

MAR 29 2011

FAIRFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION
 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Tuesday, February 8, 2011

APPROVED

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Education held Tuesday, February 8, 2011, at 501 Kings Highway East, 2nd Floor Board Conference Room.

1. Chairman Mr. John Mitola called the Regular Meeting to order at 8:15 p.m. Other Board members present were: Mrs. Catherine Albin, Mrs. Sue Brand, Mr. Paul Fattibene, Mrs. Pamela Iacono, Mr. Tim Kery, Mr. Perry Liu and Ms. Stacey Zahn. Mrs. Sue Dow was absent. Also in attendance were Superintendent Dr. David Title, Fairfield Ludlowe HS Student Representative Allison Reich, Fairfield Warde HS Student Representative Stephanie Teixeira and members of the administrative staff. Approximately 50 people comprised the remainder of the audience.
2. Mr. Mitola led the Board and audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. A Moment of Silence was held for former selectman Carl Dickman who passed away recently.
4. Mrs. Brand moved, seconded by Ms. Zahn that the Board of Education approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 11, 2011.

Mrs. Brand asked to have a revision made on Page 2, just above Board questions and comments followed. Mrs. Brand had a very specific comment relative to the description that the Gifted Program was using to identify gifted. She said it should include more than just intellectual. That correction will be made to the minutes.

Motion carried: 7:0:1. Ms. Zahn abstained.

5. Student/Committee/Liaison Reports-

- ◆ Allison Reich reported that Fairfield Ludlowe HS mid-terms will finish tomorrow, seniors continue to hear back from colleges, and the Girls Basketball Team and Boys Wrestling Team started a drive to collect toothpaste and toothbrushes for various charities.
- ◆ Stephanie Teixeira reported that Fairfield Warde HS just finished mid-terms and report cards went out today. Cheerleading took first place in FCIACs, and three girls received the FCIAC title. Wrestling has FCIACs on Friday. Boys and Girls Ludlowe versus Warde Basketball game is next Tuesday. Eighth grade parents' night was held last week, and it went really well. Fairfield Warde HS will be aired on the Challenge. They defeated Amity and West Hill in the semi-finals.
- ◆ Mrs. Albin – No report
- ◆ Mrs. Brand – No report
- ◆ Mr. Fattibene reported that the Transportation Safety Advisory Committee met on a number of issues, and they are in the process of being decided.
- ◆ Mrs. Iacono reported that the Special Projects Standing Building Committee went before the Board of Finance tonight, and funding for the Sherman project was approved unanimously. It will now move forward to the RTM for a vote at the end of the month. The full project cost was \$4.4 million and due to FEMA regulations was capped at \$1.9 million. The committee went before the Board of Selectmen and asked them to add in the soft costs above the \$1.9. They agreed and bumped it to \$2.2 million. The project was scaled down to renovating the administrative area to address safety concerns, to better facilitate special education rooms and to improve the nurse's facility. If this is approved by the RTM, we will be able to do the HVAC system throughout the building and will also be able to add the second serving line in the cafeteria. She thanked the Board of Finance for working with the Board of Ed tonight by holding a meeting concurrent to this one, knowing that the Board of Ed needed to be present at that meeting and working with us for an earlier meeting start time.

- ◆ Mr. Kery reported that he would defer the majority of the Facilities Committee report to later on the agenda. He commented that it was the sense of the body of the Facilities Subcommittee that the Board should have further discussion about the enrollment projections from MGT and that will be on a future Board of Ed agenda.
- ◆ Mr. Liu reported that Bill Sapone, Chairman of the Fairfield Woods Building Committee, had some concerns about whether the snow days being made up during the April break will delay some of the construction. He spoke with Dr. Title and Malkin Construction and they will work around it. The litigation hearing has been postponed to March 3.
- ◆ Mr. Mitola – No report
- ◆ Ms. Zahn – No report

6. Superintendent's Report-

Dr. Title stated that there have been six snow days. The first four snow days will be made up at the end of June, making the last day of school Thursday, June 23. Additional snow days will be made up during April vacation. Therefore, school will be in session on Monday and Tuesday of April vacation. There is one more day that can be made up that week and beyond that, days would have to be added on to the end of June.

