

**Special Meeting Minutes
Fairfield BoE, January 15, 2019**

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 Christine Vitale called the Special meeting to order at 7:31PM. Present were members Trisha Pytko, Jennifer Leeper, Philip Dwyer, Jessica Gerber, Christine Vitale, Nick Aysseh, Jennifer Jacobsen, Jennifer Maxon-Kennelly, and Jeff Peterson. Others present were Superintendent Dr. Toni Jones, members of the central office leadership team, and approximately 40 members of the public.

Throughout the meeting, Board members referenced budget page numbers and question numbers from the budget response document.

Discussion of the Superintendent's Recommended 2019-2020 Budget Request

Review Section: Targeted Enhancements

Update on High School Grade Weights

Mr. Ebling and Mr. Hatzis said they had expanded the circle of feedback on the new GPA scale through meetings with PTA, teachers and students. A community Q/A session was held just prior to the BOE meeting. The former Level 0 and criteria for Honors is being examined, with the goal of minimizing negative impact. The course name changes will move forward. There is some concern over the higher weights assigned to AP and to the new maximum level of 5.33 for an A+ in an AP class. Grandfathering is being explored and more research is being done on non-core electives. A quick poll of multiple high schools revealed that all reported GPA; it is a requirement for the FAFSA and the Common App.

Mr. Peterson commented that GPA scale can remain the same even if course names are updated.

Mrs. Jacobsen suggested looking at course enrollment in terms of FTE; how many students are needed to run an AP vs. elective course?

Ms. Pytko: Did the SPED audit result in any budget adjustments for suggested programs? Mr. Mancusi said the final product is still being worked on.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly Q 137: Can you provide more information on moving away from ESS and the investment of the IMPACT and DBT programs?

Michael Saad, Team Leader at Fairfield Warde and Carrie Holskin, Team Leader at Fairfield Ludlowe, made a brief presentation on the IMPACT Program. Each has 20+ years of working in FPS with students and staff. ESS was an external agency that provided clinical services and operated as a clinic. The IMPACT program has many advantages as an internal program including staff cohesiveness, knowing the families and understanding the unique culture in Fairfield. Administration has supported both educational and clinical supports including adequate room space for individual, family and group clinical settings. Ms. Holskin said despite an adjustment period, all students that transferred into IMPACT from ESS have remained with IMPACT and not moved to an Outplacement. The IMPACT program uses Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), which is also used within the high schools, separate from IMPACT. Dr. Jones praised staff for the great work that has been accomplished with this program.

Mr. Mancusi said first-year DBT implementation at Riverfield will cost approximately \$13K, which will be its PD focus. Mind-Up is being implemented at Mill Hill and Sherman schools. Kevin Chase, Mill Hill Principal, reported that the PD for

the Mind-Up Program is scripted and has minimal impact on instruction. Mr. Mancusi added that \$25K is set aside to roll the program out to all elementary schools. Dr. Jones said the goal is to teach students self-regulation when they are starting to feel stress; mindfulness is a component of DBT.

Mr. Aysseh:

What additional staff would be ideal for STEAM? Dr. Jones said STEAM is funded adequately; the biggest challenge is that the STEAM and Gifted programs share staff.

Q 91-92. Several Board Members asked about the middle school CLC-S Program. (Staffing Changes are on pg. 137)

The TMS Complex Learner Cohort for Social/Emotional Learning (CLC-S) program will include DBT and is projected to have 5 or 6 students, with one special education teacher and one licensed clinical social worker. More than 8 students would require a program adjustment. The Riverfield CLC-S students would attend the TMS CLC-S for 6th grade. Exiting out of the program is done on a case by case basis. The high school version of CLC-S is the IMPACT program.

Mr. Dwyer:

- Is there anything in the SPED audit that you want to do next year and is not budgeted for? Mr. Mancusi said the budget reflects what is needed for the high school. Dr. Jones said the middle school evaluation team was not added into the budget.
- Q 129, 36-37: Concerned that Town Boards will think the \$1.3M is new funding rather than re-purposed money that was invested in IMPACT and other programs. Mr. Mancusi said the district has done an excellent job returning students to the district, which is only possible with these programs. Conservatively speaking, without these programs, approximately 16 students would need day treatment or residential programs, averaging \$114,000 each.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly: Is there anything in the SPED audit that will show more tangible savings? Dr. Jones said the consultation, gross tuition and outplaced tuition will all show savings.

Mrs. Vitale: How will evaluation teams work at the high school? Mr. Mancusi said the core initial evaluation team would serve both high schools and include one SPED teacher, one school psychologist, and one speech pathologist. The core team would attend referral PPTs, write evaluation reports, work in consultation with receiving special education teams, and assist with PPTs and Triennials. This would help provide more consistent programming.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly: Why is so much support needed for an initial evaluation team at the high school level? Mr. Mancusi and Ms. Campbell said there is a constant flow of new students into the district in addition to mental health issues that first manifest in high school.

Review Section: Instructional Services

Mrs. Jacobsen:

- Q 47, Please expand on the difficulty of finding science materials. Mr. Cumming said the preferred method around the state is to use online materials rather than texts. The greatest change in NGSS is in the instructional methodology.
- Q 43, Why the increase in STAR Assessment. Mr. Cummings said it was due to the per pupil licensing costs. Accelerated math is not an assessment.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly:

- The post-secondary survey is not in the budget? Dr. Jones said the district is looking at a different method for the survey due to the low number of responses received.

