

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

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 7:32PM. Present were members Eileen Liu-McCormack (arrived 7:45PM), Marc Patten (arrived 7:35PM), Donna Karnal, Jessica Gerber, Philip Dwyer, Trisha Pytko, Nick Aysseh, Jennifer Maxon-Kennelly and John Llewellyn. Others present were Superintendent Dr. Toni Jones, members of the central office leadership team, and approximately 15 members of the public.

New Business

Mrs. Gerber moved, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly seconded the recommended motion “that the Board of Education hereby moves to establish an Advisory Committee on Operational Effectiveness per BoE Bylaws, Article 2, Section 4, Paragraph B, and approve the charge as described in the Commission Statement per Enclosure No. 1.”

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly: Enthusiastic about the committee, however, feels it could become unwieldy and suggested limiting the ad hoc committee voting members to 8-10 elected officials. Doesn’t want to put unelected members of the community above others. Asked for Board input prior to making an official amendment to the committee charge.

Mr. Dwyer: The ad hoc committee for education goals had a community membership requirement. Reminded the Board that all committee members will have a voice but only the 3 BOE members may vote. The committee will follow the BOE By-laws.

Mr. Aysseh: Agrees with Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly; the committee should have 8-10 elected officials. Agrees that community should participate but doesn’t want to slow the process.

Mr. Patten agrees that the committee should be 8 people, what is the happy medium?

Ms. Pytko would support this amendment, due to the short timeframe.

Ms. Gerber suggested that committee members may not be aware that only BOE members may vote.

Mr. Llewellyn: Are committee recommendations binding to staff? What is the total number of participants per the written charge? More professionals are needed on the committee, should have more diversity.

Mr. Dwyer: Recommendations from the committee would not be binding for the BOE, the charge is written to have 12 members; 3 at-large. Has asked BOF, BOS and RTM to appoint members of their choosing. Has heard from all except the RTM Republicans.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly: 3 at-large members would not provide enough expertise. Will get more input with a system of focus groups.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack: We don’t need politics in education. Not honest and true to limit the scope if we continue to tie politics to education; many are unaffiliated but could be education advocates.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly: Elected officials make the decisions; there is no mention of party affiliation in the motion. Why privilege only 3 at-large members when many groups should be represented?

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly moved, Mr. Aysseh seconded to amend the Ad Hoc Committee on Operational Effectiveness Commission Statement as follows:

Under Membership

Strike from the 2nd sentence “The BoE Board Chair” to the end of the 3rd sentence “...fifteen members.” and substitute “The BoE Board Chair will also recruit members from various Town Boards including: Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, and Representative Town Meeting. The Ad Hoc Committee will recruit community feedback in the form of focus groups from the school Bargaining Unit representatives, student representatives,

and members of the general community. The Committee will have 8-10 members. The size and number of the focus groups will be determined by the Ad Hoc Committee.”

Mr. Dwyer: Does not support the amendment. Choices have to be made. The committee is not being created to fix next year’s budget problem; rather it is to address structural change for the long-term good. Staff needs to be on the committee as they are the ones to implement. State law requires community input for broad-based educational goals. Need to have people on the committee who have a real voice.

Mr. Patten: Does not support the amendment. It puts parameters on the committee and the Chair. Is in favor of limiting the membership to less than 15. Bargaining unit representation would be helpful.

Mrs. Gerber: Only now understanding that BOE members are the only voting members. The school-space committees formed by the First Selectman – all members had voting rights.

Ms. Karnal: Thinks the committee should be opened up to more people; could the charge be changed to allow all members to vote?

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly: BOE members would listen to committee consensus. Teachers and union leadership have wonderful ideas and are motivated to be creative. Staff feedback is an integral part of the process. The amendment is not about shutting out the public – it is about having a functioning committee that can move forward.

Mr. Llewellyn: Thought the purpose was to be broad – now it seems different voices will not be heard.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack: Supports 15 members – the more feedback, the better. All should be voting members. Be more inclusive than exclusive.

Public comment on amendment:

Bob Smoler, FEA: Committee should have someone with knowledge of operational efficiency.

Suzanne Miska, Ryegate Road: Concerned that the committee is top-heavy with town board members.

Tina Brown, Quaker Lane, resident and teacher: Teachers should be part of the process.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly reiterated that real-time staff input is essential.

Mr. Dwyer said that the process will include staff leadership.

Mr. Llewellyn would like to have larger groups.

Amended Motion Fails: 4-5

Favor: Mrs. Gerber, Ms. Pytko, Mr. Aysseh, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly

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

Regarding the original motion, the Chair asked the Board for unanimous consent to change “Advisory” to “Ad Hoc” in the Commission Statement, under “Process” and “Timeframe”. The board gave unanimous consent. The Board Chair also asked the Board for unanimous consent to add the word “voting” in the “Membership” section of the Commission Statement – between the words “recruit” and “members” in the 2nd sentence; and between the words “15” and “members” in the last sentence. The Board gave unanimous consent.

Mr. Llewellyn confirmed that the at-large members may vote. Will the Chair solicit members or will others nominate?

Mr. Dwyer said he has received nominations from community leaders and elected officials and is relying on leadership to bring names forward.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack: Wants to make sure that not more than half of the group is politically affiliated. How are students and at-large members nominated? Who will review the resumes? What is the deadline?

