

**Regular Meeting Minutes  
Fairfield BoE, June 11, 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.

## Voting Summary

### Call to order of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Education and Roll Call

Vice-Chairman Nick Aysseh called the Regular meeting to order at 7:34PM. Present were members Trisha Pytko (arrived 9:35PM), Jennifer Leeper, Philip Dwyer, Jessica Gerber, Christine Vitale (arrived 8:17PM), Jennifer Jacobsen, Jennifer Maxon-Kennelly and Jeff Peterson. Others present were Superintendent Dr. Toni Jones, members of the central office leadership team, and approximately 100 members of the public.

Vice Chairman Aysseh asked the Board for unanimous consent to move the Student Recognition and the Mill Hill presentation to just prior to Public Comment; the Board agreed (Mrs. Vitale and Ms. Pytko were not present at this time).

Following Public Comment, Chairman Vitale asked the Board for unanimous consent to move the Mill Hill Ed Spec vote to just prior to the School Climate Survey presentation; the Board agreed (Ms. Pytko was not present at this time).

### New Business

#### *Approval to Change the Capacity in Mill Hill Ed-Specs*

Mr. Peterson moved/Mrs. Gerber seconded the recommended motion “that the Board of Education change the capacity outlined in the Mill Hill Educational Specifications from 504 to 441 to align with funding approved by the Board of Selectman and Board of Finance.”

Following some discussion, Mr. Peterson moved/Mr. Dwyer seconded to call the question. Motion failed 4-4 (Mr. Dwyer, Mrs. Gerber, Mr. Aysseh, Mr. Peterson in favor; Ms. Leeper, Mrs. Vitale, Mrs. Jacobsen, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly against).

The original motion passed 5-3 (Mrs. Gerber, Mrs. Vitale, Mr. Aysseh, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly, Mr. Peterson in favor; Ms. Leeper, Mr. Dwyer, Mrs. Jacobsen against. Ms. Pytko was not present for this vote).

Chairman Vitale asked the Board for unanimous consent to move the Food Service items to just prior to the ECC site discussion and vote; the Board agreed.

#### *Food Services Program and Financial Summary*

##### *Approval of Participation in the Healthy Food Certification Program*

Mr. Dwyer moved/Ms. Pytko seconded the recommended motion “that the Board of Education approve participation in the Healthy Food Certification Program for the school year 2019-20 as follows:

- **Healthy Food Option:** Pursuant to CGS Section 10-215f, the board of education certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction, and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2019, through June 30, 2020. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to, school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or by non-school organizations and groups.

- Food and Beverage Exemptions: The board of education will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Standards, and the sale of beverages not listed in section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes, provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the food and beverage items are not sold from a vending machine or school store.”

Motion passed 9-0.

### **Old Business**

#### *Approval of ECC site for 2020*

Mr. Aysseh moved/Ms. Leeper seconded the recommended motion “that the Board of Education approve the ECC Site Timeline.”

Mr. Dwyer moved/Ms. Leeper seconded to postpone action on this item until the next Regular BoE meeting.

Mr. Aysseh moved/Mrs. Jacobsen seconded to suspend the rules and extend the meeting to 11:15PM. Motion passed 7-2 (Ms. Leeper, Mrs. Gerber, Mrs. Vitale, Mr. Aysseh, Mrs. Jacobsen, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly, Mr. Peterson in favor; Ms. Pytko, Mr. Dwyer against).

Motion to postpone passed 6-3 (Ms. Pytko, Ms. Leeper, Mrs. Gerber, Mrs. Jacobsen, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly, Mr. Peterson in favor; Mr. Dwyer, Mrs. Vitale, Mr. Aysseh against).

### **Approval of Minutes**

Mrs. Gerber moved/Ms. Pytko seconded the recommended motion “that the Board of Education approve the May 7, 2019 Special meeting minutes and the May 21, 2019 Regular meeting minutes.”

Motion passed 9-0.

