

Board of Education, Fairfield Public Schools  
755 Melville Avenue, Fairfield Warde High School, Fairfield, CT  
Tuesday, January 29, 2013

**Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Education**

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chairman Philip Dwyer called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. Other members present were Jennifer Maxon Kennelly, John Convertito, Perry Liu, Jessica Gerber, Pamela Iacono, Paul Fattibene, Tim Kery, and Sue Brand. Also in attendance were Dr. David Title, members of Central Office, student representatives Marco Congello and Danielle Clark, and approximately 150 members of the public.

2. Mr. Dwyer led the Board and the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Dwyer stated that if more time is needed to discuss the budget, a special meeting has been scheduled for January 30, 2013.

3. Approval of Minutes

Ms. Iacono moved, seconded by Mrs. Gerber, the recommended motion that “the Board of Education approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 15, 2013”

**Motion Carried: 9:0:0**

4. Student Reports

Reporting for Fairfield Ludlowe High School, Mr. Marco Congello stated that several FLHS students were recognized in a statewide Scholastic Art Awards Program; students were honored with gold key (4 students), silver key (4 students), and honorable mention (4 students). Over 30 students from jazz, orchestra, and band, have been accepted to perform at the Western Regional Festival. In the PTA Reflection Art Category, 4 FLHS students placed first and 8 won honorable mentions. Mr. Congello stated that today marked the final day of mid-terms and that tomorrow is a school-wide volleyball tournament.

Reporting for Fairfield Warde High School, Ms. Danielle Clark stated the Student Forum Club opened its store on Thursday and it was a huge success. The 9<sup>th</sup> grade elective night is on the 5<sup>th</sup>. Mid-terms are over. Four students were recognized at the National PTA Reflections Program. The spring musical, ‘The Sound of Music’, is coming along very well, and preparations are underway for the town-wide choral festival. Ms. Clark stated that she values the music department and the talent is amazing.

5. Board Reports: None

6. Superintendent Report: None

7. Old Business

A. Approval of Educational Specifications – Fairfield Ludlowe High School

Mrs. Gerber moved, seconded by Ms. Iacono, the recommended motion “that the Board of Education approve the Educational Specifications for Fairfield Ludlowe High School”

Mr. Dwyer stated that the Board received Enclosure #2, which is a large report on FLHS which states the total needs of the school that total \$23 million. The 2 priorities are the windows and space needs, which total \$8 million, and there are variations of projects in between. Mrs. Brand stated there is quite a range between the large report and the educational specifications. Mr. Dwyer stated that the large report was forwarded so that the Board could be informed on available choices. Mrs. Brand asked what was included in the initial request letter to the First Selectman. Dr. Title stated that if changes are made, a revised letter can be sent. Mr. Fattibene moved to postpone this item to the next meeting, given the budgetary pressures of tonight's meeting. Mr. Liu stated that this is a result of not dealing with the population issue presently at the middle school level, and stated that the Board has not had a real discussion on redistricting, and he cannot support this project at this time. Mr. Dwyer stated there is a space need that must be addressed. Ms. Iacono stated that she wanted to second Mr. Fattibene's motion. Mr. Dwyer asked Mr. Fattibene to state the motion.

Mr. Fattibene moved, seconded by Ms. Iacono, to "postpone this item to the next regular meeting". Mr. Fattibene stated that this decision may depend on the budget decision that will be made in the next several days, and that guidance is needed. Mrs. Brand stated that postponing is a great idea, and she requested to see the letter that was sent to the First Selectman.

Public comment on postponing: None

Mr. Kery asked Dr. Title if postponing this item will create a scheduling issue. Dr. Title said the timing may work out better.

**Motion Carried: 9:0:0**

*B. Second Reading of Policy #6417 –Instruction - Student Internet Use*

Mrs. Kennelly moved, seconded by Mrs. Gerber, the recommended motion that "the Board of Education approve Policy #6417 – Instruction – Student Internet Use.

