

**Special Meeting Minutes  
Fairfield BoE, January 28, 2015**

**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 7:35PM. Present were members Eileen Liu-McCormack, John Convertito, Donna Karnal, Jessica Gerber, Philip Dwyer, Paul Fattibene, Jennifer Maxon-Kennelly, John Llewellyn and Marc Patten. Others present were Superintendent David Title, members of the Central Office Leadership Team, and approximately 10 members of the public.

*Business Items*

Mr. Dwyer requested Board consensus to add agenda item 'Support Information'. The Board agreed. He also mentioned that new information regarding the medical retention fund was placed at the table. Dr. Title explained the December experience requires the Board to add \$248,471 to Health Insurance to cover the costs, as per BOF and BOS. The good news is that the Town has received a positive pension contribution update; Mr. Mayer will provide more detail later, which may offset the increase. Mr. Dwyer offered that the net difference may not be substantial, but more will be known tomorrow.

Mr. Patten asked whether Town bodies would add to the BOE medical retention fund; questioned the growing legal expenses and offered that perhaps that fund be increased next year; asked for examples of Capital Outlay as listed on pages 53, 106 and 107; and requested more information on the McKinley Dehumidification System on page 165. Dr. Title said the Town looks to the BOE to add money to medical retention; legal expenses continue to be high and will go over by at least \$50K due to the extra expense of arbitration; last year it was exceeded by \$150K. Mr. Chase and Mr. Vuolo commented that Capital Outlay cannot be used for technology and is used to replace cafeteria tables, teacher desks, book cases, and other such items. Mr. Cullen explained the separate HVAC unit needed at McKinley; repairmen serviced the existing unit over 20 times last year due to the excessive humidity level; this unit services a critical area.

Mrs. Karnal asked why McKinley, a recently built school, would already need such a substantial fix; and asked for suggestions to reduce legal expenses. Mr. Cullen responded that new buildings sometimes have HVAC zone issues that have to be addressed and a breakdown is provided on page 165. Dr. Title said attorneys are used only when needed, but are required when opposing counsel is present. Ms. Karnal asked where the online reporting was listed in the budget and was told page 81, under Security.

Mrs. Karnal and Mrs. Liu-McCormack asked for clarification on the World Language Program; specifically the cost of adding back the program cut in 2011. Dr. Title mentioned the written proposal that was presented to the Board in November said the best place to start adding to World Language is the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, and added that having World Language as its own class 5 days a week, and adding French as an option were both improvements from what we had before.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack mentioned that the World Language program has not been fully restored; Dr. Title said the Board may add or subtract from the proposal.

Ms. Karnal requested textbook pricing and asked whether World Language will impact time in Language Arts; Dr. Title said textbooks are needed for 6<sup>th</sup> grade and beyond, the textbook will be recommended when the 6-12 curriculum is presented; students needing a double period in Language Arts will still get that.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack asked for the actual reading teacher allocation; she felt this amount is separate from what is being spent on World Language; Ms. Leffert said approximately \$110K is for the reading teachers.

Mrs. Gerber mentioned the growing enrollment at Holland Hill and asked about space requirements for new sections; the enrollment at the high schools; the Tomlinson repairs on page 166; the carpeting at FLHS, and said she is pleased to see the FLHS Sound Panel addressed on page 169. Dr. Title said sections can always be added or subtracted last minute, the final decision is made mid-August; when space is tight, specialists are sometimes displaced; feeder schools determine the freshman class, but historically FLHS has more attrition. Mr. Cullen said the Tomlinson tile replacement is

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due to a renovation issue; the carpeting at FLHS is 14-17 years old and normal use is 7-10, particularly in a heavily used area.

Mr. Convertito asked about school allocation, lunch aides and their training for food allergies, and tutors. Ms. Munsell said school allocations are listed on page 14 of the Budget Prep Manual. Mr. Vuolo said some elementary schools choose to use lunch aides to free professional staff to work directly with students; lunch aides are required to meet with the nurse and are trained to use an epi-pen, but certified staff are nearby; allocations can be used for textbooks, professional development, and library books among other things. Dr. Title said more allocation information can be found on pages 5 and 7 of the Budget Prep Manual.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack asked whether lunch aides carry any certification, and offered that parents could volunteer as lunch aides; this has been effective in other districts. Mr. Chase said that lunch aides do not carry any certification.

Mr. Convertito asked several questions about the HVAC units. Mr. Cullen said the FLHS HVAC unit malfunctioned due to a maintenance issue and the sound panel is a new unit.

