

**Regular Meeting Minutes
Fairfield BoE, January 12, 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 7:59PM. Present were members Eileen Liu-McCormack, Marc Patten, Donna Karnal, Jessica Gerber (arrived 8:30PM), Philip Dwyer, Anthony Calabrese, Trisha Pytko, Jennifer Maxon-Kennelly and John Llewellyn. Others present were Superintendent Dr. David Title, Ludlowe student representatives Mihir Nene and Isabella Frango; Warde student representatives Ashley Agrello and Brittany Shuster; members of the central office leadership team, and approximately 50 members of the public.

Student Reports

Mr. Nene and Ms. Frango reported for Fairfield Ludlowe High School: Seniors are busy with college and internship applications; student surveys are being administered; the Candlelight concert was a success; winter sports are in full swing; badminton and volleyball tournaments took place last Friday; and mid-terms are approaching.

Ms. Shuster and Ms. Agrello reported for Fairfield Warde High School: The Carillon concert performances went very well; mid-terms are approaching; college representatives attended a forum at Warde; a practice lockdown occurred; and a job shadowing experience is being discussed.

Ms. Karnal, Mr. Patten and Mr. Calabrese all mentioned that they enjoyed the amazing concerts at both schools.

Public Comment

Monique Sudikoff, Lockwood Road: Requested a refrain from extensive minutes discussion; supports Holland Hill Ed Specs approval.

Presentations

Presentation of the Superintendent's Proposed 2016-2017 Operating Budget

Dr. Title presented the Superintendent's 2016-2017 Proposed Operating Budget of **\$165,393,561** using a Powerpoint presentation. This is a 2.59 percent increase over 2015-2016. The operating budget allows the offering of a comprehensive and rigorous program of academics, athletics, arts, and extra-curricular activities. Some of the discussion points were:

1. Of the state's 169 cities and towns, Fairfield has moved from 20th to 81st in Per Pupil Expenditures.
2. The average budget increase from 2010-2016 is 2.08%.
3. Budget priorities include: Support Year 2 of the District Improvement Plan, increase the investment in maintenance and technology, adjust account lines to better reflect historical expenditures, and fund all contractual obligations and state/federal mandates.
4. Instructional Program Improvements include a revised Social Studies curriculum and expansion of Spanish to grade 3.
5. Staffing changes result in an overall increase (certified and non-certified) of 5.6 FTE.
6. Additional resource investments and facilities/maintenance include improved internet capacity and grounds maintenance/repair projects.

On July 1, 2016 the district will move to the State of Connecticut Partnership Plan 2.0, allowing for substantial savings for employees and the district. Key features of the Plan include: a mandatory wellness program; all employees will have the same insurance coverage; it functions like a fully insured plan; and rates are adjusted annually based on the experience of 200,000 members.

DRAFT

Dr. Title is proud of the budget and he praised staff for the hard work during budget preparation; in particular - Mrs. Munsell, Mrs. Leffert and Mr. Smoler for their collaborative effort on the health insurance. Both the Powerpoint presentation and the budget will be posted to the district website.

Mr. Dwyer reminded the Board of the budget review process. The budget book is reviewed in order, typically with Revenue first and the Executive Summary of Expenses following. Q&A is posted to the web; he asked the Board to check historical Q&A as posted previously; many questions have already been addressed. The BOE vote must take place on January 28 to allow budget delivery to the First Selectman by February 1, as required by Town Charter. He acknowledged Jan Byrnes for assisting Dr. Title with a creative Powerpoint design.

Mr. Calabrese said he is excited about the savings resulting from health insurance.

Mr. Llewellyn asked about health plan requirements and costs – is the Town is planning to do the same? Dr. Title said the Town is now investigating the plan for its employees; the district is still eligible even if the Town doesn't participate. There are costs with the plan, old claims will have to be paid and the IBNR will be used for this purpose.

Mr. Dwyer said that AON was very helpful throughout this process. Additionally, it proves the district's good relationships with the unions. He acknowledged that Mr. Smoler's assistance helped bring about this change.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked about submitting budget questions.