- District Improvement Strategy for the Fairfield Public Schools-

Dr. Title stated that since he came to Fairfield he has been working on an "entry plan," trying to learn as much as he could about the district. He conducted one-on-one and small group interviews, observed classroom instruction in every school, met with representatives from each PTA and read a wide range of documents to help him understand the history, tradition and culture of this community and school system. Outlined in this document is a broad strategy with step by step detail about each area. One of the things he heard in his discussions was a feeling that the district has many initiatives going on and it is really hard to do them all well. He hopes this will outline a strategy to focus our energy for future changes before implementation. We have a very good school system; but if we don't work on continuously improving it, we will fall behind. Our goal is to ensure that all students acquire the skills and knowledge outlined in our comprehensive, rigorous instructional program. If we improve instruction, then student achievement will improve. The question then becomes what is the best way to get improved instruction in the classroom to improve student learning. Dr. Title identified four areas of concentration: strengthen skills of teachers and staff, strengthen skills of school leaders, alignment of the system horizontal and vertical, and sufficient and well-utilized resources. Concentrating our resources of time, energy and dollars into these four areas will yield the greatest impact on student learning. Fewer change efforts done well are more effective than many change efforts done not as well.

Board comments and questions followed.

7. New Business

A. Presentation of High School Media Technology Curriculum-

Dr. Gary Rosato recognized the two library/media specialists Regina Krieger from Fairfield Ludlowe HS and Gwyn Gartsu from Fairfield Warde HS who have worked very closely with Jeff Burt, the curriculum leader in this area, to put these four documents together. Both of our high schools are fully outfitted with video studios and as such the students are afforded the opportunity to have hands-on experience in video production.

Mr. Burt gave a brief overview of each of the courses: broadcast journalism, documentary production, movie production and video production. The course goals range from basic skills such as editing video and audio footage to more complex skills such as working cooperatively in groups as a production crew. These goals are also focused through essential questions, not just editing film and learning how to work a camera. In terms of assessment, again, from basic camera angles and setting up tripods and sound systems, to how to pitch a story to your peers effectively, how to make the subject of a documentary at ease, and how to build a rapport with the

people you interview. There are no state standards for these courses; we use 21st Century Skills and the ISTE skills sets, which is the International Society for Technology in Education. Mr. Burt showed a brief film with the students telling what each course consists of, what they learned, and what they liked about each of the courses.

Board comments and questions followed.

- B. Mrs. Brand moved, seconded by Ms. Zahn that the Board of Education approve student participation in the RYASAP 2011 Profile of Student Life Survey.

Ms. Leonardi stated that the RYASAP survey is done every three years. The survey will be conducted with one middle school grade and one high school grade. It is about looking at developmental assets; the assets that help and strengthen students to make good choices about things like risky behavior, substance abuse, substance use, and engaging in other social issues that could present dangerous opportunities for kids. What is powerful about this survey is that the data is used by many different people. Currently there is a town task force that has used the RYASAP data, our health educators use this data, and our counseling centers use it. It is perception data. It is a very short survey to take, easy to administer and lends data that we use not only as a school district but as a community to address some of these issues for our kids. She recommended approval of this survey.

Ms. Zahn commented on how many groups use the information that comes out of this survey and encouraged Board members to approve this.

Board comments and questions followed regarding which grades will get the survey, how honest students are, how accuracy is determined, and who else other than RYASAP and Fairfield have access to this data.

Motion carried: 8:0:0.

- C. Discussion of Roof Warranty Extension Project – Roger Sherman Elementary School, North Stratfield Elementary School, Osborn Hill Elementary School, Riverfield Elementary School and Holland Hill Elementary School

Mr. Cullen stated that he has been working with the roofing contractor and the consultant who was awarded the preventative maintenance program for all of the roofs, and it was brought to his attention that if we were to perform some repairs on these five school roofs, just under \$1 million, the manufacturer would extend the warranty by five years. That decision needs to be made within 6 months of the warranties running out. Sherman and North Stratfield run out in August 2011 and the others follow right after that. We need to make a decision if this is a priority and if we would like to extend the warranty on these five roofs and bring it forward to the other town bodies.

Mr. Mitola stated that the idea is to extend the warranties and then plan to replace these roofs over a period of time so they don't have to be done all at once at a cost of about \$6 million plus.

Dr. Title stated that there is a spreadsheet with the cost of the roof warranties in the Long Range Facilities Plan that is the next item on the agenda. If the Board decides not to do the roof warranties and go for replacement, the warranty work would need to be taken out of the Long Range Facilities Plan and roof replacement put in.

Mr. Liu stated that the facilities subcommittee has been talking about these roofs for a long time; and he thought this was a recommendation, something that we had to take advantage or we could be dealing with leaking roofs, etc. He is now confused why this did not get on the capital improvement projects list that was voted on.

Dr. Title stated that the numbers for the roof warranty extension are in the proposed Long Range Facilities Plan but not in the capital improvement plan the Board voted on. There was a discussion about putting all of the roof warranty extension work in, and we did not think the town would bond that. It is repair work, and we were not sure whether this qualified.

Board comments and questions followed regarding other roofing contractors who do this type of work, what the need is, what the warranty extension entails, if this is put in would other things need to be taken out, and deciding if we want to make this a priority within the scope of what we are being told we can spend.