Ms. Kennelly stated that all are now familiar with these issues and recommended a vote. Mr. Liu stated that an ACLU attorney has offered his services on this policy, and Mr. Liu sent a letter to all Board members stating this.

Mr. Liu moved, seconded by Mrs. Brand to "send Policy #6417 - Instruction - Student Internet Use back to the Policy Committee"

Mr. Kery asked if paid legal counsel had been consulted already and Mrs. Kennelly stated yes. Mr. Kery is concerned with having a member of an interest group helping to write policy. Mr. Dwyer stated that Board members may do their due diligence. Mr. Fattibene asked that if this policy does get postponed, he would like a sense from the Board on what level of privacy the Board is looking to keep. In answer to Ms. Iacono, Mrs. Kennelly stated that the vote at the Policy Committee meeting on this policy was unanimous. Ms. Iacono stated she would not support the motion to postpone. Mrs. Brand stated that she would support the motion. Mr. Liu stated that the counsel would offer suggestions and not be writing the policy, and why not get expertise from people who deal with this all the time.

**Motion Failed: 2:7:0** Mr. Liu, Mrs. Brand in favor; Mrs. Kennelly, Mr. Convertito, Mrs. Gerber, Mr. Dwyer, Ms. Iacono, Mr. Fattibene, Mr. Kery opposed.

Mrs. Kennelly said this is the second draft and it separates district devices vs. personally owned devices, and a policy is needed to give guidance to teachers/administrators in the event a student is suspected of doing something against school rules. There is no policy out there to deal with this issue. The policy committee feels secure with this policy. This policy is spelled out fairly well, and gives comprehensive guidance while still giving latitude.

*Public Comment on Main Motion:*

Suzanne Miska, Rygate Road, stated that parents have already signed the internet form. It would be nice to have the document prior to its approval.

**Motion Carried: 7:2:0** Mrs. Kennelly, Mr. Convertito, Mrs. Gerber, Mr. Dwyer, Ms. Iacono, Mr. Fattibene, Mr. Kery in favor; Mr. Liu, Mrs. Brand opposed.

*C. Second Reading of Policy #5335 – Students – Student Internet Use*

Mrs. Kennelly moved, seconded by Mrs. Gerber, the recommended motion that “the Board of Education delete Policy #5335 – Students – Student Internet Use”

Mrs. Kennelly stated that this is a redundant policy to be deleted to avoid confusion.

**Motion Carried: 9:0:0**

*D. Second Reading of Policy #4235 – Personnel – Electronic Monitoring*

Mrs. Kennelly moved, seconded by Mrs. Gerber, the recommended motion that “the Board of Education approve Policy #4235 – Personnel – Electronic Monitoring”

Mrs. Kennelly stated that this policy serves notice to staff on what is already taking place and in the process of implementing.

**Motion Carried: 8:1:0** Mrs. Kennelly, Mr. Convertito, Mrs. Gerber, Mr. Dwyer, Ms. Iacono, Mr. Fattibene, Mr. Kery, Mrs. Brand in favor; Mr. Liu opposed.

*E. Adoption of the Recommended Budget for 2013-2014 Fiscal Year*

Mr. Dwyer stated that he will delay putting a motion on the table in order to avoid constant amendments to the motion. Mr. Dwyer stated that the Board received additional information on the table to help with the budget discussion including the prime discussion 3 page document. Dr. Title stated that this 3 page document is derived from the Board recommendations at the previous meeting to include reductions ranging from \$.5 to \$1.5 million. Dr. Title stated that he is not in favor of cutting the budget at all, but these are suggestions based on Board requests. On the first page, savings are unknown, minimal or will cost money; the second page shows requested reductions by some members of the Board of Education; the third page shows additional Board of Education requested reductions, some of which are open-ended with multiple options. Dr. Title

stated there is nothing on this list that he would recommend. Dr. Title is not recommending cutting music, but understands that the Board requested these numbers to help cost these out, even though he is not in favor of them.

