

APPROVED

FAIRFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Tuesday, March 8, 2011

APR 12 2011

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

1. Chairman Mr. John Mitola called the Regular Meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. Other Board members present were: Mrs. Catherine Albin (left 8:40 p.m.), Mrs. Sue Brand, Mr. Paul Fattibene, Mrs. Pamela Iacono, Mr. Tim Kery, Mr. Perry Liu, Ms. Stacey Zahn (left 10:10 p.m.) and Mrs. Sue Dow (arrived 7:43 p.m.). Also in attendance were Superintendent Dr. David Title, Fairfield Ludlowe HS Student Representative Allison Reich and members of the administrative staff. Approximately 60 people comprised the remainder of the audience.
2. Mr. Mitola led the Board and audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. Presentation of Elementary Health Curriculum, Grades Pre-K-5

Dr. Gary Rosato introduced Mrs. Lori Mediate, Health Coordinator-grades pre-k through 12, and Ms. Cindy Stetter, Fairfield Ludlowe High School health educator.

Mrs. Mediate stated that the health curriculum is delivered mainly by the classroom teacher in grades pre-k through 5. She discussed how a strong health education program can influence a student's academic success. Mrs. Mediate and Ms. Stetter provided an overview of the pre-k-5 health education curriculum and the revisions and additions that have been made. The curriculum is separated into five units: substance abuse, wellness, family life and human growth and development, safety and accident prevention, and violence prevention. Additional objectives have been added: more nutrition objectives, more stress management objectives, disease prevention and hand washing objectives beyond the primary grades, an introduction to lyme disease and lice prevention, and objectives on social networking and internet safety. The final goal is to provide elementary students with the tools to make healthy decisions not only in elementary school but more importantly when they are faced with the peer pressure that is often part of the middle school student's life.

Board questions and comments followed.

4. Approval of Minutes

Ms. Zahn asked to separate the minutes.

Mrs. Brand moved, seconded by Ms. Zahn that the Board of Education approve the Minutes of the Special Meeting of January 18, 2011.

Motion carried: 8:0:1. Ms. Zahn abstained.

Ms. Zahn moved, seconded by Mrs. Brand that the Board of Education approve the Minutes of the Special Meeting of January 20, 2011.

Motion carried: 7:0:2. Ms. Zahn and Mrs. Dow abstained.

Ms. Zahn moved, seconded by Mrs. Brand that the Board of Education approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 25, 2011.

Motion carried: 8:0:1. Mrs. Dow abstained.

5. Student/Committee/Liaison Reports-
 - ◆ Allison Reich – No report

- ◆ Mrs. Albin – No report
- ◆ Mrs. Brand reported that the Policy subcommittee deferred a vote on the chair until all members could be present. The Board of Health reviewed the audit and the budget. Mrs. Brand asked to make clear that the school nurses in Fairfield work under the auspices of the Board of Health and not the school district. CES reviewed their budget, and there is no tuition increase. They spoke to the Governor's proposal about the vocational schools and until a plan is proposed, no action will be taken. An invitation was sent out for the CES Awards Night on April 8. A tech evening was held and the tech coordinators from each school district attended. Six to Six was cited for students who did not meet adequate yearly progress under No Child Left Behind, and they are now obligated to hire an outside contractor to help educate the students. The state provides the list of these independent contractors, but the problem is that there is no way of validating what their training is or what their qualifications are. This is a mandate that we are subject to.
- ◆ Mrs. Dow reported that SEPTA's February meeting was on transitioning, what you do when your child turns 21 and the services stop. SEPTA will meet again tomorrow. CABE's Day on the Hill will take place on Wednesday.
- ◆ Mrs. Albin stated that Mrs. Iacono will represent Fairfield at CABE's Day on the Hill tomorrow. Governor Malloy will be speaking at 10 a.m. at the Bushnell, and after that anyone in attendance is able to wander the halls of the capital. They are not in session but the legislators will be in their offices and there will be some committee meetings going on.
- ◆ Mr. Fattibene reported that the Transportation Safety Advisory Committee convened to decide two issues related to bus stops, and they have been decided.
- ◆ Mrs. Iacono reported that the Special Projects Standing Building Committee is in a holding pattern for the Sherman project because of the 14 day waiting period to file for a referendum. The RTM approved the Sherman project. The Board of Finance is in the process of working through the budget. Mrs. Iacono stated that she represented the Board of Ed at the Board of Finance meeting last week and there was a discussion about better communication between that Board, the First Selectman's office, the Board of Ed and Central Office. She will defer the rest of the meeting to Dr. Title during his report later in the evening.
- ◆ Mr. Kery reported that the PTA Council meeting featured the Brain Fagan Awards. Board of Finance members Mr. Flynn and Mr. Tetreau gave an overview on the town budget process to PTA Council, PTA members and anyone in the general public.
- ◆ Mr. Liu – No report
- ◆ Mr. Mitola reported that Stratfield Building Committee met last Tuesday and things are moving along. There was some concern that they are a little behind because of the weather this winter but they think they will be able to make that up. Most of the meeting was spent going over change orders.
- ◆ Ms. Zahn – No report

