

FEB 11 2010

FAIRFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION  
MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Tuesday, January 26, 2010

Minutes of the Business Meeting of the Board of Education held Tuesday, January 26, 2010, at 501 Kings Highway East, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Board Conference Room.

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Chairman Mrs. Sue Brand. Other Board members present were: Mrs. Sue Dow, Mr. Paul Fattibene, Mrs. Pamela Iacono, Mr. Tim Kery, Mr. Perry Liu, Mr. John Mitola, and Ms. Stacey Zahn. Mrs. Catherine Albin was absent. Also in attendance were Superintendent Dr. Ann Clark and members of the administrative staff. Approximately 80 people comprised the remainder of the audience.

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

2. Old Business

A. Mrs. Iacono moved, seconded by Mrs. Dow that the Board of Education approve the High School Social Studies Curriculum.

Motion carried: 8:0:0.

B. Mrs. Dow moved, seconded by Mr. Kery that the Board of Education approve the Fairfield Warde High School Baseball Field Pressbox.

Board questions and comments followed.

Motion carried: 8:0:0.

C. Discussion of Superintendent's Proposed 2010-2011 Budget Request-

Ms. Leonardi explained and discussed the Special Education Excess Cost Provision, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and how it applies to the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF) and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and the action plan for using IDEA/ARRA Funds.

Approximately 1½ hours of Board questions, comments and discussion followed on the operating budget regarding the following accounts: universal service funds, instructional assistive technology, FTEs funded through grants, capital outlay and why Burr and McKinley are funded at lower levels than other elementary schools, instructional services (early literacy plan, curriculum development, student achievement intervention), safety and security (fire alarm testing), Smart Boards, the number and need of Smart Boards per building and the disparity in terms of population, the gifted program account, student achievement account, safety and security expenses and part-time employment for safety and security, adding three teachers to the staff reserve, and Stratfield School safety and security.

The Board discussed capital improvement project funding regarding Stratfield School renovation project-security and safety work and contractor material and labor for \$100,000. Mr. Cullen stated that security and safety work is existing equipment that will be disconnected, removed, reused, and relocated to work with the new renovation scope within the school building as well as outside work around the building. In past experience with other renovations there were problems related to security where we had to go back in with a local vendor to fix things, and this cost a lot of unexpected and unfunded money. That was part of the reason this money was put in and the other part was that we had an information technology discussion to get answers to questions from the Building Committee that would be given to the project team and there were not a lot of security questions or security work that would be performed. We thought we should put a place holder in the budget for this.

Mr. Kelly, Chairman of the Stratfield School Building Committee, commented that part of the scope of the project is to do security. It is not presently part of the architect's scope. However, Mr. Kelly spoke with the architect today and he said they are moving the panels, relocating the equipment, they have the wiring to hook it back up, and whatever cameras need wiring to be relocated is on the drawings. Mr. Kelly stated that he has asked Mr. Morabito what he needs for security. Mr. Kelly stated that they are doing the first part now and won't really hit the ground running until the second part begins and they start moving admin some time after September 2010. We are going to reuse the equipment that is there, if we need to add a camera or additional equipment it is well within the purview and we will handle. He does not know what the need is for the \$100,000. If there are unforeseen issues next year and the budget is limited, he may be back asking the Board to help with this in the non-recurring budget.

Approximately one hour of Board comments, questions and discussion followed on the capital budget request regarding the Dwight student bathrooms and ADA compliance, Tomlinson Middle School replacement of stairwell tread and risers, how much of a savings the Fairfield High School window replacement will provide, and the Fairfield Woods Middle School boiler replacement.

The Board also discussed which capital non-recurring items are needed and should be funded this year, and why Roger Ludlowe MS siding and Fairfield Ludlowe HS windows are being incurred in the operating budget and not in capital non-recurring.

Mr. Kery asked to add \$15,000 for enrollment projections to page 172, section 305, professional technical services, item 4060, census verification. Board discussion followed.

Mrs. Iacono asked to add \$50,000 for an operational audit. Board discussion followed.

Mrs. Iacono recommended asking the Superintendent to review some of the line items in the budget to reduce it by an additional 1%. She did not want to affect class size or program. Board discussion followed on this.

It was the sense of the Board to add \$50,000 for an operational audit, add \$15,000 for enrollment projections, not to add \$202,000 for the addition of three teachers to the staff reserve and not to have Dr. Clark pursue reducing the budget by 1%.

