasonable cost to prevent redistricting? We know there is a cost with the preschool, but costs also exist for redistricting and associated transportation. He took exception with the statement that the Open Choice students cost money; if there is existing staff and there is room, students do not cost us any additional money. There is a marginal difference in special education, and he suspects the new superintendent will be more aggressive with billing. Open Choice is a net benefit to the district, both financially and educationally.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack agrees with all the comments on diversity and global society, but there is an element of pragmatic reality. We will be spreading and/or diluting our funds or student/teacher ratios for students that are not part of the Fairfield district – is this the right time to do this? The budget is finite; it is just not true that there is no

cost; perhaps we should tell the state that we are happy where we are. Either we push back or come up with a more permanent solution.

Mr. Llewellyn said Dwight has an extra section – that was a true cost. There are 30 fewer students in elementary, so why were 8 FTE added at the elementary level? Bridgeport is 99.9% eligible for Free/Reduced and those students fall below the state average in Fairfield as shown in a chart from a few weeks ago; the gap there is huge. We don't have our shop in order regarding free and reduced lunch students, so why are we bringing more Open Choice students. We need to get our shop in order. Where is the voluntary piece – it is not in the redistricting guiding principles. The public needs to understand that at some point, the marginal cost ends.

Mr. Dwyer said he would limit his answer as it relates to the amendment – Bridgeport students have a choice and this district has a choice to participate. 100 students equals \$300K in revenue. Even if added students cause a section to be added, it is still a net positive of \$180K to cover marginal increased costs.

Dr. Tracy added that there is billing for extraordinary costs. One could argue that there is a time cost for routine services provided by staff. Currently, there are 3 situations where backing out the Open Choice students would reduce a section resulting in an unmeasurable cost of increasing the class size. We cannot make a future guarantee regarding adding sections.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said the students at Dwight referenced by Mr. Llewellyn, in class sizes of 17 instead of 23, are getting a better education at a better cost. She appreciates Mr. Llewellyn's sense of civic duty regarding Free/Reduced lunch students but would leave the decision on their attendance up to their parents. The district could possibly face a backlash from the state with potential financial repercussions, should a plan not be submitted as directed. She doesn't see evidence of ballooning costs. The Cultural Diversity Task Force, as far back as 2004, always intended for the plan to be voluntary.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack said being forced to comply with the statute is kicking the can down the road. There should be a permanent solution, and should we go to the Town before complying? Is this is laying the groundwork to do this indefinitely – with the concept of ballooning costs and spreading existing funds even thinner? Open Choice doesn't fix racial imbalance. We have a of of diversity within the town. We are taking some contradictory steps in expanding our schools although our enrollment is shrinking. Is the plan to fill schools from the outside and keep infiltrating? She would like to hear more from the people what their sentiment is. She knows that the McKinley people are happy but wants to hear from more people.

Mr. Dwyer asked that comments be restricted to the amendment.

Mr. Llewellyn shared his logic based on the percentage of Open Choice students needing special services, 15% of 72 students is 11, multiplied by the average cost of \$34K equals \$380K – even though the math is not correct it is the same logic Mr. Dwyer is applying in reverse.

#### *Public Comment on Amendment*

*State Rep. Cristin McCarthy-Vahey*, Former member of the Cultural Diversity Taskforce: The statute must be adhered to; urged the Board to vote against the amendment; the state may force a redistricting.

*Dawn Llewellyn*, Fairfield Resident: Questioned whether a public hearing with proper notice was held as per the state regs. Maybe someone has to file that with the state. She will file. All children would benefit from the diversity that redistricting would bring.

*Sally Connelly*, Tunxis Hill Road: Disagrees with the amendment, understands that the plan is a placeholder.

*Suzanne Miska*, Ryegate Road: Saddened by the discussion; certain it was not the intent of the statute. Be cognizant of budget perspective.

Ms. Pytko clarified that it will be difficult to present the plan's rationale to the Boards of Finance and Selectmen in this difficult budget season, when it includes adding Open Choice students.