6. Superintendent's Report

A. Initial Response to the Operational Audit

Dr. Title stated that the Board received the Operational Audit on December 14, 264 pages, 24 commendations, and 74 recommendations. The understanding was that he would come back to the Board with some initial reactions to the audit. He presented a 22 page written document with his initial responses to the audit. Some recommendations have dollar savings or costs and others have no financial impact. For each item that has a cost he attempted to ascertain whether or not that cost is accurate. If the recommendation was implemented, would it save the money they say it would save. He did not address items in the audit that had no cost savings attached to them. One item Prismatic did not include in their report was the impact on unemployment compensation on the town budget. In some cases dramatic reductions in existing personnel are recommended and were we to implement these recommendations, staff members would be laid off and entitled to unemployment compensation. Unemployment compensation is not a line item in the Board of Education budget and would be carried in the Town-side of the budget. The estimated costs of unemployment compensation need to be subtracted from the savings in this study to ascertain the true net savings to the Town. Some recommendations that save money may have a significant

impact on our instructional program and others may have a modest impact. He tried to make some initial judgment as to what the impact would be to the school system were we to implement the recommendations. Would the recommendation save the money noted, does Prismatic have it right and what would be the impact. There were several recommendations that would cost the district money. There were recommendations to add staff in certain departments and while noble and the numbers are right, in this environment we are not doing them. He also noted that there were a number of recommendations or areas in the audit that were suggested and have already been captured within the budget. He reviewed some of the recommendations that were thought to have large savings and really there aren't or they need to be discussed further. Finding 3-12 suggests that 16 paraprofessionals in the special ed area be eliminated and teachers be hired. They did not account for hiring the teachers. They simply took the reduction of paraprofessionals and did not give us any guidance as to how many teachers need to be hired to replace the paraprofessionals. Districts that have reduced paraprofessionals often end up hiring one certified staff member for every two paraprofessionals eliminated. There are other costs involved in making this change which appears on paper to have a large savings but in fact the savings was minimal. He noted that he stayed away from the kindergarten issue because if we choose to do anything, there needs to be a further review. While he did not disagree with the amount of savings for reconfiguring the middle school music schedules, the recommendation calls for decreasing the program and he felt it would be a big mistake. Finding 3-19, the house system, is too big to jump into immediately. There is no huge difference in the savings that we found versus Prismatic. To some extent the savings are not necessarily a reflection of the house plan, but how many positions are eliminated and what the impact of eliminating those positions would be. If you eliminate the positions Prismatic recommends, that is where you are saving money. Dr. Title stated that he does not think they truly understood the distinction between dean of students and housemaster. The recommendation by Prismatic is a very dramatic change and at this point he is not advocating eliminating the house system without a full examination of all the implications. We can look at it to see how we can do it better and if there is a way to do it more efficiently. Finding 3-20, requiring high school English teachers to teach five periods a day instead of four periods a day with a writing conference. Dr. Title stated that he thinks Prismatic misunderstood how assignments are done, and this would not save money. There is a contractual limit of 105 kids per English teacher and whether those 105 are divided into four or five periods makes no difference. The question is, is it better educationally to have four slightly larger classes and a writing conference or to have five smaller classes with no writing conference period. Our best results on standardized tests at the high school level are in writing; therefore, this is not a good idea. There was one area where Prismatic had no savings and we found \$500,000; that was the bell schedule. Finding 9-8, seek legal counsel regarding reduction of non-public school transportation was \$400,000 and there is no savings. It is on the Town-side of the budget. We are obligated legally to provide it. He reviewed the summary sheet and chart on page 20. Prismatic's estimated savings of approximately \$4.6 million and Dr. Title's calculation which is closer to \$2.1 million plus some to be determined. There are areas we have to look at further to see if we can capture some savings so we are not rejecting every recommendation. We will continue to look at them and if there are some areas that we can capture we will do it. There are some big ticket items in the audit that just aren't there or would really be harmful.

