

FAIRFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION  
MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Tuesday, June 22, 2010

Minutes of the Business Meeting of the Board of Education held Tuesday, June 22, 2010, at 501 Kings Highway East, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Board Conference Room.

The meeting was called to order at 7:36 p.m. by Chairman Mrs. Sue Brand. Other Board members present were: Mrs. Catherine Albin (left at 10:13 p.m.), Mrs. Sue Dow, Mr. Paul Fattibene, Mrs. Pamela Iacono, Mr. Tim Kery, Mr. Perry Liu, Mr. John Mitola and Ms. Stacey Zahn. Also in attendance were Superintendent Dr. Ann Clark and members of the administrative staff. Approximately 75 people comprised the remainder of the audience.

1. Mrs. Brand led the Board and audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Student Athlete Recognition-  
Recognition of State Champions

- Fairfield Warde & Fairfield Ludlowe HS Boys' Ski Team
- Fairfield Warde & Fairfield Ludlowe HS Bowling Team
- Fairfield Ludlowe Girls' Lacrosse Team
- Fairfield Warde High School Wrestling Team
- Fairfield Warde High School Girls' Tennis Team

Dr. Clark recognized members of the five teams who won state championships and presented each with a certificate. She also recognized the coaches for their accomplishments this year.

3. Recognition of Retiring Teachers and Administrators-

Dr. Clark recognized each of the retiring teachers and administrators and presented them with a certificate.

4. A Moment of Recognition was held for Dr. Clark-

Mrs. Brand stated that Dr. Clark has been the Superintendent for eight years and presented her with a book signed by the Board members and wished her the very best in her new venture.

Mrs. Albin announced that the proceeds from Dr. Clark's retirement party will be donated in Dr. Clark's name to the High School Scholarship Foundation and the Fairfield Foundation for Education. Dr. Clark began the Fairfield Foundation for Education to supplement programs that would not be in the operating budget. A donation will be made in Dr. Clark's name to each of these two foundations in equal amounts of \$1,680.

Retired members of the Board of Education: Mrs. Brenda Kupchick, Mr. Jim Lee, Mrs. Alexa Mullady and Mr. Bruce Monte, each expressed their gratitude to Dr. Clark and wished her well in her retirement.

5. Mrs. Iacono moved, seconded by Ms. Zahn that the Board of Education approve the Minutes of the Business Meeting of May 25, 2010.

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

6. Old Business

A. Discussion of the Cultural Diversity Task Force Racial Imbalance Recommendations-

Mrs. Cutaia-Leonard stated that Fairfield was notified by the State Department of Education in April that McKinley Elementary School is once again in racial imbalance. Therefore, the CSDE requires that an amended plan to address the racial imbalance at McKinley be submitted within

120 days. When this was discussed with the Board of Education last May, the Cultural Diversity Task Force was given the go ahead to take on the work and make recommendations to the Board for their consideration in order to submit an amended plan to the state by the due date of August 23. Mrs. Cutaia-Leonard asked that the recommendations be taken under consideration by the Board and put on the July 27 agenda as a voting item so there would be time to submit an amended plan.

Trudi Durrell, a member of the Cultural Diversity Task Force, briefly highlighted each of the recommendations and stated that the Task Force is cognizant of the current economic climate and tried to keep the recommendations budget neutral. The following recommendations were made: (1) request technical assistance from the CT State Department of Education, (2) the Board of Education *charge* the Cultural Diversity Task Force with analyzing conditions that contribute to this racial imbalance, (3) re-administer a parent survey, (4) conduct focus groups to identify what parents would like in a magnet school or a theme based program, (5) make a presentation to PTA Council with options and to receive feedback from them, and (6) conduct a community conversation on diversity.

Board questions, comments and discussion followed.

The Board discussed sending a letter to the State Department of Education noting that Fairfield will have a new superintendent on July 1 and requesting an extension of the August 23, 2010 submission date for an amended plan.

Mrs. Albin moved, seconded by Ms. Zahn to add an item to the agenda.  
Motion carried: 9:0:0.

Item added:

“that the Board of Education instruct the Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Ann Clark, to send a letter to the State Department of Education requesting an extension to September 30, 2010 for submission of the Amended Racial Imbalance Plan”

Public Comment-

Bruce Monte, Sky Top Terrace, encouraged the Board to ask for an extension to November 30 because there is a lot of work that needs to be done.

Jim Lee, Unquowa Road, recommended that the Board ask for an extension to November 30.

Brenda Kupchick, former Board member, commented that the Board is jumping through hoops to accommodate a law that tells us we should mix up our student population when people are happy in all of our schools.