Mr. Dwyer asked the Board to limit its questions to the Executive Summary for the next meeting; questions should be submitted in writing by Friday at the latest.

<i>Old Business</i>

Approval of Proposed Capital Non-Recurring Projects

Mrs. Gerber moved, Ms. Pytko seconded that the Board of Education approve the Proposed Capital Non-Recurring Projects for 2016-2017.

Motion Passed: 9-0

Dr. Title thanked the Board and said this item will now move to the Board of Selectman for review.

Approval of Holland Hill Educational Specifications

Mrs. Gerber moved, Mr. Patten seconded that the Board of Education approve the Holland Hill Educational Specifications as enclosed. Motion passed 9-0

Dr. Title highlighted 2 changes as recommended by the Board; the mention of sinks in new classrooms on page 4, and a notation regarding PCBs on page 5. He added that the Holland Hill enrollment projections, as identified by Milone & MacBroom, were prepared and a copy provided at the Board table.

Mr. Patten mentioned the spike in enrollment in 22/23. Dr. Title and several Board members said the explanation for the spike is included on page 2; it is due to a rise in birth rates among other factors. It was clarified that sinks will be installed in new classrooms and the principal will determine how the new classrooms will be used.

Mr. Llewellyn asked if technology, per page 7, will apply to the whole school. Dr. Title said it would. Mr. Llewellyn also asked about ADA compliance. Mr. Morabito said the school will be compliant for all programs and the new bathrooms will be accessible. Mr. Llewellyn asked if the new classrooms at Riverfield have sinks and was told yes.

Public Comment:

Trudi Durell, Woodcrest Road: Asked the Board to approve the Ed Specs as presented.

Motion Passed: 9-0

Approval of Proposed Capital Projects

Mrs. Gerber moved, Mr. Calabrese seconded that the Board of Education approve the Proposed Capital Projects for 2016-2017.

Motion Passed: 9-0

Dr. Title said this item will proceed to the BOS. If approved, it advances to the BOF, followed by the RTM in February. The public is welcome to attend all meetings, even the RTM committee meetings.

Approval of Board of Education By-Law Amendments

Item 6Di

Ms. Karnal moved/Mr. Llewellyn seconded that the Board of Education approve the By-Law amendment to Article V, Section 3.

Ms. Karnal said this amendment is helpful; time can become an issue at meetings and things get continuously pushed back.

Mr. Llewellyn said this is an important and good addition. If three Board members request an item on the agenda they should be able to. IT's not inconsistent with the state statute that three Board members can call a special meeting. Other Boards do this.

Mr. Calabrese was not sure this was necessary; it is common courtesy to have a discussion with the Chair; if something needs to be on the night of a meeting, that's why a 2/3 vote is required.

Mr. Dwyer added that agendas are hard to manage and there is difficulty when adding to an already-full agenda. He felt the agenda topics the Board requested were in fact added with the exception being those topics not under the jurisdiction of the Board, such as management initiatives and instructional methodology. He felt a reasonable process is already in place.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack said a regular practice is needed that all can rely on; a By-Law makes it firm and clear. This will ensure the minority voice is heard on topics. Often minority concerns are something the majority is not aware of.

Ms. Karnal added that since she has been on the Board, having Board members be able to add something to an agenda is something that has not happened.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said the question revolves around appropriate topics and use of staff time. This By-Law would circumvent the process already in place. The officers of the Board discern appropriate topics; voices have been heard and decisions have been made. Just because someone is unhappy with a decision doesn't make it a well-founded one.

Ms. Karnal felt there shouldn't be unreasonable requests on staff time. Some items have not always made it to the agenda even when little staff time is required.

Motion Failed: 3-6

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

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

Item 6D ii

Mr. Llewellyn moved, Mrs. Liu-McCormack seconded that the Board of Education approve the By-Law amendment to Article 1, Section 2.