Mr. Fattibene asked about leadership positions on page 156, and felt that the enrollment as shown on page 128 may be skewing declining enrollment by including PK. Ms. Leonardi explained the restructuring on page 156 which will allow for the support and placement of teams, will address and prevent crisis situations and perhaps reduce legal fees in the process; will provide individual and collective assistance to staff, and will allow for early intervention for students with increasingly complex needs and who require more complex evaluations. Dr. Title mentioned that the PK Coordinator position would be filled with existing staff.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked whether ECC was always included in PK-12 enrollment numbers was told yes, although now the program has expanded to include PK at Burr and Dwight. Dr. Title said that they always try to put the teachers where the students are, and move them around as needed. Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly also asked whether high school teachers' salaries are higher than others. Dr. Title said that all are paid on the same salary schedule.

Mr. Patten asked about class size; Dr. Title said there are class size limits in the teacher contract, as well as for safety in science labs.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked why the key unification project was not part of security; and, referring to page 160, asked about the possibility of sharing special education tablets with SBAC testing. Dr. Title said keeping the key unification project in the operating budget maintains control. Ms. Leonardi said the IPADs must remain dedicated because the applications are proprietary and are in constant use.

Mr. Llewellyn asked about individual school checking accounts; Ms. Munsell said that each school has a student activity account which is not district money. Mr. Llewellyn also asked why an additional 1.8 teachers are needed to cover the World Language proposal; and requested a review of the medical retention balance sheet information for retirees and actives. Dr. Title and Dr. Boice explained that every teacher will still teach 5 periods; students who require reading support will get a full period of that. Ms. Munsell reviewed and explained the medical retention fund balance.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack asked for further detail on the World Language schedule and the need for an additional 1.8 teachers. Dr. Title said a diagram will be provided with more detail.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack asked whether the district ever considered utilizing parents as lunch aides. Mr. Rafferty said it is difficult to find last minute replacements for no-show volunteers, and all volunteers would need to be vetted with the Police Dept.

Mrs. Gerber mentioned that lunch aide parent volunteers were previously used at Osborn Hill. It was a logistical nightmare when people did not show up; unlike a library volunteer where the schedule is extremely flexible.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack and Mr. Llewellyn asked for more information on the cost impact of the additional special education positions. Ms. Leonardi explained that the cost of the additional positions would be off-set by the dean's salary plus 2 stipends, Mrs. Leffert said more detail is provided on page 142; she will provide the average cost for ed trainers, and Ms. Leonardi will provide the budgeted salary breakdown; all deans are listed on the teacher line.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack asked about state requirements regarding ridership and the possibility of providing incentives for opting-out of transportation. Mr. Ficke explained that routes are changed weekly; some stops are shifted to reduce riding time; it is hard to remove stops when many students are at one stop. Dr. Title mentioned that the parking incentives issue was previously explored by the audit and lawyers determined that it may be illegal.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly referred to page 63 and asked about the effect of coaching requirement mandates on athletic directors and middle school coaches. Mr. Coyne responded that the CT Association of Schools keeps all principals,

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including middle school, apprised of the requirements and are kept up to date. Dr. Title mentioned that the rules apply mostly at the high school level; resources can be shared if needed. Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly mentioned that it may be difficult to retain parent lunch aides considering declining PTA membership; she asked about tuition on page 123, and the reduction in line 303. Dr. Title said that tuition on page 123, line 329 is only for special education tuition; line 303 shows the increased revenue from excess cost.

Mr. Fattibene referred to page 78 and asked about retiree premiums. Dr. Title said this is in the budget book in total, but is not broken out. Ms. Munsell added that it is not considered revenue to the BOE, rather it is more of a pass-through to pay the insurance company; retirees pay 100% of the allocation rate.

Mr. Convertito asked about the differential on page 82-83 for heating; the new Special Education positions and their effect on excess cost; and the tracking of legal fees. Dr. Title mentioned that adding and subtracting square footage goes into the fuel cost equation; the replacement of boilers is a factor; heating fuel for all elementary schools has increased; Dr. Title will send the methodology spreadsheet for how this is calculated. Ms. Leonardi explained that administrative salaries cannot be used with the excess cost provision, but legal fees may be mitigated due to crisis avoidance with early intervention practices and support.

Mr. Patten asked if the WFC Dean reduction has any effect on the excess cost and was told no.