- Is there any technology that can be used for Homebound students with zero cost? Mr. Honahan said the district is looking into expanding the Plato platform. Dr. Jones said this was initially budgeted as a hybrid learning item but ended up being removed from the budget.

Mr. Peterson: Q 68, Can you clarify that hiring teachers to help with crowd control at school events, etc. is for safety? Mr. Ebling said it was due to safety and not additional security concerns.

Review Section: Other Purchased Services

Mr. Peterson:

- Q 72, How many people need the bus route software training? Mrs. Munsell said 3 Transportation staff, the Athletic Dept., and one 1 First Student staff member (First Student is trained at no cost to the district). The Tech department also works with the software interacting with Infinite Campus. If it gets rolled out for field trips, it would be district-wide.
- What is the timeline for NEASC? Mr. Ebling said Warde is under NEASC 2020; the collaborative visit took place in October, and will return in the fall of 2020 to see what was done with the recommendations. Mr. Hatzis said Ludlowe's NEASC visit will take place on March 10, with the accreditation report expected in fall or winter of 2019, after which there is a 2 year window to address recommendations. NEASC reports will be posted.
- Object 321, why the \$7K increase in math? Mr. Cummings said the \$7K on page 82 is for the Math Academy magnet program at McKinley as well as for beginning the program review.

Tuition

Mrs. Jacobsen, Q 57: Can you explain the lower projection for excess cost reimbursement? Mrs. Munsell said the reduction could be a factor of the state allocating less money or there was a greater need, leaving less money in the overall distribution pool.

Mrs. Gerber, Q 107: Can you explain the rise in settlement agreement costs? Mr. Mancusi said there is a need to measure Fairfield's exposure while maintaining a collaborative relationship with parents.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked about the categories of disabilities that result in settlements. Mr. Mancusi said settlements are the result of disagreements over PPT placement. The most expensive settlements are for significant mental health needs, and in elementary, for significant learning needs. Dr. Jones added that CT is a state with the burden of proof. It is necessary to look at the cost of a settlement vs. the cost of litigating all the way through to due process and not prevailing. The prep for a due process hearing could take 5-7 days at \$10K-\$15K per day. If we do not prevail, we also must pay parent attorney fees.

Contracted Services

Mr. Peterson, Q 73: Why is the district moving forward on the \$100K air conditioning plan when the Board has not discussed this in detail? Mr. Cullen said the bid to hire an architectural engineering firm in consult with an HVAC contracting firm, is to produce information on what is needed to get mechanical means of fresh air in each school, not to do the actual work. Dr. Jones said it was her understanding that the Board gave direction for this work, but it can be removed if the Board does not want it. After Board discussion, *Ms. Leeper* said she realizes the Board may not have understood the potential \$100K fee and she will make note for future projects when discussed in Finance Committee.

Mrs. Gerber, Q 105, pg 35 in budget: Why the discrepancy between the numbers in the response document and the budget book? Dr. Jones said 183 is the 18/19 number and 229 is the 19/20 projected number. *Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly*

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added that we are budgeting to spend more than we are spending this year, but it is less than what we thought we were going to need last year. Ms. Munsell said there is an increase in Aquaculture.

Capital

Mr. Peterson/Mr. Dwyer, Q 66 and 131: Is it possible to lease or buy a used interior boom lift? Mr. Cullen said there is no market for buying used and he did not look into leasing. Ownership is preferable, since there are many instances where it could be put to good use. Presently, the district tries to rent when several schools need it. Rental prices and demand is going up, and it is sometimes hard to rent when needed.

Mrs. Jacobsen, Q 64: Will broken Chromebooks be replaced? Ms. Byrnes said Chromebooks are in a pattern of constant recycle.

Mr. Dwyer: Is the number of repairs what you expected? Ms. Byrnes said the number is under what was expected.

Mr. Peterson, Q 80: Why the increase in unit price? Ms. Byrnes said the vendor noted the possibility of a 10% tariff increase. Normally, there is a model change in late spring – will be buying same or similar model. All students will be using the same bundle even if slightly different units.

Mr. Aysseh, pg 43 in budget – Was the elementary school wireless project not completed? Ms. Byrnes said that is a misprint – it will be completed in 19/20 as expected.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly: Will the Board vote on the online text for FCS Curriculum? Mr. Cummings said yes.

Mrs. Vitale confirmed that the 1/22 budget meeting will include Board member recommended changes to the budget, if there are any.

Mr. Peterson requested that line item 58599 accurately reflect a \$25K increase.

Mrs. Jacobsen: page 15 in responses, please share what the 10% give-back will be going towards? Dr. Jones said the goal is always to get money back to the schools. This year, actual enrollment is used and is not adjusted after October 1.

Public Comment:

Suzanne Miska, Ryegate Road: Concerned that the \$100K bid for air conditioning is not educationally driven.

Bob Smoler, FEA President: Supports budget. Requests that staff be involved with determining sped staff caseload guidelines.

Mrs. Maxon Kennelly moved, Mr. Peterson seconded to adjourn.

Motion Passed: 9-0

Meeting adjourned 9:50PM