Mr. Liu stated that the main problem is an insurance anomaly, and passed out his information to the Board. Mr. Liu asked why educational programs are being cut when bonuses and spending are rampant in central office. Mr. Liu stated that children's programs should not be cut, rather there should be cuts in central office. Mr. Liu stated the Board of Education needs to take control of its spending. Mr. Kery stated that our spending is growing, and people cannot support the taxes. The Board of Education would be much better served if there is a financial framework. Mr. Dwyer stated that we will be looking at the budget process in the spring, but we need to focus on this year's budget. Mrs. Brand said our top priority is education and requests a 5 year plan with estimates similar to the facilities plan so the community has a better idea of where we are going. Mr. Kery stated that perhaps after the budget discussion tonight, there is a discussion on how to reach 2%.

Mr. Dwyer asked that all look at the 3 page document for budget discussion. Mrs. Munsell will keep track of the budget numbers as the discussion continues.

Mrs. Brand stated that she is flabbergasted about the curriculum leader statement that there is no cost savings and is shocked. Dr. Title stated that this focuses on secondary curriculum. In this case, department chairs, who would also teach, would have to be substituted for curriculum leaders, and this would be less effective and would cost more money. Mrs. Kennelly stated that Dr. Boice, who has proven very capable, should be able to do the fulfill the jobs of curriculum leaders; this will be a big issue next year.

In response to a question from Mr. Kery, Dr. Title stated that the audit overstated savings for KDG extended day and also did not consider transportation costs.

Mr. Liu stated that drivers are salaries and pensions, and he requested to see a breakdown in numbers of future savings regarding curriculum leaders. Mr. Dwyer stated that all ideas will be pursued for future budget discussion unless Board members state otherwise.

Mrs. Brand stated she received a note from the Deputy Superintendent stating that teachers are the best qualified to write curriculum. Mrs. Brand had asked for 6, not just the upper, and is most concerned with headcount and salaries and pensions. Dr. Title stated that curriculum leaders do perform teacher evaluations, are certified, and their pensions are covered by the Teacher Retirement.

In response to Ms. Iacono, Dr. Title stated that moving to the Department Chair structure will hurt the new teacher evaluation process, and studies have proven that education varies when there are no curriculum leaders. Ms. Iacono stated that the new teacher evaluation process is a mandate that will make it difficult to eliminate people that are required to do this job.

Mr. Dwyer stated that page one options are off the table for now, and asked the Board move on to page 2. Mr. Convertito stated that the move towards full day KDG is already happening. In response to Mr. Convertito, Dr. Title stated that increasing the parking fees at this time would be pure revenue. In response to Mr. Convertito, Nancy Byrnes stated that there is a 3 year plan, FWHS server was replaced this year, the plan was to do FLHS next year, and they chose to defer it, and

that next year the elementary computers will be 7 years old. Nancy Byrnes stated that there is another elementary initiative.

Mr. Convertito moved, seconded by Mrs. Kennelly, the recommended motion “to accept the budget of \$156,171,651 minus the costs of the following budget savings as outlined in page 2 of Dr. Title’s handout: switch to full day kindergarten (savings \$157,000); reduction of the 1.0 FTE 19.5 hour clerical positions at the high schools (savings \$23,346); removal of the food service pension subsidy (savings \$50,000); increase of custodial fees (savings \$10,000)”

Mr. Dwyer stated that the budget number is now \$155,931,305. Mr. Convertito stated that any additional cuts to programs or services is premature given that the insurance is out to bid.

Mrs. Kennelly offered a friendly amendment, accepted by Mr. Convertito to “reinstate the 1 FTE 19.5 hour clerical positions at the two high schools, thus adding back a cost of \$23,346”

Mr. Dwyer stated that the budget number is now \$155,954,651. Dr. Title clarified, in response to Mrs. Brand, that clerical positions in the high school library are similar to paraprofessionals, and that clerical is a generic term, but the pay rate is the same.