### **Adjournment**

Mr. Aysseh moved/Ms. Pytko seconded the recommended motion “that this Regular Meeting of the Board of Education adjourn.” Motion passed 9-0. Meeting adjourned at 11:12PM.

## **Detailed Minutes**

Vice Chairman Aysseh asked the Board for unanimous consent to move the Student Recognition and the Mill Hill presentation to just prior to Public Comment; the Board agreed (Mrs. Vitale and Ms. Pytko were not present at this time).

### **Presentation**

#### *Student Recognition: Warde Dance Team.*

Fairfield Warde Athletic Director, Mr. Fry, recognized the Warde Dance Team for its outstanding achievement of winning the State Championship for the 6<sup>th</sup> year in a row.

#### *Mill Hill Update*

MHBC Chairman, Mr. Quinn and Colliers representative, Mr. Warrington updated the Board on the recent BoF and BoS vote approving \$21.5M in construction costs and \$500K for unknown remediation. Every school built in the 70’s has needed some sort of remediation. The ed-specs must correctly reflect the project. Funds not used for remediation are returned and may not be used for another purpose.

**Public Comment:**

The following spoke against aspects of the Homework Policy:

FPS Staff: Tina Brown, John Whaley, Greg Hatzis, Jeremy Timperanza, Ben Francois, Amy Macintosh, Lauren Marchello, Jane Vigliotti, Whitney Walker, Frank Sahagian, Bob Smoler, Signe Wennberg-Merrit,

Fairfield Residents: Courtney Bradley

Recurring public comment themes included: (1) disproportionate negative impact on students who struggle; (2) students will seek gold star instead of learning; (3) feeling the Board's lack of trust in teacher ability to assign homework properly; and (4) posting requirement not always possible.

The following spoke against the ECC site timeline:

FPS Staff: Jeriann Mitchell

Fairfield Residents: Katie Flynn, Kelly Imschweiler, Kelly McWhinnie, Erin Lopez, Mary Lupo, Randi Cohen, Jen Cruz

Recurring public comment themes included the lack of NSS and HH parent input, and the need for a long-term growth plan.

Chairman Vitale asked the Board for unanimous consent to move the Mill Hill Ed Spec vote to just prior to the School Climate Survey presentation; the Board agreed (Ms. Pytko was not present at this time).

*Approval to Change the Capacity in Mill Hill Ed-Specs*

Mr. Peterson moved, Mrs. Gerber seconded that the Board of Education change the capacity outlined in the Mill Hill Educational Specifications from 504 to 441 to align with funding approved by the Board of Selectman and Board of Finance.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly thanked Chairman Vitale and Dr. Jones for representing the Board's interests at the BoS and BoF meetings and in particular, thanked Dr. Jones for providing all the data and representing the Board's vision and leadership very well. She strongly objected to the reprehensible accusation made against the Board Chair and Dr. Jones, that they were responsible for ripping apart an elementary community. Mrs. Vitale appreciated the support and apologized that the decision didn't go another way.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly thanked the BoF for approving the much needed renovation and asked about the possibility of somehow adding even 1 more classroom while staying within the \$22M. Dr. Jones said the biggest issue is the June 30 deadline; Mrs. Vitale said caution is needed for unknown surprises that may affect the project budget; Mr. Quinn said the schematic design is preliminary and everything is an estimate until bids come in.

Mr. Dwyer asked the building committee to keep the BoE apprised of any possibility of adding classrooms as the project gets further along. Mr. Aysseh said the only way to move the project forward right now is to vote on the motion – the only way to realistically get more classrooms is to take something out of the existing plans.

Mr. Dwyer said the BoE and 3 other Boards agreed on a 24-classroom building in 2010. He was disturbed by the misinformation presented by the BoS and the BoF. Mr. Dwyer apologized to the Superintendent, FPS staff, the Board Chair and the Building committee for the obvious disrespect they endured. While he wants and expects the project to move forward, he will vote against the motion to send the message that they made a mistake, they took political considerations rather than factual. A year ago, it was the ledge, then they moved on to question traffic, enrollment projections, facility plan, and finally the Board's vote on the plan. It is nonsensical to vote in 2019 for something that

needs more information about where people are living in 2021. The decision is for the entire town and the classrooms are needed. The state gives the BoE the mandate for these types of decisions; that is not a decision of the BoF. Clearly, the Building Committee proved the extra classrooms would be cost effective.

