

**Special (Budget) Meeting Minutes  
Fairfield BoE, January 14, 2020**

**NOTICE:** A full meeting recording can be obtained from Fairfield Public Schools. Please call 203-255-8371 for more information and/or see the FPS website (under Board Meeting Minutes) for a link to FAIRTV.

[Call to order of the Special Meeting of the Board of Education and Roll Call](#)

Chairman Christine Vitale called the Regular meeting to order at 7:31PM. Present were members Bonnie Rotelli, Trisha Pytko, Jessica Gerber, Christine Vitale, Nick Aysseh, Jennifer Jacobsen, Jennifer Maxon-Kennelly and Jeff Peterson. (Jennifer Leeper was not present.) Others present were Superintendent Mike Cummings, members of the central office leadership team, and approximately 10 members of the public.

Superintendent Cummings presented 2020-2021 staffing and organizational changes as reflected in the budget. The re-named or new positions will build capacity to support district improvement and student learning outcomes:

- Central Office, Executive Director of Operations and Processes – this position will have oversight of all district processes and operations to promote efficiencies that support the Vision of the Graduate. One example of a task for this position is implementing a plan that would support a new middle school schedule for the fall of 2021.
- Central Office, Executive Director of Instruction, Curriculum and Assessment – this position will use best practices to align instructional, curricular and assessment practices to ensure all students achieve the Vision of the Graduate.
- Central Office, Director of Public Affairs – This position will provide timely and accurate communication to all stakeholders on all matters relevant to Fairfield Public Schools.
- Central Office, 2 Secretarial Positions – One secretary will support Student Records and the Instructional Dept. and one secretary will support the Business Office.
- Middle Schools, SRBI Coordinator – this position will support all staff to plan, implement and progress monitor best practices in Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions with the goal of closing the achievement gap. This position will allow more flexibility of interventions with the amount and length of time offered to students.
- High School Department Chairs – these will be stipend positions in English, Math, Social Studies and Science to increase success of students and to also support professional growth of teachers.
- High School Chemical Hygiene Officers – this stipend position is required by OSHA.
- Elimination of Continuing Education Program – the program repeatedly loses money for the district and is not sustainable.

[Review Section: Targeted Enhancements, pages 1-6](#)

*Ms. Pytko:* Has the district purchased a social/emotional learning program and is there related curriculum for all students? Mr. Mancusi said the district uses the Mind-Up program, costing \$20K per year and \$5K for support. The initial elementary school training is complete; the advanced/intermediate training for DBT will take place next year and will cost an additional \$9-10K. Mr. Mancusi said he is collaborating with district psychologists and social workers to refine the SRBI process and review screening instruments to develop targeted interventions with progress monitoring.

*Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly:*

- Is there data on social/emotional learning that can be shared with other Town bodies? Mr. Mancusi said it is a struggle to meet the mental health needs of students at all levels. Data does show that a number of students are remaining in district due to provided supports.

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- Please provide an overview on the ELA curriculum meeting that will take place at the end of January. Mrs. Holcomb said she is proposing a district-wide systematic approach to phonics instruction, beginning with K-1. The K-5 word study program is in place now and is usually delivered through small group instruction.

[Review Section: Instructional Services, pages 70-72](#)

*Mrs. Gerber:*

- Why is there an increase in OT? Mr. Mancusi said he is looking into this with Rehab Associates, and is looking at individual schools that are experiencing spikes in OT.
- Regarding the increased need for psychiatric evaluations and are other districts experiencing this trend? Mr. Mancusi said this issue is not specific to Fairfield.

*Mr. Peterson* requested a presentation on social/emotional health.

- When comparing the former outsourced ESS program, is the annual \$78K savings exclusive of psychiatrist evaluations? Mr. Mancusi said yes, psychiatric evaluations are an additional cost to the IMPACT program. After ending the ESS program, the district was able to enhance IMPACT by hiring licensed clinical social workers and consulting with psychiatrist Dr. Gammon, clinical psychologist Dr. Liebowitz, and executive functioning expert Dr. Dawson.

*Mrs. Vitale:* Were the 26 high school psychiatric evaluations done for IMPACT students? Mr. Mancusi said no; those consultations were an additional cost to the district.

*Mrs. Jacobsen:*

- Given the increased cost of PSAT, is College Board providing any enhanced information? Mr. Hatzis said College Board provides professional development opportunities on the redesigned SAT, and aligns with Kahn Academy.
- Requested data on the correlation with 8<sup>th</sup> grade SBA and 9<sup>th</sup> grade PSAT.
- Requested clarification on the sports back-up material on personnel.

*Mrs. Gerber and Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly:* What are the additional duties of the vestibule/guard greeters and is there an added charge? Mr. Papageorge said yes there is an extra charge; the vestibule greeters also do routine checks on the building and its perimeter. This function was added under the previous administration.

*Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly:*

- What has happened to the school allocations since the last budget season? Mr. Cummings said the allocations were maintained at current percentage levels due to cost drivers and the budget position. Historically, not every school completely expends its pupil allocations, and the district is looking into changing practices and habits.
- Why do the high school athletic and extra-curricular budgets appear so different? Ms. Gottesman said allocations for extracurricular activities change on a regular basis and money gets shifted when the need arises, for example – qualifying for and attending state tournaments. Mr. Cavanna added that the per-pupil allocation is different due to the number of students, but the same number of buses is still needed for away games.