Mr. Liu stated that he cannot support moving back the food service pension subsidy; to put this in their budget would decimate their budget. Mr. Dwyer stated that this may involve school lunch prices. Ms. Iacono will support moving the pension back to food services; mandates are forcing food changes, and we should be moving towards a self-sustaining budget. Ms. Iacono stated if there are issues about covering those costs, then we can discuss raising the prices at that time.

Mr. Kery asked fellow Board members to not accept this motion, and to work toward a financial framework. Mrs. Brand would like to review the other options, and food services has paid into custodial fees. Dr. Title said that we are carrying \$110,000 as charge backs for custodial costs and utilities.

The Board discussed procedural issues regarding motions and amendments. Mrs. Gerber asked for explanations on the reasons that Dr. Title feels that page 3 reductions are not acceptable. Dr. Title stated that the reductions on page 3 would be slowly unwinding in our system what is valuable. Dr. Title stated that there is a commitment to the Gifted program that should not be undone; that decreasing guidance counselors would impact students; newly instituted elementary clerical support has been critical, especially in light of the new buzzer system; pay-to-play would impact high schools and middle schools, may stop some students from participating; CABE helps with legal advice and looks out for the interest of school boards; resists cutting maintenance projects to avoid them from becoming large capital projects; concerned about all central office positions, where clericals are accounts payable, payroll, etc.; list of initiatives proves that we need staff, we did lose a District Instructional Improvement Teacher whose job duties were all re-distributed; the manager of facilities is also critical, the PCB’s, Sandy, and the role that facilities plays in that; the audit stated that central office is understaffed for administrators and clerical.

Mrs. Gerber asked about pay to play, and whether the fee could be smaller. Dr. Title stated that the fee does not completely cover sports participation, it is only a partial payment.

Mr. Fattibene offered a friendly amendment, accepted by Mr. Convertito and Mrs. Kennelly, to “add the removal of the computer monitor replacements on page 2 of Dr. Title’s handout, to reduce the overall budget by \$70,760”

Mr. Kery made an amendment to the main motion to “remove Full Day Kindergarten from the list of changes to the budget and add the following: the reduction of 4<sup>th</sup> grade world language (savings of \$132,000), the reduction of the elementary school allocations, (savings of \$33,069) the reduction of the middle school allocations (savings of \$21,588); institute Pay to Play (savings of \$250,000), increase parking fees (\$20,000) and reduce the maintenance budget by \$101,000”. There was no second to the amendment; amendment failed.

Mrs. Iacono moved, seconded by Mr. Kery to “ keep Mr. Convertito and Mr. Fattibene’s recommendations and also add the following: reduction of 5<sup>th</sup> grade music classes to twice a week (1 regular, 1 chorus; savings \$30,000); reduction of Elementary School allocations (savings \$33,069), and the reduction of the Middle School allocations (savings of \$21,588)”. Ms. Iacono stated that the Town is facing a 7% tax increase and the cuts have to be made, and the Town is facing critical reductions. Mr. Kery stated that the music program is important, but agrees this is a step in the right direction.

Mr. Convertito stated that he would be amenable to Ms. Iacono’s amendment provided she remove the music reduction, and make it a friendly amendment.

Ms. Iacono moved to change her amendment to a friendly amendment, accepted by Mr. Convertito and Mrs. Kennelly, to “remove the original suggestion of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade music reduction”

Mr. Dwyer stated that the changes would implement full-day Kindergarten, affect items on page 2, reduce technology and elementary and middle school allocations. Mr. Dwyer asked that comments be confined to the main motion as it relates to the budget.

*Public Comment on Motion:*

Seth Block, Shrub Oak Lane, stated this discussion is over 1 percent, and asked the Board to look at the entire budget and come back with a 3% reduction. This Board has consistently made mistakes.