Cristin McCarthy Vahey, a member of the Diversity Task Force, commented on the work of the task force and stated that the task force is the recommending body and the Board of Ed will make the decisions. While it is wise to speak to Dr. Title, she hopes the Board will not wait too long.

J. Alfred Dunn stated that time is of the essence; and we have to move as quickly as possible.

Alexa Mullady, former Board member, stated that the Board needs time, and it is smart to ask for an extension.

Mrs. Albin offered a friendly amendment to change the date to October 30. This was acceptable to Ms. Zahn the seconder.

Board comments and questions continued.

Mrs. Albin moved to call the question, seconded by Ms. Zahn.

“that the Board of Education instruct the Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Ann Clark, to send a letter to the State Board of Education requesting an extension date of October 30, 2010 for submission of an Amended Racial Imbalance Plan, also in that language it will be noted that a new superintendent will be starting on July 1, 2010”

Motion carried: 8:1:0. Mr. Fattibene voted in opposition.

- B. Mr. Liu moved, seconded Ms. Zahn that the Board of Education establish an Advisory Committee for the purpose of reviewing Food Services with the following Charge:

The Advisory Committee shall review the Fairfield School Food and Nutrition Service Program to develop a plan to offer freshly prepared, high quality foods that reflect the most current information on nutrition, that promote healthy lifestyle choice and consistent with curriculum, and that incorporate sustainable business practices that will promote local agriculture and economy.

The Advisory Committee will report to the Board of Education, in a written report, initial recommendations in (1) November 2010, and (2) June 2011 results/recommendations of the changes implemented, and (3) June 2012 final analysis of changes and recommendations to sustain the program.

Mrs. Brand stated that this was to go to subcommittee, which it did not, since she felt it was time sensitive and put it on the agenda. She wrote the Charge and is in error for doing so because it is something that the Board must weigh in, and she apologized for doing so.

Mrs. Iacono moved, seconded by Mr. Fattibene to amend the motion and table this item and send it to the Policy Subcommittee for review.

Procedurally this motion could be withdrawn and sent back to the Policy Subcommittee.

Mr. Liu and Ms. Zahn withdrew their motion.

Board discussion followed on which subcommittee this item should be sent to. It was decided to keep the protocol from the last meeting and send it to the Policy Subcommittee. The next Policy Subcommittee meeting is July 21. It was the sense of the Board that the Policy Subcommittee will bring forward a Charge.

## 7. New Business

- A. Status of Teacher Evaluation Program-

Dr. Clark stated that under state mandate the superintendent of schools must annually report to the Board of Education that the school district's Teacher Evaluation and Professional Excellence Plan is being fully implemented and is in compliance with the Connecticut General Statutes as well as with the criteria set forth by the Connecticut State Department of Education. She stated that she is pleased to report that Fairfield's plan is in its 8<sup>th</sup> year of implementation and meets the requirements of both the State Statutes and the State Department of Education.

- B. Mr. Liu moved, seconded by Ms. Zahn that the Board of Education approve the RFP for an Operational Audit.

Mrs. Iacono stated that it is the recommendation of the subcommittee that the audit be overseen by the Finance Subcommittee, who will make recommendations to the Board. The Finance subcommittee recommends, and it is written in the RFP, to have a member of the Board of Finance as a liaison in reviewing the audit. Mrs. Iacono stated that the town bodies have again reiterated that the Board of Ed join with the town and have a joint operational audit. The

recommendation from the Finance subcommittee is to proceed with the Finance subcommittee overseeing the audit with a liaison from the Board of Finance.

Board questions and comments followed. The Board of Education will keep control of the audit but will welcome other town bodies to sit in on the audit.

Mr. Fattibene recommended a change on the first page, last line of the first paragraph that states “operational and management efficiency within the business of the Fairfield School System” to read “operational and management efficiency within the business of the **Fairfield Public School System.**” Board members were in agreement.

Once the RFP is approved by the Board of Education, it will go to the town purchasing agent to post. The expectation is that bids will be returned by July 16 and the plan is to go through the bids and start interviewing the week of July 19.

Mr. Fattibene moved seconded by Mrs. Iacono to amend the RFP for consulting services of an operational audit and add the following language in the Evaluation Criteria section “**a liaison from the Board of Selectmen and the RTM.**”

Public Comment-

Cristin McCarthy Vahey, RTM District 6, encouraged the Board to vote in favor of this motion.

Jeff Peterson, Marne Avenue, commented in favor of having an RTM member as a representative of the community.

