

Please Note: These minutes are pending Board approval.
Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting held on April 2, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, Municipal Office, Building, 3 Primrose Street.

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| A. Plante, Chair | C. Melillo |
| J. Vouros, Vice Chair | A. Uberti |
| D. Ramsey, Secretary | T. Vadas |
| S. Tomai | 3 Staff |
| C. Gilson | 6 Public |
| D. Linnetz | 1 Press |
| G. Petertonjes | |
| I. Khazadian | |

MOTION: Mrs. Tomai moved that the Board of Education go into executive session to discuss two personnel leave of absence requests and invite Mr. Melillo. Mr. Ramsey seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 1 – Executive Session

Executive session began at 6:50 p.m. and ended at 6:55 p.m.

Mrs. Plante called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Item 2 – Pledge of Allegiance

Item 3 – Vote on Executive Session Items

MOTION: Mrs. Tomai moved that the Board of Education approve the one-year leave of absence for Katie Mauro. Mr. Gilson seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

MOTION: Mrs. Tomai moved that the Board of Education approve the one-year leave of absence for Abbey Clements. Mr. Gilson seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 4 – Consent Agenda

MOTION: Mrs. Tomai moved that the Board of Education approve the consent agenda which includes the donations to Sandy Hook School and the correspondence report. Mrs. Linnetz seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 5 – Public Participation

Item 6 – Reports

Chair Report: Mrs. Plante gave a budget update. The Legislative Council put forth the Board of Finance recommendation for the Board of Education budget. The referendum is April 23 and she urged everyone to vote. She also thanked those who attended the budget meetings.

Superintendent's Report: Mr. Melillo spoke about preparation for the April 8 partial solar eclipse. We will emphasize safety and provide certified eclipse glasses for students and all athletic activities will not be held outdoors until after 4:00. Middle School walkers must have a form from their parents saying they can do so. He contacted other districts, our weather person, and Dr. Machado who feel it is important to embrace this educational opportunity for students. Principals also have plans in place during dismissal times.

Committee Reports: Mrs. Linnetz attended a Bandorama at the high school with 450 students playing in the gym. She also attended an event at the middle school on Thursday when an author spoke to 7th and 8th grade students about how his primary school experiences helped him learn about creating stories.

Mr. Ramsey reported on the Curriculum and Instruction meeting on March 26 with Mrs. Uberti updating them on new state guidelines on the teacher evaluation program. The 2024-25 school year will remain status quo and we will work on implementing the program for the following year. The kindergarten enrollment is at 17 students in the K readiness program. Mrs. Uberti and Mrs. DiBartolo will be creating a webinar on the K-5 reading program.

Mr. Gilson reported that CAGE will be sending out information on the legislative session. He's going to Ridgefield because they received an award for their district website. Danbury also won this award. He would like to look at ways to improve our website.

Mr. Melillo suggested a meeting with Dennis Colclough who is working on updating our website. We recognize the need to modernize the design.

Student Reports:

Mr. Peteronjes reported that last Wednesday underclassmen took the SATS. Last Thursday Families United in Newtown hosted the Barbi and Ken Dream Night Prom. Yesterday the girls' softball team had their season opener.

Ms. Khazadian noted that it was Autism Awareness Day so many students wore blue in support of autism science and advocacy. Some of our students left for Spain today and will meet with the students who came to Newtown in the fall. On Wednesday, student government is hosting a debate on gun violence between students from Junior Newtown Action Alliance and the Debate Club. Friday is the junior prom at the Aqua Turf.

Item 7 – Old Business

Facilities Study:

MOTION: Mrs. Tomai moved that the Board of Education approve Bureau Veritas to conduct the facilities study. Mrs. Linnetz seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

John Barlow, Director of Facilities, spoke about the process for choosing Bureau Veritas.

Mr. Ramsey asked when it would begin.

Mr. Barlow said students will be in the building during some of this work, it will involve two or four people touring the facilities, and begin two weeks after the contract is signed. He received the contract today to start reviewing so it could start by the end of April. They will also look at the enrollment projections over 10 years and our space needs.

Mr. Gilson asked if he had any experience with their cost estimates and how much the cost will actually be.

Mr. Barlow said they could be between 5 and 15 percent on the estimates.

Mrs. Tomai recalled it was between 15 and 20 percent but they won't always know what the real costs were but this works for budgetary purposes.

Mr. Leonardi asked if they have experience working in a similar district like Newtown where enrollment has declined.

Mr. Barlow said they have done studies across the country so it is possible they have.

Mr. Leonardi asked to explain the scope of a space needs analysis.

Mr. Barlow said the State doesn't have a standard for existing space requirements. We have to see if our space meets the current educational standards.

Mr. Leonardi asked if that could include a recommendation to consolidate buildings. Mr. Barlow said there would be no recommendations. They will just bring back data on the buildings.

Mr. Leonardi asked if this group would reach out to departments like technology before the assessment begins and who manages the output of it to share with the stakeholders. Mr. Barlow said we would reconvene as a committee and share the draft copy with the stakeholders to make adjustments to the report.

Mr. Ramsey said there has been a lot of discussion about the air conditioning issue in the upper wing of the middle school and putting in an electrical infrastructure to enable portable air conditioners to help with the heat.

Mr. Barlow refused to spend \$450,000 through CIP for air conditioners without knowing more about the facility. They will look into the electrical system and putting air conditioning in the building. There's been talk about putting things in on a temporary level. He wants to see where the study lands before we start upgrading the electrical system.

Mrs. Linnetz spoke about the high school roof issues which is ongoing. We know we have to replace the roof because there are pretty regular disruptions. She asked how he prioritized the roof solution.

Mr. Barlow said a replacement roof would not be able to be done over the summer because it's a complete removal of the roof first. We are actively making repairs and doing inspections. The goal would be to apply for a non-priority grant through the State of Connecticut and make adjustments in the CIP for next summer. We could make a temporary repair to C-wing for \$93,000 but we also have leaks in A and B wings and the auditorium. The roof has gotten brittle over the years and cracks with the temperature changes.

Mrs. Linnetz confirmed replacing the roof for next summer. Mrs. Plante asked if the Municipal Center and Central Office is in the scope.

Mr. Barlow said it was not but Jeff Capeci was involved, is impressed with the pricing that came through for the study and is thinking about checking all of the town buildings.

Mrs. Plante asked if they would be looking at the middle school first. Mr. Barlow said they will be putting data in for each school and will go school by school with follow-up meetings where we get draft copies. It will take 12 weeks for the report. The CIP is in July and August. Upon the approval tonight, Jeff Capeci was authorized to sign the final contract.

Motion passes unanimously.

Item 8 – New Business

First Read of Policies:

Mrs. Linnetz referred to Policy 6114 Emergencies and Disaster Preparedness. We received a CAFE model policy and also included feedback from Mark Pompano, Chris Melillo, Anne Uberti, and the District Safety and Security Committee as well as from principals. It is very detailed on how we handle emergencies in the district.

Mrs. Linnetz said they took the same approach on Policy 6114.1 Fire Emergency (Drills) Crisis Response Drills/Bus Safety Drills and reviewed the CAFE model and contacted the same stakeholders. She also thanked Todd Higgins for his many hours working on these policies.

Approval of Minutes:

MOTION: Mrs. Tomai moved that the Board of Education approve the minutes of March 19, 2024. Mr. Ramsey seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 9 – Public Participation

John Barlow shared cards he received from students from the greenhouse because his crew did an amazing job putting automation into the greenhouse through a grant.

MOTION: Mr. Ramsey moved to adjourned. Mrs. Linnetz seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 10 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Donald Ramsey
Secretary