

**Special Meeting Minutes
Fairfield BoE, March 16, 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 Special Meeting of the Board of Education and Roll Call

Chairman Philip Dwyer called the Special meeting to order at 6:55PM. Present were members Marc Patten (arrived 8:12PM), Donna Karnal (arrived 6:56PM), Jessica Gerber, Philip Dwyer, Anthony Calabrese, Trisha Pytko, Jennifer Maxon-Kennelly and John Llewellyn. Eileen Liu-McCormack was not present. Others present were Superintendent Dr. Toni Jones, members of the central office leadership team, and approximately 100 members of the public.

Racial Imbalance Hearing - Timeline

Mr. Dwyer said the Racial Imbalance Plan Timeline is expected to be placed on the April 6 agenda for approval. He opened the floor to public commenters for this item.

Public Comment:

Sally Connelly, McKinley Parent: Supports McKinley school; suggested performing a no-cost parent survey and creating a PR letter highlighting what McKinley has to offer.

With no other public commenters, Mr. Dwyer closed the Hearing.

Business Items

Racial Imbalance Timeline

Dr. Jones stated that the CT. State Board of Education approved the current Racial Imbalance Plan with conditions that a timeline be added; the portion that is new starts on page 7 and includes benchmark planning and a timeline for: Community Engagement, Pre-K focus, Open Choice, Magnet or other Program Options and Redistricting Elementary Schools.

Mrs. Gerber asked about publicizing McKinley – would it be possible to have packets of information available at kindergarten and new student registration? What would a community survey entail – could this be done sooner than December? Dr. Jones cautioned that McKinley, while built as a 504 school, has smaller class sizes. The December timeline ensures consideration of fall enrollment numbers.

Mr. Llewellyn:

- Should the magnet option be removed, given that limited seats are available? Dr. Jones said we will need to calculate the number of seats available and the type of program that might be offered.
- Should the 3.2, Open Choice cost analysis, actually be March 2017? Dr. Jones said no, it is March 2018.
- Requested a report on special education costs for Open Choice students and noted that he has requested this several times.
- If state does not fund Open Choice, or if the funding is reduced – would we still expand the program? Mr. Dwyer said it would be difficult to bring in new students if funding were eliminated or reduced.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly

- Noted the date on page 1, first paragraph – should be corrected to January 4, 2017.
- Page 10 - 2.0 PK program - unclear on target date of January 2018. Dr. Jones said the January date factors in September actual enrollment numbers, and will determine if the program shift has had an impact. Mr. Dwyer added that official state numbers won't be known until the spring.
- Page 11. Why June 2018 for 3.4 – Analyze impact to Racial Imbalance? Dr. Jones said there will be many checkpoints along the way and into the future.
- Page 12. Shared that having served on the Cultural Diversity Task Force, June is a bad time for surveys. Was fairly certain that their survey was not reliable, given the response rate.
- Page 12. Why wait so long to get technical assistance from the state? Dr. Jones said everything in this plan is on or before the date listed, which means we are working on this now.

Mr. Llewellyn said the state would want updated renovation numbers referenced on page 7. Dr. Jones said the plan has already been approved; section 6 is the only section for review; we shouldn't go back on what has already been approved. Mr. Dwyer added that an accurate number won't be known until the RTM acts.

Ms. Karnal questioned the project completion dates listed for Holland Hill. Mr. Dwyer said he would check on the completion dates with the Holland Hill Building Committee (HHBC). Mr. Cullen said the HHBC hasn't announced the start date; the waterfall could accommodate the start of one project before the completion of another. Dr. Jones added that the Board voted on the plan with information available at the time; the CSBE did not ask for plan updates.

First Reading of Policies

Policy 5145.15 Students - Directory Information

Policy 6111 Instruction-Schedules-Student Calendar

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said the policies are fairly straightforward and asked for any comments or questions.

Mrs. Gerber asked what was new in the Directory policy. Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said she will get that information.

Mr. Llewellyn asked if the 4 items listed in the Directory policy - student name, address, telephone, parent/guardian electronic address is what can be released; suggested the policy should also include other items such as graduation year and sports participation. Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said the four items are what is referred to as the Directory Information throughout the policy, but she will discuss this at the next policy meeting.