Board questions and comments followed.

B. Financial Report

Mrs. McWain stated that Enclosure No. 5 is the newly developed format for the Statement of Account – Summary by Major Classification. Next month the Board will receive the report, and it will be reviewed in greater detail concerning our financial position as of third quarter of this fiscal year. She briefly reviewed the report and each of the seven major classifications and the balances and shortfalls in the accounts: personnel services, fixed charges, pupil personnel expenses; school expenses, support expenses, maintenance/operation/transportation; and capital.

Board questions followed.

C. Board of Finance Meeting Recap

Dr. Title stated that this item is the result of the Board of Finance meeting held a week ago where there was a discussion about the medical retention fund. The medical fund issue, including the stop loss, was first discussed at the January 18 Board of Ed meeting with the AON advisers. There were two additional Board meetings at which this fund was discussed in some detail as noted on page 169 of the budget book. Consistent with past practice, there have been some changes subsequent to AON's predictions of our expenses. Right now we are in the vicinity of \$600,000 to the good compared to when we built the budget. The budget was built based on not contributing as much to the fund as was projected by AON. Were the AON projections to occur, the fund balance on the Board of Ed side would still be very healthy, but it would reduce the amount of the fund if the AON projections were correct. While this is okay on the Board of Education side, the issue is that we are in this internal service fund with the Town. Last spring one rating agency addressed the issue of the internal service fund with the Town suggesting that if we end up drawing down on that account by the end of June 2012, the Town may be risking its bond rating. Both the town side of the health insurance fund and the workers compensation comprise the other two components of the internal service fund. The Town and the Board of Finance are suggesting that the only healthy fund of the three is the Board of Ed health care. Last year when the Board made a decision not to contribute as much to its health care for this year to offset a \$3 million dollar cut, there was a lot of angst. There was also very little incentive for the Board to leave money in that fund because under the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding between the previous superintendent and the First Selectman, any funds that remain in the medical retention fund at year end can be taken by the First Selectman and used for any purpose. Dr. Title reconstructed what happened last year and pointed out that there was such a substantial change in the claims between November when the budget was put together and May when the fund balance had gotten so high that the Chief Fiscal Officer told Mrs. McWain that the Board could take \$1.95 million out and be fine fiscally. Mrs. McWain recommended \$1.6 million which is what the Board ultimately did. The fund on June 30, 2009 was about \$4.4 million on the Board's side and the fund balance projected for June 30, 2011 is estimated to be \$4.1 million, if there are no changes in the claims experience. The notion that the Board has drained this fund is not one hundred percent accurate. There were two issues of concern last night. One was about the projection, what would happen to the fund balance, and the second was around the stop loss. Dr. Title suggested a solution to this that would involve the Town taking the whole fund; they can still keep the accounting separate, but take the whole fund. We would have it off our books entirely. We would send our employee contributions over to the town side, and they could manage that as a single fund. They are looking at it as a single fund but they can't really control what the Board of Ed does with it because they don't have line item control of our budget. Dr. Title stated that he is happy to work with the Town and has made that suggestion. Mr. Hiller thinks that has a lot of merit but will not solve the immediate problem that is still out there in terms of what the Board of Finance would like to do.

Approximately 45 minutes of Board questions and comments followed.

Mrs. Brand stated that she is concerned about the Town's AAA bond rating. She feels that she was not adequately informed about the risk of decreasing the medical retention fund balance and thinks the Board needs to think about what we can do to help protect the schools and the Town. She doesn't know what that is but thinks the Board has to work closely with the Board of Finance and the Board of Selectmen and come to some kind of resolution that basically helps all of us.

Mr. Liu stated that he remembers the discussions about the stop loss and what the AON people said at the meeting, and at no time does he remember the Board discussing the medical retention fund and taking money from it and building it into part of the operating budget. He commented that he felt the administration did not make it abundantly clear that \$1.9 million from the Medical Retention Fund would be used as part of our proposed operational budget for the 2011/12 year. It is not the point of whether this money is ours or not, it is about the protocol. He stated that he is

having very difficult time with this right now not only from an integrity point of view with the rest of this Town but that the \$1.9 might need to be taken out of this budget if the Town feels that parts of it need to stay in that account.