Wendy Lien, Riverside Drive, stated that she supports extended day kindergarten and requested that extended day still be offered, even if it is without bus service.

Matthew Hutzemann, Pansy Road, stated that the Board’s primary mission is education, and chose to live in Fairfield for the education. He asked that the Board not cut the budget, and he will attend the other Town meetings where the BOE budget is discussed.

Trudy Durrell, Woodcrest Road, stated that an insurance anomaly is the reason for the budget increase, and stated that the Board should be defending the budget.

Josey Jandovitz, Aran Hill Road, stated that she echos sentiments heard thus far and supports the motion on table.

Lincoln Hayes, Mountain Laurel, stated that he is a realist and knows there will be cuts, but music and world language are critical.

Dana Alger, Riverfield PTA president and former Riverfield teacher, stated that she approves Dr. Title's budget.

John Levinson, Harbor Road, stated that there is an affordability problem, and that the Board of Education should reduce expenses and non-instructional costs. He is disappointed in the micro cuts, and that there has never been a budget lower than the previous year. Redistricting should be reviewed.

Amy Francolleti, Kate Schallau, Fairfield Kindergarten teachers, stated they are members of the KDG task force and support full day kindergarten, as it would provide flexibility and the needed breaks throughout the day.

Lisa Havey, PTAC President, read the PTAC resolution stating students deserve equal levels of educational experience and opportunity, and that children must not be placed in a position of undue stress in order to manage the fiscal needs of the Town of Fairfield.

Lisa Winjum, Boroskey Road, ask the Board to support Dr. Title's budget in full, and that leadership could take a look at changing the house system and foregoing pay raises.

Suzanne Miska, Rygate Road, stated that budget cuts should come from the administration level.

Laura Bernaschina, Mill Plain Road, stated that no one wants to look at central office and that this is a Board of Education not a board of employment.

Mark Halstead, Crest Terrace, stated that he moved here for the educational system, and that programs need to be first. He stated he is an architect by trade, and kids learn with great programs in rectangular classrooms.

Maureen Sawyer, Thor Place, stated that she just came from a 4<sup>th</sup> grade music performance that was wonderful, and stated that the Board of Education should be supporting Dr. Title's budget and not creating a tidy list to be used as talking points.

Ann Marie Soto, Osborn Hill Kindergarten teacher, stated that she supports full-day Kindergarten.

Vessy Doulis, Mill Plain Road, stated that when she looks at the budget book, there are many secretaries and central office costs, and asked why it is so easy to propose cuts to programs.

Mike Varga, Rock Ridge Road, stated that Dr. Title stands behind his staff and the budget and asked the Board to pass the budget without cuts.

Kate Daniello, Shrub Oak Lane, stated that Dr. Title and his staff should be the ones making the recommendations, and that the area of curriculum leaders should be reviewed again for savings.

Jen Carolan, Rock Ridge Road, stated that she is disappointed to see facilities on the cut list. This can affect the educational experience, as it may affect the health of students and staff.

J. Alfred Dunn, stated that the greatest star in the sky is all day kindergarten, as 85-90% of the parents wanted it and it will also save money.

Helen Dodson, former BOE member, stated that her 2 children thrived in education because of Fairfield's comprehensive program, and hopes the Board will pass the budget. The BOE should not cut the budget.

Bruce Monte, former BOE member, asked whether anyone really believes that Dr. Title's budget reflects everything that is wanted, and he agrees that administrators are needed, and then asked whether this Board views sports and the arts as integral parts of the education.

Mike Borsari, Euclid Avenue, stated that music and athletics are important, and Gifted is also important. The Gifted program differentiates our town with a lot of the DRG and other towns that we are compared to. He would be willing to pay extra for this program.

Mary Hogue, FWHS PTA President, stated that this is a Board of Education and the Board should be advocating education, not cutting programs.

John Llewellyn, Sturges Road, stated that there are a lot of opportunities to cut central office and not programs, and the analysis for savings with curriculum leaders is incomplete.