D. Discussion of Draft Long Range Facilities Plan and Elementary Schools-Space Deficiencies Report (Pre-Conceptual Plan Cost Estimate)

Dr. Title stated that this is a different format than previously, making it as simple and clear as possible. The distinction between what is short-term bonding and what is long-term bonding has been eliminated and is all in one column. The first page is a summary that lines up with the four year window that the First Selectman put out in August. There is a summary sheet which shows by school, by year, the dollars we are estimating and then each succeeding page gives an overview of what the project is. An asterisk represents projects that may qualify for short-term bonding. At the bottom of the first page is a gross amount by year, an estimate of what the state reimbursement is and then a net total. The major projects were estimated before the MGT Capacity Study was done. They were basically to do core upgrades and where portable classrooms were going to be replaced, annex buildings have been priced out. When the MGT Study came out and identified the core issues, the facilities subcommittee was asked to review it and go through what it would cost to remedy all of the deficiencies identified in the report with Stratfield type additions, not annex buildings. That information is found on Enclosure No. 6. All of the estimates to remedy the space deficiencies are significantly more expensive than what is in Enclosure No. 5. Enclosure No. 5 is smaller in scope and is for annex buildings as opposed to additions. Under this proposal the gross total for the four years is \$49 million+ and that includes short-term plus long-term. In the plan the First Selectman put forward that total was \$27 million. Without remedying the MGT deficiencies, we are already \$22 million over. Knowing that we are way over the proposed number, there was some feeling that we should put out what our real needs are and what it will cost. That is why there are two documents. The feeling of the committee was to move something forward and this is our best estimate. If the Board decides to go with the numbers on Enclosure No. 6, any project for 2012-13 or later needs to be adjusted for construction costs inflation.

Mr. Kery, chair of the facilities subcommittee, stated that at this moment we are 900 seats short of delivering the program at the elementary level. In his capital plan the First Selectman allocated to the district \$19 million plus a maximum of \$2 million a year for the next four years in small project funds for a total of \$27 million. We are somewhere around \$38 million after reimbursement to fix these problems. There are three options: (1) code and safety updates, limited core facility updates and replace the portables with portables, (2) code and safety updates, limited core facility updates and replace the portables with a pod or annex and (3) code and safety updates, replace portables with a permanent structure and compliment that with comprehensive facility updates. The thought of the subcommittee is that this is an issue that will require input from all the town bodies. The Board could engage a firm to evaluate all of our facilities to determine if we can get more out of the existing buildings. They could create a master facilities plan for our district that would be very comprehensive and accurate in terms of cost estimates. We could also utilize the expertise available on the Town Facilities Commission and ask them to be partners. Hiring a firm to create a master facilities plan for the district is pointless if there is no desire by town officials to act on any of the recommendations that would result from this type of study.

Approximately 45 minutes of Board questions and comments followed regarding which enclosure to use, how to move forward, getting more precise numbers, having an architectural study done to evaluate all of our buildings and wasting money on the study if the Town is not willing to act on the recommendations, the need to have a Town-wide discussion with the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance and the RTM, being prudent to get a reliable, professional and accurate assessment of the costs for what we need, the cost to hire a professional estimator, where we get the money to pay for an estimator or an architect, prioritizing projects, making an educated presentation to the Town about what we are up against, doing maintenance this year and taking the rest of year to work on projections, the audit, and the impact of putting this off for another year.

Mr. Mitola stated that the issue is what to move forward for 2011-12 and then what our longer range plan is thereafter.

Board comments and questions continued regarding the need to have a definitive process, if holding off on Riverfield will put it in a danger zone since the portables are going to dissolve underneath us and we are going to have kids that need space, the possibility of looking at this as a one year plan and trying to convince the town to collaborate with us to collect more information, the need to understand what the process is going to be before taking the next step, prioritizing these projects to try to give some rank order or in the event we have to make some decisions as to which ones can move forward and which ones cannot, getting some indication as to what the ramifications are of delaying these, and the need to present a plan that addresses all of our needs with an understanding that we may not get that, focusing on one year at a time, incorporating the numbers from Enclosure No. 6 into Enclosure No. 5 and prioritizing within this list, deciding whether to move forward the limited pod structure in Enclosure No. 5 or to move forward with a full renovation. Those are two different things that need to be decided before moving forward with either one.

Mr. Mitola stated that this will be a voting item on the next Board meeting; it may not be approved that night, but there will be a motion and further discussion on the Long Range Facilities Plan.

- E. Mrs. Iacono moved, seconded by Mrs. Brand that the Board of Education Approve the Amendment to the Racial Imbalance Plan as outlined in the Superintendent's letter to the Acting Commissioner of Education dated January 13, 2011.