Discussion of 2017-2018 Budget Changes

Mr. Dwyer said budget changes are being reviewed earlier than usual due to the governor's proposal and the First Selectman's proposal to reduce the education budget, resulting in a \$4.3M target.

Dr. Jones handed out a document with Tier 1 and Tier 2 lists of possible budget reductions and said the reduction is ranging from \$4.2M to \$6.2M, as shown on the bottom. This is a huge number for an already lean budget.

For Tier 1:

- Homebound Instruction – Tutoring for expelled students. Legislation mandating tutoring might not get passed this year. This is a bit of a gamble.
- One Bus Reduction – May be a challenge.
- Two PE positions – Currently vacancies. If not filled, would require shuffling of staff.
- Program supplies
- Maintenance and Capital Projects including: FWHS and FLHS tennis courts, FWMS music suite flooring, preventative building maintenance, paving, playground maintenance, Mill Hill flooring project, permanent PK playground at Stratfield, maintenance/technical consultants. This is just kicking the can down the road.

For Tier 2:

- Student Activity Fee, based on number of students currently participating in sports - would need a lot of discussion.
- Building rental fee increase, don't want to increase too much and lose renters.
- World Language, grades 3-5, 4.8 FTE – this is a big valued item that the Board has worked hard to implement.
- 4th grade orchestra
- No summer curriculum work
- District Professional Development
- 10% School allocation reduction for supplies
- District Improvement Plan Program implementations
- Aquatics Program K-12
- Freeze secondary CO administrator

Tier 3 reductions have only been discussed at the community level and would be a challenge to explore:

- Music lesson fees
- Furlough day
- Close one elementary school
- Consolidate to one high school
- House system structure change
- Gifted Program, K-8
- Middle School Secretary
- Reduction of Days for Dean
- Reduction of Days for Counselor
- Relocate Walter Fitzgerald Campus
- Relocate Central Office to a school
- No 9th grade sports
- Change to ½ day Kindergarten
- Elimination of Curriculum Leaders

DRAFT

Staff has repeatedly reduced. In listening to teachers, we need to make sure that we are not stressing staff, keeping in mind that multiple previous reductions have not been restored such as:

- Paras in 1st and 2nd grades
- World Language in Elementary – 3 days a week
- Gifted Positions
- Smaller Class Size in Elementary
- Central Office Clerical
- Library Media Clerical at High Schools
- High School Receptionist
- Para Reduction of 2 work days district-wide
- 10.5 Reduced Days
- Computer Para for high school
- Library para at high school

Mr. Dwyer thanked Dr. Jones for the initial list; none of these suggestions are made lightly and some will not move forward.

Mr. Calabrese noted that the BOE budget is still short \$1.2M even with Tier 1 and 2 ideas.

Mr. Dwyer explained how the \$4.25M number was arrived at:

\$1M additional residential outplacement cost if legislation passes

\$1.250M – reduction in special education grant

\$2M reduction by First Selectman

The state will give \$2M to the Town for special education; it is the First Selectman's recommendation to transfer that to the BOE; if that is not done, the resulting cut would then be \$6.25M.

Mr. Llewellyn asked about the \$9M pension number that Governor Malloy pushed to the Town; is this legal?

Mr. Dwyer said he has not heard of one legislator in support of this and encouraged all citizens to send sentiments to public officials. The Town was given the \$9M bill, \$2M of which the Town assigned to the BOE. The BOE budget has always been a target, as it is a high number.

Ms. Pytko acknowledged receipt of numerous emails from advocates and understands and appreciates that these are more than just numbers.

Mrs. Gerber mentioned the worst case scenario in light of the \$9M - the BOE budget could be further reduced.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said the public can advocate for the restoration; the BOS and BOF could choose to put \$9M back in the Town budget.

