

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

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting held on June 27, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 3 Primrose Street.

D. Zukowski, Chair	C. Melillo
J. Vouros, Vice Chair	A. Uberti
D. Ramsey, Secretary	T. Vadas
D. Cruson	3 Staff
A. Plante	3 Public
T. Higgins	1 Press
S. Tomai	

Ms. Zukowski called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Item 1 – Pledge of Allegiance

Item 2 – Consent Agenda

MOTION: Mr. Cruson moved that the Board of Education approve the consent agenda which includes the correspondence report. Mrs. Plante seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 3 – Public Participation - none

Item 4 – Reports

Chair Report: Ms. Zukowski spoke about graduation and welcomed Shannon Tomai and Todd Higgins, the two new Board members, who appreciated the opportunity to serve.

Superintendent's Report: Mr. Melillo spoke about the move back to Hawley School. A two-day program was conducted at the Community Center for Hawley students and he thanked Matt Ariniello and the district staff for help with bus duty. We are applying for a grant through the Primary Mental Health Program from the State Board of Education for \$20,000 each year for two years. This would be for a paraprofessional who will receive specialized training to address mental health needs of our students. We received funds from a Perkins Grant and purchased a food truck for the high school for automotive students to learn how to design and retrofit the truck.

Mr. Melillo noted that the switch gear for the Hawley HVAC project was delayed until August 14 so we will use alternative equipment to have the building up and running with 2/3 of the school being air conditioned. This is a result of issues regarding the supply chain.

Mr. Higgins questioned if there was any collaboration from industry for the food truck. Mr. Melillo said he was going to be collaborating with our food service vendors. This work will incorporate many courses in the high school.

Mrs. Tomai asked who would be paying for any needed equipment for Hawley School. Mr. Melillo stated there was money set aside if this were to happen so we have a \$50,000 contingency for the Hawley project.

Committee Reports:

Mrs. Plante reported that the CFF committee met last night and reviewed the financial report. We will start work on the CIP and give a full presentation to the Board in August.

Financial Report and Transfers:

MOTION: Mr. Cruson moved that the Board of Education approve the financial report and transfers for the month ending May 31, 2023. Mr. Ramsey seconded.

Mrs. Vadas presented the financial report and answered questions from the Board.  
Motion passes unanimously.

#### Item 5 – Presentations

##### Social Emotional Supports:

Anne Dalton spoke about social emotional health and well-being in the schools. She provided information on programs in the schools and data on various surveys conducted.

Mr. Higgins said in looking at the survey trends asked if the district has help regarding this information.

Mrs. Dalton reported that we work with the consultant on the survey results to present it in a meaningful way.

Mr. Melillo said that regarding the number of incidents in the schools, we have faculty and staff who will look at the data points and see how we can support our students. We have a set protocol on what we have to do but each child is different.

Mrs. Uberti said regarding the incident log, it also includes a record of a disciplinary event such as pushing another student. The categories are dictated by the state. It's been difficult to know how each administrator labels a disciplinary event.

##### Chartwells Update:

Mrs. Vadas introduced Jamie Davies, Chartwells district manager, John Morris, director of dining services, and support managers Bill Devoe and Judit Hajba. Mr. Davies gave an update on their food service. She noted that she witnessed the Reed School mood boost in action where they discussed how the food affected their brain. Every child participated. We are also going to look into the recycling program and there is a learning component with grants available.

#### Item 6 – Old Business

##### Second Read of Gr. 7 and 8 Kitchen Science Curriculum:

MOTION: Mr. Cruson moved that the Board of Education approve the Grade 7 and Grade 8 Kitchen Science Curriculum. Mrs. Plante seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

#### Item 7 – New Business

##### Action on Potential Standing Committee Assignments:

MOTION: Mr. Cruson moved that the Board of Education approve the revised Standing Committee Assignments. Mrs. Plante seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

##### Action on Connecticut Primary Mental Health Grant:

MOTION: Mr. Cruson moved that the Board of Education approve applying for the Connecticut Primary Mental Health Grant. Mrs. Plante seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

##### Discussion Regarding Tuition:

MOTION: Mrs. Plante moved to table the tuition discussion. Mr. Ramsey seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

#### Item 6 – Old Business continued

##### Strategic Plan Update and Possible Action:

Richard Lemons gave an overview of the process for the strategic plan and portrait of a graduate and spoke about the four district priorities and strategic actions and also how the plan will be used by the Board, the district, and school leadership teams, and how the Communications Committee will publish the plans.

Mr. Higgins referred to a graphic around social and emotional learning and was trying to track putting students on the path and how it translated into the strategic plan. He asked what the collaboration was on the plan in this area.

Mr. Lemons reported that there is evidence that points to the importance of social emotional development and skills necessary to thrive in the world and the core components of being academically successful in school. The planning committee recognized that this work was important. This was a strong set of assets for Newtown. It didn't need to be a fourth goal because of the progress that has been made.