*Mr. Peterson* asked about the FLHS drama budget, noting that it appeared to be 3 times as large as Warde's; he expressed some concern over resource equity. Mr. Hatzis said Ludlowe had cut back on its drama budget over the last few years, but maintained a healthy internal account balance due to ticket sales. After purchasing some expensive props, the fund needed to be restored. Mr. Cummings added that principals develop budgets that reflect the culture, climate and interests of the students; variances exist over time due to differing productions and tournaments.

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*Mrs. Jacobsen*

- Requested overall high school sports participation, broken down by gender.
- Referencing the handout, what does recondition mean? Mr. Hatzis said sports equipment is checked to ensure it meets safety codes.
- Why don't ECC and PK have an allocation? Mrs. Munsell said PK is now consolidated and budgeted in with ECC. ECC receives an allocation for equipment only.

*Mr. Aysseh* asked if legal expenses are tracking thus far to be half of what was spent last year. Ms. Deasy replied there is nothing on the horizon at this time to increase legal expenses. The district has experienced significant cost savings since she was hired in July 2017.

[Review Section: Contracted Services, pages 72-75](#)

*Mr. Peterson* asked why the district was lagging behind in document retention. Mrs. Munsell said there was no money in the budget for it.

*Mrs. Jacobsen* asked about the status of the air conditioning RFP. Mr. Papageorge said the district is working with the town on an RFP for energy savings controls. Information from that RFP will feed into the air conditioning RFP. In addition, fresh air and sprinkler systems will be a part of the study and are included in the \$100K.

*Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly* questioned the discrepancy of facility rental charges related to coop sports at the high schools. Mrs. Munsell said this is a book keeping matter and is not part of the allocations.

*Mrs. Rotelli* asked for clarification on extra-curricular salaries. Ms. Deasy said the Ludlowe allocation includes CPP and WFC.

*Mrs. Jacobsen* asked for more information on the conditioning coach. Mr. Cavanna said that is a contracted position and will provide more information on the number of hours provided.

[Review Section: Other Purchased Services, pages 78-84](#)

*Mr. Peterson* asked about the copying budget. Mrs. Munsell said copy machine equipment is leased and is used often. The district takes advantage of new technology in copy machines that perform multiple functions.

[Review Section: Tuition, pages 77-78](#)

*Mrs. Gerber* asked why magnet school enrollment is declining. Mr. Cummings said Fairchild Wheeler has experienced a trend in declining enrollment, with students returning to Fairfield Public Schools. *Ms. Pytko* asked if there was also a trend of parochial students returning to Fairfield Public Schools. Mr. Cummings said he will look into providing that information.

*Mrs. Jacobsen* and *Mr. Peterson* asked about the trend in outplacements and how outplacement projections compare with actual. Mr. Mancusi said he will gather cost information and provide the number of students. Historically Fairfield outplacements fall below the state prevalence rate. Programs such as CLC and CLC-S help keep the number stable.

[Review Section Supplies/Texts/Materials, pages 84-95](#)

*Mr. Aysseh*: As we move forward with HVAC in schools, can we build in a continuous self-cleaning system? Mr. Papageorge said he can look into the self-cleaning systems, but with so much dust, a physical cleaning is better.

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*Mr. Peterson:* Are the Chromebook covers counted as separate savings on pages 95 and 161? Mrs. Munsell said no, there is only one savings of \$34,905 on page 95, even though it is also listed on page 161.

*Mrs. Jacobsen:* Are administrators comfortable with the numbers, which appear to be the lowest in quite a number of years? Mr. Cummings said he would hesitate to say they are comfortable, but noticed a number of requests moving from direct student needs. The district is holding off on Chromebook implementation at the elementary level.

[Review Section: Capital Outlay pages 102-105](#)

*Mrs. Jacobsen:* What are the Microsoft computers for? Ms. Byrnes said the 274 computers will be distributed across the 11 elementary schools to provide equitable access to technology in the classroom and technology refresh for students.

*Mr. Peterson:*

- Why the need for a cybersecurity audit? Mr. Cumming said this was requested by a Board member. Ms. Byrnes said she welcomes the audit and hopes it will help determine whether the district is spending money wisely and choosing the right products. The 2009 Prismatic audit was mostly an operational audit but it did have some elements of technology.
- Why the reduction in the damaged account? Ms. Byrnes said there have been very few lost or stolen Chromebooks. Ms. Munsell added that the damaged account is district level account and not exclusive to Chromebooks.

*Mrs. Vitale:* How are the charging carts working out? Ms. Byrnes said the schools are handling charging issues well and students are asked to charge Chromebooks at home.

*Mrs. Gerber and Mrs. Vitale* requested a breakout of outplaced district tuition amounts and the numbers of students attending those schools.

*Mrs. Gerber* thanked Mr. Cummings and staff for responding to the questions and said the responses were very helpful.

**Motion to Adjourn:** Mr. Peterson

**Second:** Ms. Pytko

**Motion Passed: 8-0**

*Meeting adjourned 9:45 PM*

*Respectfully submitted by*

*Jessica Gerber*

*Fairfield Board of Education, Secretary*