

**APPROVED**

ENCLOSURE NO. 3

FAIRFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION  
MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION JUN 14 2011  
Thursday, May 19, 2011

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Board of Education held Thursday, May 19, 2011, at 501 Kings Highway East, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Board Conference Room.

1. Chairman Mr. John Mitola called the Special Meeting to order at 7:33 p.m. Other Board members present were: Mrs. Catherine Albin, Mrs. Sue Brand, Mrs. Sue Dow, and Mrs. Pamela Iacono. Mr. Paul Fattibene, Mr. Tim Kery, Mr. Perry Liu and Ms. Stacey Zahn were absent. Also in attendance were Superintendent Dr. David Title and members of the administrative staff. Approximately 150 people comprised the remainder of the audience.
2. Mr. Mitola led the Board and audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. Discussion of Proposed Recommended Budget Adjustments for 2011-12

Mr. Mitola stated that tonight is dedicated to public comment. He stated that the Board of Finance and the Board of Selectmen cut the Board of Ed budget by \$2 million. Thereafter, the RTM cut an additional \$800,000 from the Board of Ed budget. We are now required to come up with \$2.8 million in reductions. There was discussion about pay for play, and Dr. Title was asked to look at other options. Dr. Title will be making some additional recommendations tomorrow, which will be posted online. The Board will be voting on the budget adjustments at the May 24 meeting, and tonight is an opportunity to hear from the public. This is not a question and answer session. If members of the public have questions, please email or call any Board member.

Public Comment-

Mike Barlow, Howard Street, spoke in favor of the hockey program and asked the Board to please don't do anything to take away the hockey program from either the boys or the girls.

Diane Faiella, Library Media Specialist at Fairfield Ludlowe High School, commented on the consequences of the cuts to the LMC staff and the two computer lab paraprofessionals. The library media center would be closed before and after school, the computer labs would be locked to drop in students, and there would be a strain on technology.

Denise Rehder, Library Media Specialist at Osborn Hill, stated that the program to eliminate some of the media techs at the elementary schools was piloted this fall and was deemed unsuccessful by most people in the school buildings. If she had to choose between people taking care of the existing technology and buying new technology that is not going to be taken out of the box, she would choose to maintain the staff we have who are qualified to fix the technology we have.

Alana Scharlop, a former Fairfield Warde HS student, spoke in favor of keeping the hockey team.

Stephanie Gabriel, Captain of the Fairfield Girls Ice Hockey team, stated that hockey is not a low enrollment sport and asked the Board to reconsider their intentions regarding Fairfield's girls and boys ice hockey.

Francisco Guillen and Cole Prowitt-Smith, 5<sup>th</sup> graders at Mill Hill, stated that they are looking forward to trying out for JV Basketball and intramural sports in middle school and asked the Board to please not cut this wonderful experience.

Lisa Winjum, Boroskey Drive, spoke against pay to play. She also commented on not sacrificing some sports for all sports. If it were a choice between eliminating freshmen sports and hockey or pay to play for a year or two, pay to play would be the preferable option. She asked if we go to pay to play that it not become the new norm in Fairfield.

Vlasta Grech, World Language teacher at Roger Ludlowe MS, read comments from two of her colleagues, Roberta Krajci and Kristen Broggini, asking the Board to reconsider grandfathering for the middle school redistricting. You have chosen to fund transportation for two years which brings no added value to our schools. There is no logic in taking away the instruction of foreign language from students while other options were presented. She encouraged the Board to consider these points and understand the opportunities that will be eliminated from the students of the Fairfield Public Schools if the proposed World Language cuts go through.

Karin Martel, World Language teacher at Fairfield Woods MS, stated that by decreasing the elementary program in half we are agreeing to offer our World Language students half an education and half an opportunity to become global learners.

Jay Wolk, Stratfield School PTA liaison to the First Selectman's office, stated that there is no need for the \$800,000 cut, and he is not quite sure why the RTM voted to cut \$800,000 out of the budget. He also stated that cutting paras and psychologists from the elementary schools is going to be devastating for the children. Stratfield School uses paras in the classrooms to take over for teachers instead of substitute teachers.

Jeanne Pacewicz, Sigwin Drive, spoke against pay to play. She asked how coaches will handle questions from parents such as; I paid for my child to play, why isn't he or she playing or getting more playing time. She also stated that she does not support the elimination of freshmen sports and eliminating low enrollment sports.