Dr. Title stated that he will return to the Connecticut State Board of Education tomorrow to discuss the amended plan. He attended a meeting in September and was sent back to try to strengthen the plan a little and return in February. What is in this plan was discussed as part of the budget process because it is about the preschool program. There is nothing really new in here but a Board member suggested that the Board formally endorse this before it goes back to the State Board tomorrow.

Board comments and questions followed regarding the genesis of the preschool program at Burr and McKinley.

Dr. Title stated that part of this was to expand the preschool to children who might not otherwise be able to afford it and to try to address the racial imbalance issue. The reason the Burr program is part of that feature is that in the event children going to the Burr preschool decide to stay at Burr, it helps the racial imbalance. By increasing the number of children in the Burr preschool program, we increase the likelihood that more children will stay there. As discussed during the budget, we already have the staff so we don't have to add additional staff. Dr. Title stated that when he went to the State Board they wanted to see what we could do to enhance our plan but only gave us about one month so. Any deeper plan would need to come back to the Board for a much bigger discussion and could not have been done in this timeframe.

Board comments and questions continued regarding how moving the McKinley preschool kids to the Early Childhood Center helps the McKinley preschool students educationally, how having kids at Burr is helping with integration and helping their level of education at a preschool level, the rationale of how these lower income preschool kids are going to be in a better educational environment at the ECC, the educational merits, and why Dwight was not considered.

Mr. Mitola stated for the record that the Board had this discussion during the budget process.

Mrs. Brand called a Point of Order that the Board did not discuss the racial imbalance plan during the budget process. The move was discussed but not relative to racial imbalance.

Mrs. Iacono moved to call the question.

Mr. Mitola stated that he would allow a few more questions.

Dr. Title stated that more sites were considered, and this was also looked at in terms of what the budgetary impact would be. There was some concern about moving all of the early childhood options to the other side of town since a lot of the families who take advantage of this live in the McKinley district. There is not enough space at Dwight or Burr to do both programs in one building, so transportation costs would go through the roof because we would have to transport students to Dwight and Burr. We would not be able to save the money that we were able to save in the budget by consolidating the programs. It made more sense to put the McKinley preschool program at Warde.

Board comments continued.

Public Comment-

Richard Joslin, Carriage Drive and a taskforce member for the racial imbalance plan, commented on the expansion of the preschool and the capacity at Burr and asked if the district will pay for these low income students to be transported to the preschool. He also asked what the annual cost is once these kids choose to matriculate at Burr. The MGT report cites a deficiency in space for the preschool at Burr; how is this addressed especially if you are expanding the capacity? He commented on the McKinley preschool moving to the ECC and that bringing in 20 new students, some of whom will be minorities with language deficiencies, in his opinion will be inferior peer models and he questioned how the special ed kids will improve by the addition of these minority students to the reverse mainstream. Lastly he recommended that thinking about space as the ECC is not a place, it is a service.

Mr. Liu stated that he wished the Board had been given more time to go over this. He does not feel this plan is ready.

Motion carried: 5:3:0. Mr. Fattibene, Mr. Kery, Mrs. Albin, Mrs. Iacono and Mr. Mitola voted in favor. Ms. Zahn, Mrs. Brand and Mr. Liu voted in opposition.

8. Mr. Kery moved, seconded by Mrs. Albin to suspend the rules and extend the meeting for 5 minutes.

Motion carried: 7:1:0. Ms. Zahn voted in opposition.

9. Public Comments and Petitions-

Anne Pasco, FEA President, commented that the Board needs to come forward first with a long range plan that convinces this community that the buildings you want to build are really needed. That is where you start, that is how you win them over and that is how you get the cash.

J. Alfred Dunn commented that the last time he spoke he ridiculed the Board concerning a \$500,000 cut. What happened was that early start or late start was crushed.

Tina Dejarnette, Quaker Lane, stated that she fully believes in preventative maintenance and being proactive so when she hears about roof warranties, that sounds awesome. When she hears that they put in new windows at Dwight that saved money on heating, that is awesome to her. The flack comes from hearing that Ludlowe needs new air conditioning, Ludlowe needs new siding, Burr needs this again, etc. How old are these buildings? Look for grants; go to the parents and say we found this money will you match it? Where is a will, there is a way.

Richard Joslin, Carriage Drive, stated that in the Prismatic report there was a conclusion by the experts that the achievement gap at McKinley was caused by the failure to afford equitable educational resources. He hopes that the Board can address this observation.

Cristin McCarthy-Vahey, RTM District 6, commented on the Long Range Facilities Plan and urged the Board to pass a plan. She urged the Board to prioritize, come to consensus, and give the other bodies you will have to come before your vision. Let us know what you need. The town bodies need to come together and she will encourage and continue to push for conversations. She urged the Board to take action on this even if it takes a few meetings.

10. Open Board Comment-

11. Ms. Zahn stated that the meeting is officially adjourned at 11:05 p.m.

Stacey Zahn
Secretary