Mr. Dwyer mentioned that Westport and Greenwich chose not to budget for shared pension costs, and deal with the issue as a special assessment, if needed. The BOF and BOS could restore the \$2M. Once it gets to the RTM, the only thing that could be restored is the \$2M, which would require a 2/3 vote.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly

- Noted that the state is now considering sports participation as PE; an idea she brought up a few years ago. Dr. Jones said she will look into that.
- Concerned with preventative maintenance. Mr. Cullen said there are six areas to be impacted: painting, roof preventative maintenance and building envelope PM, ADA studies and fixes,

maintenance code and safety systems, HVAC system cleaning and professional cleaning of circuit boards and devices.

Mr. Llewellyn - Is the \$30K for studies only? Mr. Cullen said it also includes working with an architect and engineer, and the ramp implementation.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly

- The one bus reduction – could we also look into flexible school start times? Dr. Jones said yes.
- The student activity fee is like a parent tax, can we get the full picture? Dr. Jones said this will involve significant staff time to investigate. If the majority of the Board is in favor of this, she will look into this further.
- DIP Program Implementation – what would we not be moving forward with? Dr. Jones said she will get that information.
- Asked about the possible savings with the solar carport panels project being proposed at the high schools. Dr. Jones said other factors are involved such as paving costs; the project needs to be economically feasible.

Mr. Dwyer said the Board is considering moving the budget adjustment agenda item to June 13 to have the best available information. Will assume another discussion in April, and May for research, vote in June.

Ms. Pytko

- Asked whether the BOF/BOS was attempting to delay the budget vote. Mr. Dwyer said legislation is being considered to allow a delayed budget vote; Fairfield's charter requires that the budget is due in early May.
- What is the Aquatic Program? Ms. Leonardi said it serves the most vulnerable students and is a wonderful swimming program that students attend accompanied by staff. Rental fees and transportation account for the cost.

Mrs. Gerber

- What is the impact of summer curriculum work reduction? Dr. Jones said this is part of a bigger discussion; if reduced to zero, may have to have more early releases to do some curriculum work and PD.
- Tier 3 is an unpleasant list, but noticed the absence of increasing elementary class size. While not in favor of it, has heard it mentioned in the past. Dr. Jones said this will be done if needed. Some of the classrooms are very small and may not accommodate more students.

Ms. Karnal

- What is homebound instruction? Dr. Jones said that is tutoring for expelled students. There won't be an impact if legislation does not pull through.
- What do the maintenance technical consultants cover? Mr. Cullen said this covers smaller projects that require architectural engineering services, indoor air quality testing, hazard materials testing, among others.
- Why the different pricing for the tennis courts? Mr. Cullen said FLHS is a repair and FWHS includes an underground sprinkler system.

Mr. Dwyer acknowledged the importance of maintaining quality facilities.

Mr. Llewellyn asked if magnet students and ½ day magnet program students are included in enrollment – could we legally charge for those students? Mr. Dwyer said magnet students are not included in the enrollment numbers; there is a requirement to provide magnet program information to all students.

Mr. Patten

- Where are the 2 PE positions? Dr. Jones said there are 2 openings at the elementary level; we would have to look within the department for coverage.
- What categories of sports would be included in student activity fees? Dr. Jones said all competitive sports as well as other areas. Would need to work with staff to ensure participation does not suffer.
- Would this eliminate the entire World Language Elementary Program? Dr. Jones said yes. There is a sense that it is not adequately funded even today; we would look for other ways to infuse vocabulary into the building such as with apps.

Ms. Pytko – Do closing an elementary school and combining high schools belong on the Tier 3 list, given our large district? Dr. Jones said community discussions would be required and it would be a tremendous amount of work over a multi-year period. It would not affect next year’s numbers.

Mr. Dwyer requested that Board members submit suggestions to Dr. Jones. Dr. Jones added that she has an excel tool that can be used to simplify Board suggestions and will help to determine which ideas should be researched more fully; this will be sent out shortly.

Approval of Minutes

Approval of the Minutes of the February 14, 2017 Regular Meeting

Mrs. Gerber moved, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly seconded that the Board of Education approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of February 14, 2017.

Motion Passed: 6-1-1

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

Oppose: Mr. Llewellyn

Abstain: Ms. Karnal

Superintendent Report

Dr. Jones thanked the Town for help and input during the snow days, which can be difficult calls to make. The process begins as early as 4:00 am.