Sean O'Leary, South Pine Creek Road, stated that he feels strongly about athletics and voiced his support for the young students who got up to speak tonight. He advocated to keep JV basketball.

Laurie Quick, Roger Sherman Board of Ed Rep, spoke in support of the elementary staffing model and against pay to play.

Joe Cetta, Holly Dale Road, stated that he does not agree with a plan that takes away sports or pay to play. There are things that can be done to eliminate costs and save JV sports such as volunteer coaches and volunteer referees.

Sean Munday, Spanish teacher at Tomlinson MS, spoke on behalf of the World Language program and the potential cuts. To do what is proposed would be a serious step backwards and is not something that can be easily undone.

Christine Pisani, Beth Drive, spoke in support of the elementary staffing model.

Bill Dunn, Tuckahoe Lane, expressed concern with the cuts in kindergarten support and maintaining a pool of internal candidates for positions like elementary school principal. Given the economy, he believes many parents will send their children to kindergarten when age eligible, prepared or unprepared, and without enough support some of these children will struggle. Losing a teacher is hard, losing a capable teacher is harder and losing a teacher who would make a great principal would be sad. He also stated that he does not like pay to play, but wouldn't take it off the table at this time. It will provide additional support for a successful referendum.

Julie Gottlieb, Applegate Road, stated that she understands how critical sports can be, but if she had to pick between cuts to Language Arts, the elementary curriculum, media services, paras, or any other services or programs that directly impact her child's education, she has to support those first.

Christyn Whitney, Burr PTA President, asked that the Board not eliminate the new elementary staffing model. While sports are important, if a child cannot read, write or add, sports become moot.

Emily Price, Town House Road, spoke in support of the high school sports program. She also spoke in support of not reducing the World Language program.

Suzanne Miska, Ryegate Road, stated that she supports the hockey program at the high school. She also spoke against pay to play and the reduction in the World Language program. She pointed out some things in the budget that she thinks should be revisited: mileage reimbursement, conferences, part-time clerical support at the elementary schools and perhaps having one instructional improvement coordinator cover two elementary schools.

Meghan Flynn, a freshman at Fairfield Warde HS and a member of the girls' varsity ice hockey team, asked the Board not to cancel the hockey program. While the program has been referred to as small, this sport is also one of the fastest growing with rising interest each year. While pay to play is a change, it is not new for families who participate in sports and it is a better alternative than eliminating some sports in favor of others.

Jim Lee, Unquowa Road, stated that he had always thought the Board of Ed budget should increase by the enrollment increase compounded by the cost of living. From 2005-06 until 2010-11, enrollment went up 10%, the CPI went up 15.7%, and the budget went up 19%. What that means is that in constant dollars per student, you have already sustained a real cut of about 6%. The Board has tough choices to make, and whatever you do somebody is not going to like it. He commented on the elementary foreign language program and stated that the program was lost in the early 70's and it took 23 years to get it back. If children learn a foreign language before adolescence, they have a better chance to pick it up later on.

Richard Joslin, Carriage Drive, reminded everyone that on June 14 they can advocate for the budget by voting in the referendum. He stated that Tom Mooney has in his legal writings that the Board of Education can advocate for the referendum at its meeting, and he encouraged the Board to speak out because without Board support, any restoration of funds won't take place. He commented that pay to play is kind of forcing parents to pay for things, and why not have the cost of grandfathering be borne by the parents by giving them the opportunity to drive their kids to school. He commented that we did a great job passing the burden to all of the schools, the kids and the parents but there was no cut at central office. Do something to share the pain.

Joyce Gallagher, 150 Stonybrook Road, urged the Board not to cut freshmen sports.

Karyn McNeil, elementary school Spanish teacher, spoke in favor of the Spanish program at the elementary school level. Cutting the elementary Spanish program is also going to affect the middle school program and the high school program. She stated that cutting freshmen and JV sports teams will be detrimental. She spoke in favor of the elementary staffing model.

Brad Weinstein, Shelter Rock Road, spoke in favor of the hockey program and freshmen sports and stated that there has to be a way to make this work.

Conor Scharlop, a freshman at Fairfield Warde High School, spoke in favor of the hockey program and stated that it is a false statement to say that hockey has low enrollment.