Mrs. Gerber also supported the 504 and was very disappointed with the vote and with the way in which the doubt about the validity of the request was expressed. She does not want to slow down or stop the renovation work, even though the district is losing space with the new plan and is not an expansion. She will vote to approve the ed specs and wants Mill Hill to get the school they deserve.

Mr. Peterson agrees with many of the statements and also favors a 504.

Mr. Peterson moved, Mr. Dwyer seconded to call the question.

**Motion Failed: 4-4**

Favor: Mr. Dwyer, Mrs. Gerber, Mr. Aysseh, Mr. Peterson

Oppose: Ms. Leeper, Mrs. Vitale, Mrs. Jacobsen, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly

Mrs. Jacobsen thanked Mr. Quinn and agreed the project needs to move forward, but she will not support the motion. She shared the sentiment of the grossly unacceptable treatment of the Board Chair and Superintendent. The BoF decides the money and they need to stay in their lane and not get into the business of our plans or what the BoE feels is necessary for the children and staff of this district.

Ms. Leeper agreed with Mr. Dwyer and Mrs. Jacobsen and will be voting against the motion. It would send a confusing message that the BoE approves a 441, even though a 504 is best for the foreseeable future and beyond. The disrespectful treatment endured by the Board Chair and Superintendent is a deterrent to volunteers running for Board positions.

Mrs. Vitale said although she supports a 504, she will be voting to change the ed spec and will stand behind the work of the building committee. She shares the Board sentiment and thanked everyone for advocating for a 504.

*Public Comment:*

*Mr. Quinn, MHBC Chair: Fears a tie vote and requested the Board consider fixing Mill Hill.*

**The original Motion Passed: 5-3**

Favor: Mrs. Gerber, Mrs. Vitale, Mr. Aysseh, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly, Mr. Peterson

Oppose: Ms. Leeper, Mr. Dwyer, Mrs. Jacobsen

*(Ms. Pytko was not present for this vote.)*

*School Climate Survey*

Dr. Jones presented a summary of the school climate survey results. The focus this year was to increase parent and staff response rates, consolidate the teacher and parent surveys into one annual survey, and automate survey calculations. Response rates showed a large increase, leading to higher quality building level input. Dr. Jones reviewed survey results of parents, staff and students. Overall results are posted to the website. Many positive aspects were highlighted as well as areas that may need more focus. Generally:

- Over 90% of Parents felt their child's school is a great place to learn and their child likes school. An area of focus is communication.
- Over 90% of Teachers and Staff said teachers support one another and that students are getting a high quality education. An area of focus is student behavior.

- Over 90% of elementary students like their schools and have friends. Areas of focus include understanding the rules. Over 90% of secondary students said teachers listen and there are plenty of opportunities to get involved. Areas of focus include making learning interesting.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked whether any questions were dropped from the previous survey and hoped that secondary administrators will pay attention to the response about having one adult to talk to. Dr. Jones said similar questions were eliminated as well as many demographic questions, which previously went unanswered.

Mr. Dwyer is pleased with the positive results, as well as the information on things to work on.

Mrs. Vitale asked about next steps. Dr. Jones said the information will be used for site improvement. Mr. Mancusi added that a district climate meeting is planned in the fall. Parents will be part of the team that will highlight areas that help students feel more connected.

Mrs. Jacobsen noted that the legislature just passed a comprehensive school climate law.

#### *Middle School Schedule Update*

Mr. Cummings and the middle school principals presented an update on the middle school schedule. Fulfilling FPS' Learning Principles and expectations of recently adopted curriculum is one of the reasons that prompted the schedule review. The schedule review process began in September 2018 and included the review of 12 middle school schedules, high school student interviews, site visits and a parent survey. Core commitments include a team model, time for interventions and PD, lunch by grade level and equity to accessibility in all subjects. Some of the challenges include adapting proposals to current contracts, budgetary impacts and the support of intervention offerings as well as the social and emotional health of students. Next steps in the process include addressing community concerns, finalizing schedule drafts and an updating the Board in November 2019.