Vote on amendment carried: 5:3:0. Mr. Liu, Mrs. Dow, Mr. Mitola, Mrs. Iacono and Mr. Fattibene voted in favor. Ms. Zahn, Mrs. Albin and Mr. Kery voted in opposition. Mrs. Brand was out of the room during the vote.

Back to Main Motion as amended.

Public Comment-

Josh Garskof, RTM District 5, stated that it is not about who controls the audit, it is about looking for savings. Why not try to use the same agency to do both sides or have some kind of crossover.

Board comments continued regarding conducting the operational audit.

Motion carried: 9:0:0.

- C. Ms. Zahn moved, seconded by Mr. Kery that the Board of Education approve the Facilities Principles.

Mr. Kery stated that the Facilities Planning Principles is a document that has been unanimously approved by the subcommittee as a means by which to template planning moving forward and urged that this be approved by the full Board to assist in the committee’s work.

Board discussion followed. Mr. Liu stated that he is a member of the Facilities Committee, and he has had questions about this document from the beginning. The document doesn’t address redistricting, and he would like it to go back to committee. Board comments continued.

Public Comment-

Catherine Giff, Eleven O’clock Road, expressed her concern that redistricting is absent as an option. She commented that she thinks this is focused just on the elementary schools, and half of our students are in the secondary schools.

Mr. Fattibene moved, seconded by Mr. Liu to amend the motion to read: “the Board of Education moves to approve as a sense of the body the Facilities Planning Principles”

Board comments followed.

Mrs. Iacono moved to call the question, seconded by Mrs. Albin.

Vote to call the question carried: 6:3:0. Mr. Fattibene, Mr. Liu, and Mrs. Brand voted in opposition.

Vote on amendment failed: 2:7:0. Mr. Liu and Mr. Fattibene voted in favor.

Board questions and comments continued on the motion.

Mrs. Iacono moved to call the question, seconded by Mrs. Albin.

Vote to call the question carried: 8:1:0. Mr. Fattibene voted in opposition.

Motion carried: 5:4:0. Mr. Mitola, Ms. Zahn, Mrs. Iacono, Mrs. Albin and Mr. Kery voted in favor. Mr. Liu, Mrs. Dow, Mr. Fattibene and Mrs. Brand voted in opposition.

- D. Mr. Mitola moved, seconded by Mrs. Iacono that the Board of Education approve the line item transfers for the 2009-2010 fiscal year as detailed in the Financial Statement-Enclosure No. 4.

Mrs. Iacono stated that the Finance Subcommittee heard a presentation from Mrs. McWain and she asked that the Board approve this motion.

Mrs. McWain stated that at this time the amount being requested for transfer is \$700,800, which is .5 of one percent of the operating budget. The total amount estimated for transfers is not requested at this time because there may still be some adjustments necessary in some of the accounts before the close the fiscal year. A complete financial statement will be provided to the Board in September that will document everything that happens between now and when the books are actually closed.

Board questions followed.

Motion carried: 8:0:0. Mrs. Albin had left the meeting.

- E. Ms. Zahn moved, seconded by Mrs. Iacono that the Board of Education accept the Dwight Elementary School Window Replacement Project (#051-0118EC) as complete and authorize the Superintendent of Schools or her designee to process all necessary forms related to the Connecticut State Department of Education Building Grants.

Motion carried: 8:0:0.

- F. Ms. Zahn moved, seconded by Mrs. Iacono that the Board of Education accept the Riverfield Elementary School Window Replacement Project (#051—117EC) as complete and authorize the Superintendent of Schools or her designee to process all necessary forms related to the Connecticut State Department of Education Building Grants

Motion carried: 8:0:0.

- G. Ms. Zahn moved, seconded by Mr. Liu that the Board of Education approve Roger Sherman Elementary School Core Upgrades and Renovations and request the First Selectman assign a building committee to this project.

Board questions and comments followed.

Public Comment-

Meredith McCormack and Michele Leddy, co budget reps for Sherman, asked for the Board's support in getting these core upgrades done at Sherman.

Cristin McCarthy Vahey, RTM District 6, asked if more information on the ed specs and space needed would be ready as this moves forward to the other town bodies for approval.

Motion carried: 8:0:0.

- H. Ms. Zahn moved, seconded by Mrs. Iacono that the Board of Education send a letter to the First Selectman requesting a building committee be assigned to the Roof Replacement Project at Fairfield Warde High School.