Donna Boyle, Mailands Road, spoke in favor of freshmen sports and asked the Board to give the freshmen kids the same respect in sports that was given to the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders when you grandfathered and provided buses.

Carolyn Marcato, retired coordinator for the library media and technology resource teachers in Fairfield, expressed concern that many of technology assistant positions are being eliminated, and she encouraged the Board to stop purchasing technology and maintain the people we have to keep the current pieces in working condition. She also stated that the library media specialists are teachers,

and asked that the library media paraprofessionals be restored so that the library media specialists can continue to teach and not be paid a high price to check out books.

Anne Pasco, FEA President, stated that the district instructional improvement grant writer whose office happens to be at central office is a teacher position and a member of the FEA. That is truly not what she perceives to be an administrative cut at central office. She reiterated that she is on record as saying that instruction should come before buses. By removing the clerical staff at both high schools six writing labs will now be shuttered except for when a teacher brings a class down, and she asked the Board to look at that again.

Liz Mosher, Rosemere Avenue, stated that she was a lacrosse coach at Warde High School for eight years, is presently a club lacrosse coach in Wilton, volunteers at Wakeman and also works at the Sportsplex. She commented on the social and emotional aspects that sports provides for girls. She begged the Board to not cut freshmen sports.

Susan Brown, Pemburn Drive, spoke against pay to play and cutting freshmen sports. She also identified herself as the President of the Boys' Ice Hockey Booster Club and wanted to clear the misconception that the boys' ice hockey program has low numbers. She was told that the athletic director has been informed by the CIAC that there are so many kids playing hockey that they are at risk of losing their coop status. There are no low numbers in hockey.

Trygve Sandberg, Penfield Road, expressed concern about eliminating anything; sports, World Language, etc., and asked the Board to please think about what will least impact the children. Do the best you can to cut nothing, and if we have to have a referendum, tell us.

Alan Scharlop, Fairfield Woods Road, expressed concern about eliminating sports. It gives kids something to do after school so they are not hanging out and getting into trouble. Hockey parents have been paying dearly since our kids were young; we know the cost of hockey, and we would understand if there was a cost to have our kids play and represent the Town of Fairfield.

Elizabeth Kelly, Flintlock Road, spoke in support of the elementary school staffing model.

Krista Dougherty, Gilbert Highway, stated that she hopes the Board does not cut sports or eliminate any freshmen sports. Intramurals and JV sports are important to children's education and she does not want education cut either. There are better places to take the cuts from; perhaps some cosmetic maintenance projects, cutting all late buses or eliminating buses for the extended day kindergarten.

Paul Barlow, a member of the varsity hockey team, spoke in support of the hockey program.

Tina Gabriel, Dill Road, stated that what drew her to Fairfield was the education system and the community. It is sad to be sitting here talking about cutting Spanish, Language Arts, sports, and all the good things that attract people to Fairfield. She pleaded with the Board to make the right decision and not cut any of these important things.

Craig Curley, Lakewood Drive, commented that he firmly believes in sports. He stated that if he were thinking about moving to Fairfield and had school age kids, he might not move here if there was pay for play or freshmen sports were not an option. Now he is worried about his real estate values.

Tiffany Vlandis, Walbin Court, spoke in support of freshmen and middle school sports. It creates self-confidence and gives a sense of belonging. She commented on the World Language program and stated that if kids are exposed to this at a young age, they develop a tongue for it. It is more difficult to learn when you get older.

Marie Lavigne, Cedarhurst Lane, commented on the sports program, especially hockey. She asked if we can hold off on new projects until there is more money. Just keep what we have and not implement new things for a few years until things get better.

Mike Varga, Rock Ridge Road, stated that Dr. Title and the Board have done everything they can to communicate to the Town the need to support this budget. Everyone here and the people who are not occupying these chairs have to make sure that the referendum succeeds. Next year when the budget comes up, we have to make sure that we are not on the defensive again but that this Town gets back on the track of supporting education.

Caroline Meijer, Katona Drive, spoke in support of the ice hockey program.

Casey Crowley, Congress Street, spoke in support of the ice hockey program.

4. Mrs. Albin moved, seconded by Mrs. Iacono that this meeting of the Board of Education adjourn at 9:03 p.m.

Motion carried: 5:0:0.