Mr. Dwyer said the evidence will show that this is a net revenue and he feels the Board of Finance will understand that.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said if the Board of Finance intends for us to cut this part of the plan in the budget, what budget line would they refer to? Agrees the district needs to get a full refund from Bridgeport.

Mrs. Gerber questioned how the district could be more aggressive with getting the additional funds over the \$3K – and how to ensure this gets done in the future.

Dr. Tracy felt this is an administrative matter that he will discuss with Dr. Jones. He pointed out that some districts don't bill anything for Open Choice students.

Mr. Dwyer said this can be addressed with Dr. Jones.

Mr. Llewellyn asked if Ms. Leonardi could add anything about the ability to recover costs.

Ms. Karnal questioned why the administration hadn't been more aggressive with billing.

Dr. Tracy said he wasn't sure what was done in the past, but this is an opportunity moving forward. Ms. Leonardi said when the district first worked with CSDE and Bridgeport in calculating reimbursement for Open Choice students with significant needs, the consensus on the interpretation of the statute was to bill for anything over the PPE and \$3K. There is no charge for existing staff. While it is possible to go back and calculate past expenses over \$3K, it will be an extraordinarily heavy lift after which it will be necessary to negotiate the cost with Bridgeport. Going forward, Bridgeport will be billed for expenses over \$3K, but that is no guarantee of payment.

Mr. Llewellyn asked if it might be hard to get that money now that Bridgeport is charging the district for magnet schools? Ms. Leonardi said she did not believe so, but proof-of-cost documentation will have to be submitted.

**Motion to Amend Failed: 4-5**

Favor: Mrs. Liu-McCormack, Ms. Karnal, Ms. Pytko, Mr. Llewellyn

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

Ms. Karnal requested the Board be notified by Friday on whether the public hearing requirement had been met; if it hasn't – how will this affect the district? She appreciated all the McKinley parents speaking with such passion and clarified that diversity and racial imbalance are not synonyms and she requested the proper term be used in the vote.

Mr. Dwyer said the plan has been discussed in public; Dr. Tracy said he will contact the Board attorney.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack asked if the Board could wait to get an answer from an attorney before voting; it would be nice to hear thoughts from the public.

Ms. Pytko asked if the town hall meeting held recently and the posted agenda for tonight's meeting could qualify as the meeting the requirement.

Mr. Llewellyn recommended that the highlighted comments, numbers 1,2, and 3, be removed; they are misleading conclusions and based on specific scenarios – other scenarios are possible; it should say the 6 scenarios don't work.

Mr. Dwyer said those highlights are pulled directly from the Milone and MacBroom powerpoint and are firm conclusions based on redistricting guidelines; this is included in the report so the state will see that pocket redistricting has been addressed. While possible to pocket-redistrict; the majority of the Board has not favored this.

Mrs. Gerber confirmed with Mr. Dwyer that Milone and MacBroom were not provided specific scenarios to report on, rather, they were asked to devise scenarios possible based on the redistricting guidelines. Milone and MacBroom also studied the ripple effect of feeder patterns.

Mr. Llewellyn said the guiding principles do not mention feeder patterns. Scenario D is a viable solution.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked if there are any other amendments.

Mr. Llewellyn moved, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly seconded to amend the motion by adding the following language at the end of the motion: "and move students who participate in the Dwight Pre-K 4s program in 2017-18, as referenced on page 6."

Mr. Llewellyn asked how many students at Dwight and Burr are in the 3-year-old program currently? Dr. Tracy confirmed that these are PK seats, rather than Dwight or Burr students. Mr. Cummings said there are eight 3-year-olds at Dwight and he is not sure about Burr.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said the Dwight program is not working to improve the racial imbalance.

Mr. Dwyer asked if this could work at either Burr or Stratfield; Mr. Cummings said yes. Ms. McGoey said another playground would be needed to support a PK at Stratfield. Mr. Cullen said the playground is estimated at \$43K; it could be completed over the summer after the 17/18 operating budget is approved.