Dr. Clark and her staff will look at areas to reduce the budget by \$65,000 for the dollar amounts proposed to be added this evening.

### 3. Reports and Recommendations-

#### A. Superintendent's Report-

Strategic Plan--Dr. Clark reported that the Board will receive a comprehensive report at the Business Meeting in March.

Plan to Improve Racial Imbalance--Mrs. Cutaia-Leonard commented on the Cultural Diversity Task Force recommendation to ask that the Board of Education consider opening opt in to McKinley to all ten elementary schools for the 2010-11 school year. She commented on a number of questions that this brought about concerning the enrollment at McKinley, the class size guidelines for McKinley, the number of students it would take to be in compliance for racial imbalance, the costs of providing for opt in to McKinley from other elementary schools, the legalities of equity if open to only a few schools, does opening up to all elementary schools establish a precedent, the impact on the feeder pattern and the impact on projections. This will be on the February 9<sup>th</sup> agenda for discussion and a vote. Board questions and comments followed.

Race To The Top Program -- Dr. Clark explained that this is a competitive federal grant that supports reform programs enacted as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). There was a one week turn around to apply for \$133,000 that we would get over 4 years, about \$33,000 per year from the State. In order to be eligible to apply for that money, it would cost between \$50,000 and \$100,000 each year and we decided in this economy that is not a good idea. We also did not agree with all of the things the state would require us to do, and since there was not an opportunity in one week to have a Board meeting to discuss this, we just said,

we don't have the people, the time or the programs in place to make us eligible; and we don't know if Connecticut will get the full funding so we made an executive decision to say we are not going to spend money to apply for money we may not get. Board questions and comments followed. Dr. Clark will review this in April and give recommendations to the Board at that time.

4. Public Comments and Petitions-

Richard Joslin, Carriage Drive, commented on the bathrooms at Dwight, and asked the Board not to delay these upgrades. He also commented on the IDEA/ARRA grant and encouraged the Board to validate what Ms. Leonardi has done so far and to push forward with this.

Peter Rupert, Warwick Avenue, implored the Board to be the advocates that you should be for education in our community. Please advocate for the children of this district.

Trudi Durrell, a member of the Cultural Diversity Task Force, commented on the recommendation to open the McKinley opt in to all elementary schools. She commented on the urgency of having the Board consider allowing an open house at McKinley prior to kindergarten registration because that is one key thing that has not been done in the past few years and it would allow parents to see what an incredible facility McKinley is and what it can offer students.

Meredith McCormack, Sherman School budget rep, commented on the proposed cut of \$50,000 for new lockers at Sherman school and asked the Board to please not take this off the table.

Jim Gallagher, Congress Street, commented that the teachers and administrators have declined both wage and step increases, and there is also no increase in medical premiums this year. Historically, these two liabilities have accounted for the majority of budget increases. Despite these efforts, the budget represents a \$5.2 million increase, which includes a decrease of \$60,000 for textbooks and instructional materials used by students. He commented that he finds very little diligence in this budget construction and thinks the priorities of this budget are going in the wrong direction.

Maureen Sawyer, speaking on behalf of the Riverfield PTA Executive Board, shared what they believe are the crucial needs of the district: maintaining class size guidelines, maintaining the current teaching staff and distributing resources reasonably throughout the district, specifically staffing. The budget deliberations should be based on what is fair and needed for each school and each child.

Cristin McCarthy Vahey, RTM District 6, commented that the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance and RTM do not determine what the Board of Education priorities are, that is up to you as a Board. She also stated that she is in support of the \$50,000 for the operational audit.

J. Alfred Dunn commented on the presentation concerning high school counselors that was given at a previous meeting.

Jennifer Kennelly, a member of the Cultural Diversity Task Force, reiterated that McKinley opt in opt out has worked every year. What it did not take into account was the influx of minority students entering kindergarten or families moving into McKinley. The Task Force hopes to hold an open house prior to kindergarten registration that is well advertised to reach out to families. This will not solve the problem in one year, but is continuing in a good faith effort to address what the State has asked of us.

5. Ms. Zahn moved, seconded by Mr. Mitola that this regular meeting of the Board of Education adjourn at 10:45 p.m.

Motion carried: 8:0:0.

Stacey Zahn  
Secretary