Mr. Melillo said we acknowledge the social emotional component was important. This component needs to be woven into the curriculum pieces and we have been doing that. We have looked at data points and we have processes in place looking at data to ensure student needs are being met. We looked at where our needs were and where we had to improve to move our students to the next level.

Mrs. Uberti said it has been an intense focus the past decade. We try to build competencies in students to be able to do the things in the plan.

Ms. Zukowski stated that we have the strategic plan but we have to ensure that it will be successful.

Mr. Lemons agreed with Ms. Zukowski. All schools will be asked to look at the plan and build their school community tied to the data of the schools priorities. Schools will share their strategic plan and compare with other schools.

Mr. Melillo met with Mr. Lemons about having leadership teams regarding what goals will be made. At our administrators retreat we will discuss this and develop school improvement plans. Hopefully, the schools will have a working plan in place at the start of the school year.

Mr. Higgins said there is a reference to annual performance and asked if the benchmarks have been identified and goals to say this is where we are, this is where we want to be, and to assess where we are in the development of this plan.

Mr. Melillo noted that we aren't there right now. We had to have the Board approve the plan first. We want to have preliminaries around structures when we pull data and who will be on the teams.

Mrs. Tomai proposed to add a reference in priority #2 so it doesn't get lost in the portrait of the graduate.

Mr. Melillo said we've taken feedback from a multitude of people but we can approve the plan as is and come back with that in it. There's a nod to the DEI plan and we can add the Casel standards as a reference to the work we are doing.

**MOTION:** Mr. Cruson moved that the Board of Education approve the Newtown Public Schools Strategic Plan. Mrs. Plante seconded.

MOTION: Mrs. Tomai moved to amend the motion to add a reference to social emotional learning, specifically Casel and add a reference to social emotional learning, specifically Casel, in Priority 2, portrait of the graduate. Mr. Higgins seconded.

Mr. Cruson appreciated the amendment but feels this is such a foundational piece to the district it doesn't need to be spelled out in the plan. The Board does feel it's a priority but he was not in favor of adding the Casel framework as a bullet in the strategic plan.

Mrs. Uberti said it was important to not think of this as a checklist. The school teams come together to reflect the needs of their school. They should build action steps in their building. There may be other parts of the plans their goals are connected to. She liked to add the social emotional piece. There is funding for mental health and social emotional learning so it makes sense to put it in there.

MOTION: Mrs. Tomai moved to remove her amendment. Mr. Higgins seconded.

MOTION: Mrs. Tomai moved to amend the motion to add under Priority 2, Section 3, create a comprehensive plan to help all students achieve the portrait of the graduate, including an assessment process. The new language would be consistent with the social emotional learning standards of the Newtown Public School District. Mr. Vouros seconded.

Vote on amendment: 6 ayes, 1 nay (Mr. Cruson) Motion passes.

Vote on main motion: 7 ayes Motion passes unanimously.

#### Item 7 – New Business continued

##### Tuition Discussion:

Mr. Cruson said policy 5118 Nonresident or Tuition Students prescribes the percentage we charge for staff. If we want to change the percentage, it has to go to the Policy Committee.

##### Action on Minutes:

MOTION: Mr. Cruson moved that the board of Education approve the minutes of June 1, 2023.

Mr. Ramsey seconded. Vote: 5 ayes, 2 abstained (Mr. Higgins, Mrs. Tomai) Motion passes.

MOTION: Mr. Cruson moved that the Board of Education approve the minutes of June 6, 2023.

Mr. Ramsey seconded. Vote: 5 ayes, 2 abstained (Mr. Higgins, Mrs. Tomai) Motion passes.

MOTION: Mr. Cruson moved that the Board of Education approve the minutes of June 8, 2023.

Mr. Ramsey seconded. Vote: 5 ayes, 2 abstained (Mr. Higgins, Mrs. Tomai) Motion passes.

#### Item 8 – Public Participation - none

MOTION: Mr. Cruson moved that the Board of Education go into executive session regarding the contract extensions for the Assistant Superintendent and Director of Business and the evaluation of the Superintendent and invite Mr. Melillo. Mr. Vouros seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

#### Item 9 – Executive Session

The Board entered executive session at 9:45 p.m. and returned to public session at 10:35 p.m.

#### Item 10 – Public Session

MOTION: Mr. Cruson moved that the Board of Education approve the one-year contract extension for the Director of Business. Ms. Plante seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

MOTION: Mr. Cruson moved that the Board of Education approve the one-year contract extension, 2.5% raise and \$1,500 Annuity Payment for the Assistant Superintendent, and move further that the Board Chairperson be authorized to finalize and execute the employment contract with Mr. Melillo for the period July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2026. Ms. Plante seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

MOTION: Mr. Cruson moved that the Board of Education extend the employment contract of Christopher Melillo as Superintendent of Schools, through and including June 30, 2026, and raise of 2.5%, and move further that the Board Chairperson be authorized to finalize and execute the employment contract with Mr. Melillo for the period July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2026. Ms. Plante seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

MOTION: Mr. Cruson moved to adjourn. Mr. Higgins seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 11 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

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Donald Ramsey  
Secretary