Mr. Cummings, Ms. Tiley, Dr. Rosato and Mr. Formato responded to Board questions:

- Class size is an issue for contractual obligations.
- Early intervention was a big driver. Much has changed in the 20 years since the schedule was last reviewed.
- Twelve area middle school schedules in schools from Virginia to Connecticut were reviewed. Those with a modified block schedule appeared the least satisfied. High school freshmen that were interviewed were in favor of the block schedule.

Mrs. Maxon Kennelly asked that open time disallow the use of electronics. Ms. Leeper said she is looking forward to hearing more about the enrichment blocks. Mrs. Jacobsen said the new graduation requirements may lead to more opportunities.

Chairman Vitale asked the Board for unanimous consent to move the Food Service items to just prior to the ECC site discussion and vote; the Board agreed.

#### **New Business:** *Food Services Financial Summary*

Mrs. Munsell presented the FPS Food Services financial statement and said the program is doing well financially and there is no recommendation to increase lunch prices. Food Services Director, Ms. O'Malley reported that participation has increased. Schools with lower participation rates were identified and changes were implemented with the help of a

nutrition innovator. The current focus schools are Holland Hill and North Stratfield. A registered dietician is available for special dietary needs and nutrition education for 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade classes.

#### *Approval of Participation in the Healthy Food Certification Program*

Mr. Dwyer moved, Ms. Pytko seconded that the Board of Education approve participation in the Healthy Food Certification Program for the school year 2019-20 as follows:

- **Healthy Food Option:** Pursuant to CGS Section 10-215f, the board of education certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction, and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2019, through June 30, 2020. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to, school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or by non-school organizations and groups.
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**Motion Passed: 9-0**

#### **Old Business**

##### *Approval of ECC site for 2020*

Mr. Aysseh moved, Ms. Leeper seconded that the Board of Education approve the ECC Site Timeline.

Mrs. Vitale recapped that ECC would move from the Warde and Stratfield sites to Holland Hill and North Stratfield in the 2021-2022 school year. The Board continued with extensive discussion on this topic and thanked ECC staff and parents for their input and presence at meetings.

Mr. Aysseh noted that the decision to move ECC was predicated on a rubric that included Mill Hill as a 504, which is no longer the case. He suggested amending the timeline, to put it on pause until Milone and MacBroom complete a feasibility study.

Mr. Peterson said it is the right decision to bifurcate the program but he is reluctant to abandon the Warde site. Milone and MacBroom should also be charged to find which facility is most appropriate for the program.

Ms. Leeper agreed to maintain Warde as well, given the pace of growth. She apologized for flip-flopping on the issue and would not support a 3<sup>rd</sup> site that only had a few sections. Milone and MacBroom will need parameters on distributing sections.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly confirmed that the idea to abandon the Warde site came from the Board and not from staff. She believed that NSS and HH are better sites for the program than Stratfield. Discussion on this has taken place over the past year and is not a rushed decision, but she was in favor of postponing the vote to the next meeting in order to respond to the many questions that parents have, and to allow time for Mr. Aysseh to craft his amended motion.

Dr. Jones said the timeline for the upcoming year is set, even if the Board delays a vote until August. All of the work on the timeline was predicated on having a 504 at Mill Hill, but there is good information in all of the work that was done. Mrs. Vitale added that Milone and MacBroom could prepare scenarios over the summer.

Mrs. Jacobsen supported maintaining the Warde site, postponing the vote and rethinking the charge to Milone and MacBroom. A new 10-year projection with building utilization is needed. Ms. Pytko agreed and would rather not vote tonight; she maintained support for a single site.

Mr. Dwyer was not in favor of postponing the decision, but supported amending the motion appropriately.