Mr. Llewellyn asked about Burr KDG capacity – could take in fewer 3 year olds. Mr. Cummings said it currently is budgeted for 19 students, and he was unsure if there is an extra room. Dr. Tracy said the amendment seems practical and added that Dwight families should be accommodated.

Mrs. Gerber re-read the amendment.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack asked what is the cost savings for such a change? What is the total cost excluding Open Choice?

Mr. Llewellyn estimated a cost savings of \$105K.

Mr. Dwyer reviewed the capacity at Dwight and Mr. Cummings confirmed his understanding that the number of PK seats was being reduced to 72. Dr. Tracy added that if the PK seats remained at 90, there wouldn't be a cost savings.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said her understanding is that the PK seats would be reduced to 72; eliminating the Dwight PK would result in the elimination of .5 FTE at a cost savings of \$59K, and the elimination of a bus at \$45K – totaling approximately \$105K.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack asked what is the cost to run the PK program at Burr and Stratfield per year?

Mr. Llewellyn said after the start-up cost of \$40K, the net cost for 36 PK seats at each school is \$229K per year; \$345K after more sections are added.

Mr. Patten said he is not in favor of the amendment, as he felt it was delving into semantics.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack wanted the final numbers. Was McKinley surveyed? Why not get feedback from the community? She was concerned that Dwight was not fully utilized. Dr. Tracy said surveys were not done with this plan. The net cost of the program for the year is \$230K.

Mr. Cummings said the district has been holding off on PK applications until a decision has been made; placement is important to parents.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said this amendment is not semantics, rather it has a budget impact; she added that the Board needs to decide now.

Mrs. Gerber re-read the amendment.

*Public Comment on Amendment:*

*Suzanne Graceffa, York Road: Stratfield is closer for McKinley parents.*

*Kelly Socol, York Road: Stratfield has the same feeder pattern as McKinley.*

**Motion to Amend Passed: 7-2**

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

Oppose: Mr. Dwyer, Mr. Calabrese

Mr. Llewellyn asked if the PK location change will have to be re-approved; he felt this was necessary due to budget implications.

Mr. Dwyer confirmed that the Board agreed; the plan will need to be re-approved for a PK location change or other significant change.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly confirmed that the Board did not have any other amendments. She cautioned the Board on using the word 'problem' and commented that her work on the Cultural Diversity Task Force included more than racial

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imbalance. The PK is moving the needle; the plan has a chance of succeeding and she feels it is a well-thought-out plan; she is not in favor of taking one bus and moving those students to another school in order to sprinkle diversity.

*Public Comment on Motion as Amended:*

*Christine Vitale*, Verna Hill Road: Asked the Board to support the Plan; felt Open Choice brings value.

*Suzanne Miska*, Ryegate Road: The state is helping to divide the Town.

The original motion, now amended to read: “that the Board of Education approve the Racial Imbalance Plan dated November 10, 2016, and move students who participate in the Dwight Pre-K 4s program in 2017-18, as referenced on page 6”

**Amended 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

<i>New Business</i>
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*First Quarter Financial Report*

Mrs. Munsell gave an overview of the report; she reviewed the increase in certified and non-certified staff and mentioned that 6 of the certified positions were included in the budgeted projections that were ultimately cut by the Board of Selectmen last year. The first year of the CT 2.0 Plan includes a major undertaking to track headcount and coverage classifications as well as a detailed review of all billing.

Mr. Llewellyn asked is the FTE logic budget to budget? In elementary, we are down 4 sections and 30 students vs. last November. Mrs. Munsell said she was referring to actual positions budgeted vs. the number of FTE’s in place now.

Mr. Dwyer asked Mr. Llewellyn to clarify his question in an email to Mrs. Munsell. Dr. Tracy thought it would be helpful to have 3 columns: last year actual, this year budget, this year actual and Mr. Llewellyn agreed.

Ms. Karnal asked what is line 307 – other services? What is 329 - tuition? Mrs. Munsell said 307 is extracurricular stipends such as coaching and yearbook. 329 is out-of-district tuition; reimbursement for this expense is filed on December 1. Ms. Leonardi will provide the number of outplaced students.