Mr. Kery stated that the Facilities Subcommittee voted to bring this forward to the full Board. In the Long Term Plan, Page 20, which was approved by the Board on January 12, 2010, this was tied together with the application of solar panels to the roof. The subcommittee chose to move forward by separating the solar panels from the project. The net cost of the project to replace the entire series of roofs at Fairfield Warde HS would be \$6,044,452. Mr. Kery stated that the Facilities Subcommittee is asking that the Board send a letter to the First Selectman requesting a building committee to look at this project. Additionally, the Facilities Subcommittee voted to ask the Town Facilities Commission to look at this as well to bolster our case with the town.

Board questions and comments followed. Enclosure No. 5 includes the solar photovoltaics, and the recommended motion needs to be clear that the request for a building committee to be assigned to this project does not include the solar photovoltaics. Mr. Kery stated that the recommendation of the subcommittee is to go forward with just the roof at a cost of \$6,044,452.

Motion carried: 8:0:0.

8. Public Comments and Petitions-

J. Alfred Dunn wished Dr. Clark the best, and "may fortune light your every foot step."

Deborah Graser, orchestra teacher at Fairfield Warde HS, and Linda Smith, orchestra teacher at Fairfield Ludlowe HS expressed their concern with the recent 1.0 cut in the string program. Another negative consequence of the cut was that the search for Mrs. Graser's replacement was halted and Fairfield did not have the opportunity to interview top quality candidates from outside who were interested in applying for this position. Mrs. Graser and Mrs. Smith urged the Board of restore the 1.0 string position for next year.

Michelle McCabe, Merritt Street, commented on the establishment of an Advisory Committee to review Food Services and asked the Board be mindful that there are some deadlines. Twenty-five percent of the school lunches are ordered in February for the next school year. She asked the Board to make sure that enough time is given so that by February 2011 when the orders are placed for the 2011-12 school year, the Board will have made some meaningful changes.

Mike Varga, band director, commented on the string program in Fairfield. He also commented on an article that appeared in the press which implied that the Music Department was OK with the Board's decision to reduce the strings position, which was definitely not the case. Prior to the faculty meeting on June 1 the music staff had no advance knowledge of the cut to take place or that as a result of that vote the Fairfield Warde High School Orchestra Director position would need to be filled by an internal candidate.

Rebecca Wicke, music parent association board member, commented on the music program and asked that the same consideration be given to finding a replacement for Mrs. Graser as was for Dr. Clark, by conducting a national search.

Christie Krauss, member of the music parent association, commented on the work that Mrs. Graser has done for the music program and the recognition it has received nationally. The music program is one of the factors that brings people to Fairfield.

9. Mr. Kery moved, seconded by Mrs. Dow to extend the meeting to 11:10 p.m.  
Motion carried: 8:0:0.

Return to Public Comment-

Pam Foarde, president-elect of the music parent association, commented on the music program and what it provides to the students. She asked the Board to consider reversing the decision. Parents just want someone with the same level of experience to replace Mrs. Graser.

Anne Ullman, Stoneleigh Road, commented on the excellent strings program. To shuffle middle schools teachers, strain their work load and not bring in someone of Mrs. Graser's level is a shame. She asked the Board to reinstate the position and look for someone outside the community to replace Mrs. Graser.

Joanne Natale, Sasapequan Road, commented on the replacement of Mrs. Graser at the high school. She asked that the search be reopened to make sure there is no one else more qualified.

Bob Vance, Primrose Lane, reminded everyone how competitive it is to get into college. Our music program is above all others. He asked that the Board to reinstate a national search.

Valerie Wilke, Joan Drive, commented that there was never any mention of an impact on the search to fill Mrs. Graser's position. Public comment might have been different if the public were well informed of what impact the cut would have on the search process to find a replacement for Mrs. Graser.

Marilyn Feranec, retiring teacher and retiring FEA President, thanked her students, parents, the administrators, central office administrators and the Board of Education for having put the interest of the students first. She also thanked the teachers in Fairfield who work so hard to provide a wonderful education for the students in Fairfield.

10. Reports and Recommendations-

- A. Superintendent's Report

**Strategic Plan**--Dr. Clark stated the Dr. Rosato will send a comprehensive report to the Board this summer on the status of the Strategic Plan.

**NEASC**--Dr. Clark thanks David Ebling for the work he did with the faculty and administrators at Fairfield Ludlowe HS in continuing to address the NEASC recommendations. Mr. Coyne is working to address the NEASC recommendations this year at Fairfield Warde HS.

**Plan to Improve Racial Imbalance**--Mrs. Anna Cutaia-Leonard gave her report earlier this evening.

11. Ms. Zahn moved, seconded by Mrs. Iacono that this regular meeting of the Board of Education adjourn at 11:07p.m.  
Motion carried: 8:0:0.

Stacey Zahn  
Secretary