Budget reductions mentioned are a first pass-through; more work is needed.

Thanked the Board for its service in honor of Board Appreciation Month. Board members give of their time voluntarily and perform a valuable service that is appreciated by staff and community.

Committee Liaison Reports

Ms. Pytko reported the SEPTA Fundraiser takes place on April 1 at Anna Liffey’s. The BOF holds its Budget Open Forum on Saturday at 9:30 am at FLHS. CES Transition Resource Expo will take place on March 22; Special Needs Planning Seminar on March 30; SEPTA teen night at the YMCA on March 31st.

Ms. Maxon-Kennelly thanked Dr. Jones for attending the budget-focused PTAC meeting; many good questions were generated.

Mr. Patten reported for the Board of Health: Several tools for nurses exist in the schools to keep students safe with regards to substance abuse and other issues; a new free bike rental program is available; the new Chair of the Board of Health, Dr. Henry Yoon is very knowledgeable and is most willing to work with the Policy Committee on health issues.

Mr. Dwyer said the HHBC is moving forward to the design/development phase of drawings; its primary task is to get through the Town Commissions.

Open Board Comment

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly wished the best of luck to the Odyssey of the Mind teams competing at the March 18 state competition.

Mr. Calabrese mentioned the importance of advocating for the BOE budget restoration of \$2M and encouraged public participation.

Mr. Dwyer appreciated the invitation to read to Riverfield students and very much enjoyed his visit. The Special Election will take place on June 6 and will be on the April 6 agenda regarding the school calendar.

Public Comment

Matt Hutzemann, Fairfield Resident: Supports sports and other programming; would rather have fees than service elimination.

Suzanne Miska, Ryegate Road: The Town should come together about the Racial Imbalance Plan; does not feel time is right for Open Choice program.

Jennifer Biondo, Fairfield Resident: Supports aquatic therapy.

Sarah Hoefler, FPS Music Coordinator: Eliminating 4th grade orchestra would be a detrimental cut and would impact the whole program.

Carolyn Trabuco, Fairfield Resident: Structural changes are needed; we are asset-heavy with many buildings.

Amy Dutter, Cider Mill Lane: Stressed importance of music program.

Ellen Blomberg, Fairview Avenue: Supports Fairfield education and programming; volunteers can help in many areas.

Dawn Llewellyn, Fairfield Resident: Does not support Open Choice and PK in Racial Imbalance Plan. Should redistrict to save money.

Girlye Jasper, Burr Parent: Glad to see the Board is concerned about the students; is hopeful that students' best interests are placed first.

John Convertito, PTAC President: Urged Board to stop looking at programming and focus on asset utilization and consolidation.

Rabab Hussain Syed, Judd Street: Students have benefitted and thrived in Fairfield Public Schools. Agrees that programs should not be cut.

Steve Cerny, Fairfield Resident: Racial Imbalance Plan timeline involves a lot of work; stop new enrollments in Open Choice; incentivize McKinley families to attend other schools.

Bob Smoler, FEA President: The \$9M cut will not come through and is a false narrative. Staff is already stressed - need to make sure that staff is sane and can work well with children and deliver services. Make sure that whatever we end up with we can do well. Pressure should be applied to public officials to get out of this false narrative.

Patti Bilotto, Fairfield Resident: Supports music program.

John Platner, Church Hill Road: Appreciates transparency and urges Board to look at structural opportunities. Volunteers can help in many areas.

Superintendent Evaluation

Mrs. Gerber moved, Ms. Karnal seconded that the Board of Education hereby moves into Executive Session to discuss superintendent employment and performance in accordance with CGS 1-200(6)(A).

Motion Passed: 6-0

(Ms. Pytko and Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly were not in the room)

The Board went into executive session at 9:24PM.

The Board came out of Executive Session at 10:45PM

Adjournment

Mrs. Gerber moved, Ms. Karnal seconded that this Special Meeting of the Board of Education adjourn.

Motion Passed 8-0

Meeting adjourned at 10:45PM

*Jessica Gerber
Fairfield Board of Education
Secretary*