The Board discussed keeping ECC as one site by either adding a second floor to the current ECC/Warde site, or moving to a school location. Dr. Jones commented that a second story for such young children would most likely not pass the fire code. Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said moving the ECC to a school location ultimately results in taking someone else's school. Mr. Aysseh suggested taking a fresh look at the Long Range Facilities Plan.

Mr. Dwyer moved, Ms. Leeper seconded to postpone action on this item until the next Regular BoE meeting.

Dr. Jones mentioned that the ECC program will be entering its 3<sup>rd</sup> year and is successful at that location.

Mr. Aysseh moved, Mrs. Jacobsen seconded to suspend the rules and extend the meeting to 11:15PM.

**Motion Passed: 7-2**

Favor: Ms. Leeper, Mrs. Gerber, Mrs. Vitale, Mr. Aysseh, Mrs. Jacobsen, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly, Mr. Peterson

Oppose: Ms. Pytko, Mr. Dwyer

**Motion to Postpone Passed: 6-3**

Favor: Ms. Pytko, Ms. Leeper, Mrs. Gerber, Mrs. Jacobsen, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly, Mr. Peterson

Oppose: Mr. Dwyer, Mrs. Vitale, Mr. Aysseh

*First Reading of Homework Policy*

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly acknowledged the comments from the public and noted that any staff member that is surprised by the policy should take that issue up with administration and building leadership. The policy committee has been working on this for several months and was formed in part from her own professional teacher experience. Professional Development will be vital for policy implementation and she encouraged staff to get all comments to the Policy Committee. The BoE gives direction to administration through policy; almost all of the wording is from other districts and is hardly groundbreaking. The headmasters surveyed staff and received feedback; many were in favor. Even with 21<sup>st</sup> century skill requirements, kids haven't changed and that is the basis here.

Mrs. Leeper expressed grave reservations with the policy and will provide specific feedback. Mr. Dwyer added that he is not in favor of a prescriptive policy, rather the reliance should be on professional staff to implement in each unique classroom. Mr. Dwyer asked if the policy change was requested from administration or if it was due to a change in law. Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said no, the change is a result of parent feedback and the observations of the 3 policy members.

*Discussion: Updated Draft Waterfall Schedule*

Dr. Jones noted that Sherman school Phase IV shows up in the Waterfall at \$3M, comprised of \$1.3M for the roof, \$1M for the stage mechanical and HVAC controls, \$500K contingency and \$115K escalation.

Mrs. Jacobsen questioned line 27 – why is the full \$200K represented when it was adjusted at the last meeting? Mr. Papageorge said the \$200K in that line is for next year's improvements to WFC. Dr. Jones added that there were originally two separate \$200K's; it shows up again on line 31 in 20/21.

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Mrs. Jacobsen also asked about the FLHS bathrooms and questioned the pricing that has remained the same since 2013. Mr. Papageorge said the FLHS bathrooms are an issue but were moved back due to issues with the OHS roof; he will check on the pricing.

Mrs. Vitale said the Waterfall will again be on the August agenda. Mr. Dwyer suggested adding a line in the waterfall for air conditioning, in order to make it clear to the BoF that this item is being pursued.

### Approval of Minutes

Mrs. Gerber moved, Ms. Pytko seconded that the Board of Education approve the May 7, 2019 Special meeting minutes and the May 21, 2019 Regular meeting minutes.

**Motion Passed: 9-0**

### Superintendent Report

Dr. Jones reminded everyone that graduation is Friday at 5:00PM. Mr. Papageorge is continuing to work with WFC and he will have an update for the Board at the next meeting.

### Open Board Comment

Mr. Aysseh and Mrs. Vitale thanked Dr. Jones for all of her positive contributions and wished her Good Luck.

### Public Comment

Bonnie Rotelli, Fairfield Resident: ECC is a collaborative program and most beneficial to students. The decision on location should not be rushed and all options should be explored.

### Adjournment

Mr. Aysseh moved, Ms. Pytko seconded that this Regular Meeting of the Board of Education adjourn.

**Motion Passed: 9-0**

Meeting adjourned at 11:12PM

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