Mrs. Gerber asked about the Community Partnership Program and nursing supplies on page 104-106. Ms. Leonardi explained that the Community Partnership Program has been in existence, but the proposal shows the program separated out from the high school; the nursing materials are items such as rubber gloves and bandages, increases may be seen here in schools with higher populations that need these items, such as the ECC.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked whether these funds address the impact of allergies and was told no.

Mrs. Gerber mentioned that her comment regarding the possibility of adding sections at Holland Hill should not be interpreted as advocating for redistricting.

Ms. Karnal asked whether every elementary school was sized for 504 students and was told no. She asked about page 42 regarding personnel recruitment and requested a breakdown of open teaching positions. Mrs. Leffert responded that the recruitment costs are used for hiring options; there is one vacancy in the library and all other vacancies are filled. Interns may fill in as substitutes; interns are finishing up certification requirements at local universities; there are 27 positions with leave-of-absence status that are currently filled with long-term substitutes.

Mr. Convertito asked if per diem for subs had been adjusted. Mrs. Leffert said it had not, but FPS is in line with other districts.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack mentioned that she would like the Board to be involved in the budget early on and had several questions about the PK program and the issue of racial imbalance. Dr. Title said a few students can make a difference in solving the racial imbalance issue as calculated by the state; the PK program has been the least expensive and most educationally advantageous way to do this; the only other possibility is to redistrict.

Mr. Dwyer added that in order to change the PK plan addressing the racial imbalance, the state would have to grant permission to do this.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack questioned the number of secretaries that support the dismissal process and mentioned an app used in Westport that has saved the district money. She also asked about iReady and the rubric; she also asked about the state requirement to identify gifted students, and the gifted test schedule and frequency in past years and for this year. Mr. Rafferty said there is no budgetary impact for improved iReady communication; schools already share iReady information at conferences; Mrs. Liu-McCormack said communication would be helpful; Dr. Title added that current iReady reports are not user-friendly and that a parent committee would perhaps be part of the process to aid in the communication. Mrs. Liu-McCormack mentioned that she wanted to add to music and mentioned her concerns regarding the amount of testing done for gifted identification. Mr. Rafferty said he would provide more information on gifted.

Mr. Llewellyn motioned, seconded by Mr. Fattibene, to suspend the rules and extend the meeting past 11pm.

**Motion Passed: 7-2**

**Favor:** Mrs. Liu-McCormack, Mrs. Gerber, Mr. Patten, Mr. Dwyer, Mr. Convertito, Mr. Llewellyn, Mr. Fattibene

**Opposed:** Ms. Karnal, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly

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Mr. Llewellyn requested a copy of the Whitsons Food Services Contract and asked about the meeting format for the remainder of the meeting and for tomorrow's meeting.

Mr. Dwyer requested Board members to type up motions by tomorrow, early enough, so that all proposals can be properly addressed and adequately costed-out by staff.

Mr. Llewellyn asked about solar panel savings. Dr. Title mentioned that savings from those panels has been subtracted from the electricity accounts at the impacted schools.

Mr. Dwyer asked Board members to voice suggested budget proposals.

Mr Fattibene has no suggested changes to the budget.

Mr. Convertito said, due to the construction at FLHS, he will propose the removal of 2 maintenance projects at FLHS: the parking lot light fixtures and the HVAC sound panel.

Mrs. Gerber has no suggested changes to the budget.

Ms. Karnal said she will propose a change to the FLHS key unification project and may prepare a World Language proposal after further review.

Mr. Patten has no suggested changes to the budget.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack will suggest reducing the carpeting projects at Jennings and FLHS, and requested a cost breakdown for each carpet project at Jennings and FLHS; she might consider a proposal on reducing PK transportation; after further review, she might prepare proposals to add to World Language, Music, and gifted testing.

Mr. Llewellyn said there is an affordability issue with the budget and said he would like to see an audit of the special education program prior to its restructuring.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly requested new pension numbers and was told those will be provided tomorrow morning.

*Public Comment*

Kelly Dunn, Tuckahoe Lane: Support of Special Education Plan.

Bonnie Rotelli, Merritt Street: Support of budget and Special Education Plan.

Christine Vitale, FLHS PTA President: Support of FLHS maintenance projects and budget.

Trudi Durell, Woodcrest Road: Support of budget.

Tricia Donovan, Fairfield Resident: Gifted and World Language programs.

*Adjournment*

Mr. Llewellyn noted that he supports giving all students the help they need and spending in a fiscally responsible way. He said an outside look looking in is better than an inside look.

Mr. Patten motioned to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Karnal.

**Motion Passed: 9-0**

Meeting adjourned 11:21 PM

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