Mr. Dwyer: Would like current BOE student representatives to be on the committee. Would like to see people join that have the needed skillset. All are welcome to send in names, the superintendent and bargaining units will make recommendations. Hopes the committee names take shape by the end of the week, and have an organizational meeting by mid-October. Members could still join following the first meeting.

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Mr. Patten: In favor of specifically stating the number of members on the charge.

Mr. Patten made a motion to amend the “Membership” section of the Commission statement to change the word “twelve” to the word “up”. There was no second to the motion.

Mr. Aysseh thanked the public for their comments. We have been elected to do a job and will have to make tough decisions, which may include structural change. Likes the idea of community input from FEA and other groups but not sure if this is the right way to do it.

Public Comment:

Suzanne Miska, Ryegate Road: Concerned with broad nature of committee.

Jason Bluestein, FSAA President and Burr Principal: Important to have certified and non-certified staff representation to provide unique perspectives.

Christine Vitale, Verna Hill Road: Short and long-term committees are needed.

Mr. Llewellyn said the term ‘advisory committee’ is used in the by-laws; unsure if language allows non-BOE members to serve on advisory committees.

Mr. Dwyer said the by-laws do allow this and read an excerpt from the second paragraph concerning advisory committees.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said the conversation should begin as soon as possible and there may be some messiness to the process. As the committee is formed, adjustments may be made accordingly.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack said the Board could charge the committee to investigate ideas; this is a fact-gathering process.

Mr. Dwyer: Suggestions for the committee do not require a Board majority.

The original motion, as amended, Passed: 8-1

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

Oppose: Mr. Aysseh

Financial Review 2016-2017

Dr. Jones thanked Mrs. Munsell for the excellent work that was done to get out of the financial hole from last year. Mrs. Munsell reviewed the budget transfers and final balances report and said the district was able to make purchases for some items that were on hold; mostly capital maintenance projects and instructional materials.

Ms. Pytko: If the state doesn’t pass the budget by October 1 – do we not get our ECS funding? Dr. Jones said we do not anticipate receiving any ECS funding.

Mr. Llewellyn: Referenced the 3rd paragraph of the report – regarding the payment of wages with 16-17 funds – was that a carry-forward? Mrs. Munsell said this references costs that were incurred in 16-17 and has nothing to do with 17-18 year.

Mr. Patten: Was there anything in that we could not pay for, in terms of things like instructional materials? Dr. Jones said many items were frozen last year; she would need to check the list.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked if an updated list of frozen items could be provided for the first October meeting; this will help with budget ideas.

First Reading of Policy 5113, Attendance/Excuses/Dismissal

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said the only change is statute-driven and is on the first page.

Mrs. Gerber added that the Board adopted a revised version of this policy just last year.

Approval of Minutes

Approval of Special Meeting Minutes of September 12, 2017

Mrs. Gerber moved, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly seconded the recommended motion “that the Board of Education approve the Minutes of the Special Meeting of September 12, 2017.”

Motion Passed: 9-0

Approval of Regular Minutes of September 12, 2017

Mrs. Gerber moved, Ms. Pytko seconded the recommended motion “that the Board of Education approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of September 12, 2017.”

Motion Passed: 7-2

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

Oppose: Mrs. Liu-McCormack, Mr. Llewellyn

Superintendent Report

Dr. Jones reported that the 2 new preschool classes are going very well. The PK playground at Stratfield was one of the items that was frozen, but staff has done an excellent job working around this. The new CLC classrooms at OHS and Burr are in place and is delighted with how well they are doing. Back-to school nights are in process. SBAC results will soon be going out to parents and district results will be shared with the Board.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly: Is the Stratfield PK enrollment growing – it did not appear full? Ms. Miner said yes. Dr. Jones added that the ECC program will also grow.

Ms. Karnal mentioned that parking was an issue for the FLHS Open House.

Mrs. Gerber responded that there were events at multiple schools in the area that night, including a PTA event at RLMS and a Fairfield Prep event.

Committee/Liaison Reports

Ms. Pytko stated the upcoming SEPTA meeting will take place at McKinley. Mr. Mancusi will attend.

Mr. Aysseh: The Thursday HHBC meeting was canceled.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly reported the PTAC is hosting a BOE candidate forum on November 1.

Mrs. Gerber: Reported the FLHS committee approved invoices, Mr. Donald will be giving an update to BOS. The window replacement project is 70% complete. More difficult windows will be replaced next summer.

Open Board Comment

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said she is available to help PTAs get started with Odyssey of the Mind programs.

Mr. Dwyer asked the Board to come prepared on October 10 to discuss ideas for the 18-19 budget. Reminded the Board of the CBE conference from November 16-18. Noted that the new Board members orientation session is scheduled for November 15. The first read of any By-law changes will occur at the November 28 meeting.

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Public Comment

Sally Connelly, Tunxis Hill Road: Questioned PK site assignments for ELL students.

Suzanne Miska, Ryegate Road: Absence policy is difficult to follow with planned college visits.

Adjournment

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

Motion Passed: 9-0

Meeting adjourned at 9:30PM

*Submitted by
Jessica Gerber
Fairfield BOE
Secretary*