Mr. Llewellyn read his amendment as stated in the enclosure. He felt it was a good mechanism to effectuate how that information will get there.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack agreed with Mr. Llewellyn and said this will improve transparency. Is flexible on the details but thinks the mechanism is important.

Ms. Pytko asked for clarification on “significant time.”

Mr. Llewellyn said that phrase was used before when the bylaw was revised and he would like to quantify it. He cited 2 examples – one, regarding his request to view school checkbook registers; and two, regarding his request for Iready test reports -- where he felt his requests were not responded to in a timely manner. Requests should not be ignored or delayed. It appears that members of the public have more ability, through FOI requests, to get information.

Mr. Dwyer said individual members may not direct staff and this amendment would facilitate that. He disagreed with Mr. Llewellyn’s examples and clarified that his request regarding reviewing all of the checkbook registers at all 17 schools in the district required significant staff time and had to be revised. He was prepared to put Mr. Llewellyn’s request on the agenda for the Board to vote on, but Mr. Llewellyn changed his response and his revised request was addressed. The Board received detailed information regarding the Iready report done in-district, and was also told that using a different report would not be helpful. He imagined that the amount of time that staff were investing in the changes to the healthcare plan took precedence over addressing the Iready request.

Mr. Calabrese felt that the additional language was not necessary; the By-Law as stated is sufficient. The request for the checkbook registers was addressed.

Mr. Llewellyn countered that his revised request regarding the checkbook registers was submitted in April, and he did not receive a response until September. He has yet to receive a response regarding his other request that concerns iReady, and he submitted that one before Thanksgiving. The Iready report is generated through just a few mouse clicks. Some Board members are interested in seeing how our schools are doing on a national level.

Mr. Dwyer responded that Mr. Llewellyn did receive an emailed response, but it was not to his liking and he still has the right under the current By-Law to request that it be placed on a Board agenda; the mechanism that exists does work.

Dr. Title added that the history of this goes beyond the most recent requests. The reason for the By-Law as it is currently written is that some Board members made multiple requests that redirected staff time for hundreds of hours. The implication that the district doesn’t take these requests seriously is flawed. Regarding the IReady request; this is one of many assessments - results of which are planned for Board review once per year, and this was approved by the full Board in July 2015, as outlined in the District Improvement Plan. Dr. Title said he is always reluctant to say no to any request for information, and he doesn’t want anyone having the impression that the district is not responsive.

Mr. Patten said that in his past experience serving on By-Law committees, attorneys have advised to not create restrictions that would affect future Boards. He is not in favor of this amendment.

Mr. Llewellyn disagreed with Dr. Title’s assessment of his request and added that asking for simple requests shouldn’t be an issue. As a Board we have a fiduciary responsibility. He has gotten a lot of questions from parents regarding Iready.

Motion Failed 3-6

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

Oppose: Mr. Patten, Mrs. Gerber, Mr. Dwyer, Mr. Calabrese, Ms. Pytko, Mrs. Maxon-Kelly

Item 6D iii

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly moved, Mrs. Gerber seconded that the Board of Education approve the By-Law amendment to Article 2, Section 3.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly explained this amendment as being more technically accurate. A BOE member may act as a liaison, not a voting member, of a school building committee; the Board may appoint a voting member to the CAC2.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack asked if a Board member was ever a voting member for a school building committee and was told no.

Mr. Patten asked if the Board votes on the member for the CAC2 and Mr. Dwyer said yes; it is his intention, as there is no interested BOE member, to ask the FairTV commission to recommend a member of the public to serve in this capacity.

Motion Passed: 9-0

Item 6D iv

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly moved, Ms. Karnal seconded that the Board of Education approve the By-Law amendment to Article VII.

Motion Passed: 9-0

<i>New Business</i>

Acceptance of the Stratfield Elementary School Project

Mrs. Gerber moved, Mr. Calabrese seconded that the Board of Education accept the Stratfield Elementary School Project #051-0121EA as complete.