*2017-2018 Program Initiatives and Budget Implications*

Dr. Boice and Mr. Cummings reviewed the enclosure including the purchase of textbooks and instructional materials for Science and Social Studies; World Language options for the elementary level; and a 6-day program rotation in grades K-5.

Mr. Dwyer asked if the textbook amount of \$509K is a new expense. Dr. Boice said there is no money currently budgeted for Science texts, but that amount may be off-set by \$250K that was set aside last year for Social Studies texts.

Ms. Karnal questioned:

1. Why the delay in the Science curriculum implementation? Mr. Cummings said the Board agreed to this last year for an effective implementation plan; teachers are currently learning a new math resource. Grades 3-5 will be implemented in 18/19, grades 6-12 are moving forward next year.
2. Don’t you need the 3-5 foundation for grades 6-12? Mr. Cummings said he would rather build capacity and then move forward.
3. The 5<sup>th</sup> grade students will enter a new curriculum in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade? Mr. Cummings said yes –that would be for one year.

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Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly moved, Ms. Karnal seconded to extend the meeting to 11:25pm.

**Motion Passed: 7-2**

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

Oppose: Mr. Calabrese, Ms. Pytko

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said implementing new curriculum presents transition concerns and involves summer development work to address those concerns. She does not support teachers simultaneously implementing 2 new texts with new subject area curriculum. Dr. Boice added that teachers have explored the Next Generation Science Standards; there is some shift in content, but it is mostly a change in how it is taught and how students study; bridge-work will be built into the transition; students will be prepared for 6<sup>th</sup> grade; coursework varies depending on grade level and course. Mr. Cummings said teaching will be done using the inquiry method; the Fairfield museum has experience with this method; the instructional method is no longer limited to the subject area; we want to teach kids how to problem solve. Ms. Karnal expressed disappointment that it wasn't being rolled out all at once and asked if curriculum had ever been rolled out this way. Mr. Cummings and Dr. Boice clarified that it had been done this way in the past.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack hoped that the new curriculum would be rolled out from the bottom up and is concerned with the delay; she hopes there is a holistic plan with a deliberate roll-out. Mr. Cummings said the work to be done includes creating an equitable system of delivery and equipping elementary teachers with content knowledge.

Mr. Dwyer asked if the Board was prepared to support Option 2.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly requested more information before the budget discussion.

Mr. Patten asked about the Maryland programs and asked if that could be done in Fairfield. Mr. Cummings said the group saw 2 different programs – one was a full immersion program that moved beyond simple conjugation; students were able to engage in authentic conversations; that set a vision for what we would like to do here. We would need to hold off on a program like that, fundamental work is needed on K-2 reading instruction and professional development.

Mr. Dwyer confirmed the Board is accepting Option 2 pending a better description.

*First Reading of Policy 5141.3 – Students – Health Assessments and Immunizations*

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked the Board to forward any questions to her attention.

*Approval of Minutes*

*Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of October 18, 2016*

Mrs. Gerber moved, Ms. Pytko seconded that the Board of Education approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of October 18, 2016.

**Motion Passed: 7-1-1**

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

Oppose: Mrs. Liu-McCormack

Abstain: Mr. Llewellyn

*Approval of the Minutes of the Special Meeting of October 24, 2016*

Mrs. Gerber moved, Ms. Pytko seconded that the Board of Education approve the Minutes of the Special Meeting of October 24, 2016.

**Motion Passed: 7-0-2**

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

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Abstain: Mrs. Liu-McCormack, Mr. Llewellyn

*Superintendent's Report*

Dr. Tracy thanked the Board for the opportunity; he respects and admires the teachers and leaders and enjoyed his brief collaboration with Dr. Jones and wishes the Board well in the future.

Mr. Dwyer said Dr. Tracy did a great job and thanked him on behalf of the Board.

*Adjournment*

Mr. Calabrese moved, Mrs. Gerber seconded that this Regular Meeting of the Board of Education adjourn.

**Motion Passed: 9-0**

Meeting adjourned at 11:22PM

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