April Clyne, Hillside Road, has a 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grader and a kindergarten student starting next year. She stated that the busing to Dwight Pre-K should be cut, and agrees with the full-day Kindergarten.

Reid Williamson, Joan Drive, thanked the Board for not considering cutting music and language.

Ken Lee, Rhoda Avenue, stated that we have to become fiscally more responsible, and has seen progress. He asked the Board to protect education, and encouraged more cooperation with Town bodies.

Marc Patten, Valley Road, RTM member, stated that he applauds the Board for the motion on the table, and that he applauds full day Kindergarten. He would like to see the increased parking fees put back in, as this is a privilege that doesn't affect education and parents would be willing to do this.

Izabella Lopez-Kalipir, Jennings student, stated that she enjoys being in the challenge program at Jennings; it is a program where she feels a sense of being accepted for her intelligence, and enjoys thinking outside the box.

Mr. Liu stated that he has listened to all comments, and all are trying to make the district fiscally responsible. In response to Mr. Liu, Dr. Title stated that the budget returns to the BOE after the RTM action in May. Mr. Liu suggested that the budget gets passed as is without any cuts, and when more cuts are required, that work can be done in May.

Mr. Dwyer stated that Mr. Liu's suggestion would be an amendment to the motion to "to not adopt any suggested changes and return to original budget number", seconded by Mrs. Brand. Mr. Liu stated that this is an idea to not pass the amendment, and then pass the budget as is. Mrs. Brand stated that there doesn't seem to be consensus and thinks more deliberation is needed. Mr. Liu withdrew the motion.

Mr. Dwyer stated that he is in support of main motion.



Mr. Fattibene asked whether full day Kindergarten is beneficial to students not just for the cost savings. Dr. Title stated that it is educationally beneficial, and professional staff has stated so, and those who request extended day may be accommodated. Mrs. Kennelly stated that full day was going to be a recommendation.

Mrs. Munsell stated that the new budget number for the motion is \$155,829,234. Mr. Dwyer stated that this number recognizes the friendly amendments including the reduction of elementary and middle school allocations, removal of the monitor replacement project from the budget, implementation of full day kindergarten, the movement of the pension to the food services budget, and the increase in custodial fees.

Mr. Dwyer called the question.

Mr. Convertito moved, seconded by Mrs. Kennelly, the recommended motion: "that a budget recommendation in the amount of \$155,829,234 be approved and forwarded to the Board of Finance for its consideration in the preparation of the Town budget for the 2013-2014 fiscal year; further that the Superintendent be authorized to distribute the said amount in a manner agreed to by the Board at this meeting."

**Motion Carried: 7:2:0** Mrs. Kennelly, Mr. Convertito, Mrs. Gerber, Mr. Dwyer, Ms. Iacono, Mr. Fattibene, Mr. Kery in favor; Mr. Liu, Mrs. Brand opposed

Mr. Dwyer stated the budget was adjusted by approximately \$345,000.

8. Public Comment and Petitions: None

9. Open Board Comment:

Mr. Kery made a suggestion that we should have set a cap this year, and stated that Mrs. Brand asked for a 5 year fiscal plan. Mr. Kery motioned to create a fiscal framework that would send a message to other Town bodies. Mr. Dwyer stated that 6 votes are needed to add an action item to this agenda, and the Board will already be discussing this at the budget process meeting. Mr. Kery stated he is not looking to add an item on this agenda, but wants to get a sense from the Board on getting a commitment from the chair regarding caps and a fiscal plan. Mrs. Brand clarified that she is requesting a 5 year educational plan with financial data. Mr. Dwyer stated that the budget discussion will take place.

Mr. Dwyer complemented the Board on the efficient discussion.

10. Mrs. Kennelly moved, seconded by Mr. Convertito, that "this regular meeting of the Board of Education adjourn at 10:38 p.m."

**Motion Carried: 9:0:0**