Dr. Title said the district is pleased with the project. This vote will allow the project to be closed so that the Town can receive any remaining reimbursement.

Motion Passed: 9-0

First Reading of By-Law Amendment Article V, Section 6

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly thanked Mr. Calabrese and Mrs. Gerber for their help in crafting this new language. The three of them met to discuss new language; she clarified that while this was done in public and was noticed to the Town, it was not an actual meeting. She was dismayed that a member of the public did not extend common courtesy and secretly recorded the discussion without consent, unbeknownst to all present.

Mr. Dwyer clarified that there is no legal requirement for permission to record; Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly re-stated that she would have appreciated being told.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said the overriding interest was to provide clarity to the public; Public Comment is still at the beginning of the meeting for agenda items; speakers are also invited to comment on Old Business and New Business items, later in the meeting and as they occur. She made a special note that the sentence "A member of the public can only speak to a topic once at a meeting." - was struck in error and should remain.

Mr. Patten thanked the members for their efforts and asked if the public had offered any suggestions.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said that Mr. Convertito had reminded the group that a Board meeting is a meeting in public and is not a public meeting. The suggestions made by the public wouldn't go against this By-Law change.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack felt that, as public servants, the Board should understand what the public's concerns are and not just our own concerns, and that we should allow Public Comment for items not on the agenda.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said a Town-Hall style meeting could address this; Mr. Dwyer agreed and said the idea was to have 3 Town-Hall style meetings per year.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack asked if the forums are recorded and was told yes. She said it was helpful for the public to hear one another as well, and expressed concern that speakers may have an immediate issue and may not want to wait potentially months for a Town-Hall forum; it would be easier to work this in to the agenda to provide timely opportunities.

Mrs. Gerber said it is important to remember that the public has multiple opportunities to contact BOE members at any time via email, mail, phone and in person, so no one would have to wait for months without sharing a concern.

Mr. Calabrese agreed. There are other avenues that people have to make themselves heard. At the meeting, he did bring up that other districts do allow public comment on any topic, but his understanding was that some members of the public were abusive when this Board allowed that.

First Reading of Policy 5514 – Students – Administration of Medication in the Schools

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly invited questions on the policy. Jill Mitchell from the Board of Health also attended the meeting and provided input. Per CABE, the proper verbiage is ‘adopted’, rather than ‘approved’, and this is reflected on the last page. Any substantive changes will require Board of Health review. This policy is paired with #5515, and the committee is looking to strike that policy due to redundancy.

Mr. Dwyer said he will plan to have policy #5515 on the next regular agenda to avoid having conflicting policies in place.

Mrs. Gerber asked if the policy had already been approved by the Board of Health and Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said she would check.

Mr. Patten said, speaking as the liaison to the Board of Health (BOH), the BOH wanted the policy to be vetted first by the BOE. Mr. Dwyer asked him to clarify the sequence of the approval process.

Approval of Minutes

Mrs. Gerber moved, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly seconded that the Board of Education approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of December 8, 2015.

Motion Passed: 7-2

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

Oppose: Mrs. Liu-McCormack, Mr. Llewellyn

Committee/Liaison Reports

Ms. Pytko said SEPTA has announced a new teen dance program and an event at Taco Loco.

Mr. Patten said the Board of Health reported on a well-being survey with the state of CT; it is available and there are some good statistics. The Nursing Supervisor for the Town, Joanne Ryan, is retiring and the new Supervisor is Jill Mitchell. The district looks forward to working with her.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said comments on the Social Studies curriculum should be submitted as soon as possible; the window for that is closing soon. The PTA is always looking for new members;

Open Board Comment

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said she enjoyed the Carillon concert; it was amazing.

Mr. Dwyer acknowledged and thanked the administration; they went above and beyond in their work with health insurance; this will take pressure off of programs. The Board owes a debt of gratitude to the staff for this work.

Adjournment

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

Motion Passed: 9-0

Meeting adjourned at 10:05PM.

Respectfully Submitted by
Jessica Gerber
Fairfield BOE
Secretary