7. Old Business

- A. Mrs. Brand moved, seconded by Ms. Zahn that the Board of Education approve the High School Media Technology Curriculum.

Motion carried: 8:0:0.

- B. Mrs. Brand moved, seconded Mrs. Iacono that the Board of Education approve the Long Range Facilities Plan with MGT of America capacity deficiencies.

Dr. Title stated that this was discussed at the last Board meeting. The Board received a summary of the projects being put forward, and the pricing did not include remedying all of the deficiencies as recommended in the MGT report. The pricing on the large projects was been changed to remedy the MGT deficiencies, which increased the price fairly dramatically and there was some feeling by the Board that we needed to stated what our needs are and the price so that is the change. This is an insert to the Facilities Plan that is still in existence.

Board questions and comments followed regarding receiving documentation on how the cost estimates were developed and why we need to do these projects, taking off Dwight and Osborn Hill, prioritizing and using a matrix when bringing a maintenance project or school project forward to show its priority, to have this align with our projections and to move to the community conversation and look to the other Boards for potential solutions. There was discussion about sending this back to subcommittee.

Mrs. Iacono asked to give direction to the administration to come back to the Board and tell us how you got your estimates, show us the history, explain why you are asking for what you are asking, put in your priorities breaking it out through maintenance versus enrollment. Mrs. Brand asked to add a matrix.

The motion was withdrawn and sent back to the subcommittee.

Mrs. Iacono moved, seconded by Mr. Kery to direct administration to develop and provide the cost estimates and rationale behind their numbers and provide justification and explanation as to the facilities needs and maintenance needs of the district.

Mr. Fattibene suggested instead of referring it directly to the administration to refer it to the committee to work with the administration to accomplish the goals that Mrs. Iacono just indicated.

Board members were not agreeable to this and preferred to direct it to the administration.

Motion carried: 8:0:0.

- C. Mrs. Brand moved, seconded by Mrs. Iacono that the Board of Education approve the Roof Warranty Extension Project – Roger Sherman Elementary School, North Stratfield Elementary School, Osborn Hill Elementary School, Riverfield Elementary School and Holland Hill Elementary School.

Motion carried: 7:0:0.

8. New Business

- A. Authorize the Chairman to Send a Letter to the First Selectman Requesting a Building Committee for the Riverfield Elementary School Project

Motion withdrawn and moved to the next meeting on March 29, 2011.

- B. Mrs. Iacono moved, seconded by Mrs. Brand that the Board of Education accept the Tomlinson Middle School Project #051-112EA as complete.

Board questions and comments followed.

Motion carried: 7:0:0.

9. Public Comments and Petitions-

Susan Long, Southport, commented on an email she sent the Board regarding Riverfield doing a feedback survey every year, and she asked the Board to consider this. She believes that every parent, every teacher and every child has valuable feedback that could help make our school system better. She asked the Board to consider how the Town of Fairfield can ask for feedback annually to help begin the process of getting people used to giving feedback to make our education system better.

10. Open Board Comment-

Mrs. Iacono commended the administration for their program changes to the Summer School.

11. Mr. Kery moved, seconded by Mrs. Dow that this regular meeting of the Board of Education convene to Executive Session to discuss pending collective bargaining agreements for Fairfield Education Paraprofessional Association, Fairfield Association of Educational Office Professionals, and AFSCME Council 4, Information Technology Technicians at 10:14 p.m.

Motion carried: 7:0:0.

12. Mr. Mitola called the Executive Session to order at 10:18 p.m. Board members present were Mrs. Brand, Mrs. Dow, Mr. Fattibene, Mrs. Iacono, Mr. Kery, Mr. Liu, and Mr. Mitola. Also in attendance were Dr. David Title and Mrs. Margaret Mary Fitzgerald.

13. Mrs. Brand moved, seconded by Mr. Kery to return to Public Session at 10:32 p.m.

Motion carried: 7:0:0

14. Mr. Liu moved, seconded by Mrs. Brand that this meeting of the Board of Education adjourn at 10:33 p.m.

Motion carried: 7:0:0.

Stacey Zahn
Secretary