Regular Meeting Minutes
Fairfield BoE, October 4, 2016

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Call to Order of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Education and Roll Call

Chairman Philip Dwyer called the Regular Meeting to order at 7:30PM. Present were members Eileen Liu-McCormack, Donna Karnal, Jessica Gerber, Philip Dwyer, Anthony Calabrese, Trisha Pytko, Jennifer Maxon-Kennelly and John Llewellyn. Marc Patten was not present. Others present were Interim Superintendent Dr. Stephen Tracy, members of the central office leadership team, and approximately 20 members of the public.

There was no public comment.

Mr. Dwyer received unanimous consent to discuss item 6B first on the agenda.

6B – Review of Modification of Right of Repurchase Agreement for Board of Education Offices at 501 Kings Hwy E.

Town attorney, Mr. Lesser, reviewed the agreement for the condo unit as purchased by the town in 2002. The first repurchase agreement was negotiated in 2012, and this extension will be for 10 years, through 2026. This will go to the Board of Selectmen, followed by the RTM; this is being provided to the BOE for informational purposes only.

Mr. Llewellyn questioned the impetus and requested the fair market rate value; he also mentioned that the document references sections that are not provided. Mr. Lesser said this agreement was drafted at the Town's request; the current purchase price in the agreement was $4.6M. It provides flexibility; in the event the seller exercises the right to repurchase, we have the right to lease for 5 years at a fair market rate.
Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked how is it in the Town's best interest to use fair market value? Mr. Lesser said local realtors were consulted; this agreement provides more flexibility.
Mr. Dwyer said additional questions can be sent directly to Mr. Lesser.

Presentations

District Improvement Plan – Annual Update

Dr. Tracy thanked staff for working on the report; Part I summarizes the steps taken since July 2015 to implement the actions set forth in the Plan; Part II presents data related to each of the Student Performance Indicators and Part III sets forth modifications proposed by the administration. He was very impressed with the ambitious nature of the Plan when initially studying it prior to beginning work in the district. The staff was able to answer most of the submitted questions, and they continue to work on those remaining. Mrs. Parks added that the comprehensive report is self-explanatory – the staff collected as much data as possible and some conclusions have been drawn.

Mr. Dwyer recommended focusing on Parts 1 and 2 for the initial discussion, before moving on to the recommended changes in Part 3.
Mrs. Gerber appreciated all the work that was put in to this document and asked how changes regarding paperless report cards have been conveyed to parents. She suggested advertising report availability dates on the home page. Mr. Cummings said a constant effort continues on communicating the availability to view report cards in IC.
Mr. Llewellyn asked about online student records. What is the retention policy? Who has access, what is shared with outside firms? Can parents request access to student data that is not available through the portal? Mrs. Parks said the paper file is the permanent record; the state requires that it be kept for 50 years. The parent portal offers parents access to most student data; parents may request a review of student data that is not available online. New legislation requires the district to notify parents and post on the web – any outside vendors that will have access to student data and/or student content. In the case of PLATO, the vendor will only have access to student data and content for those students using PLATO. Ms. Leonardi added that special education records have a higher level of confidentiality and are housed separately; these records are kept for 7 years beyond graduation, after which the student can pick them up.

Mrs. Gerber asked if other districts had reached out regarding the Walter Fitzgerald Campus – how quickly could students from other districts begin attending? When will we get a report on this? Ms. Leonardi said the students may begin attending in the second semester – there is no specific date for the report, perhaps at the November meeting. Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said the report was referenced in June and she would prefer receiving it sooner rather than later. Mr. Dwyer said program changes are usually discussed at the November meeting, so it can be addressed at that time. Mr. Llewellyn said he would prefer getting it ahead of that meeting.
Ms. Pytko referenced page 3, #5: How are we working the social/emotional transition? Mrs. Parks said some of this is addressed at orientation, but will also be worked on via Instructional Rounds, taking place tomorrow at the elementary and middle school levels. Principals can directly address issues individually with students who may have more anxiety. Ms. Leonardi added that the focus is on a tiered approach – universal and more extensive tiers for those students who need it; parents and teachers should also be considered.
Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked about subject teachers in 5th grade; and students not having a fixed teacher - how does this impact the transition? Can the impact be measured? Mr. Cummings said this is in place in some schools, but there needs to be a systemic approach to make that work in each school; the model shouldn't follow the teacher. Band and other specials need to be addressed; an algorithm has to be worked out. Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked what was meant by the statement on page 3, #5, regarding the focused discussions around grading. Mrs. Parks said this being studied and has initiated a larger dialogue. If we have a Capstone experience in grades 11 and 12, credits will still be required to graduate. How can we transform what happens in the classroom to ensure that students are directing their own learning to some extent while still performing at a high level.
Mrs. Liu-McCormack, referencing transition in question #5, said she was hoping to see more specific strategies that we had implemented as part of the program. She felt the frequency and rigor of tests in middle school could be introduced gradually in elementary school. Some teachers may do this, but there doesn't appear to be a deliberate program that's rolled out across the district is her guess. The concept of note-taking is important; it's this unsaid skill. There might be something lost in the new process. Kids don't use notes, they use review pages instead. Is there a way to build this into the transition process? It's a bizarre little thing but it's helpful. She also thinks handwriting is important. You write differently than how you speak. Typing isn't quite as personal as handwriting. Kids don't get to watch teachers writing anymore. It would be nice to have that in elementary school. It's such a fast move into technology. Also important is the introduction of Latin roots and prefixes, which helps develop vocabulary; you have to be able to write big essays using good words, and students must have a grasp for the bigger tests like the SAT. Mrs. Parks said teaching strategies for students to summarize and be effective note-takers exists within the Marzano framework. Mr. Cummings added that vocabulary building exists, and there will be more of this with the Social Studies and Science curriculum. Mrs. Liu-McCormack said that's fabulous, and wanted to know if a description existed for the transition, will there be a packet presented to the Board, or is it a broad concept. Mrs. Parks said it is a work-in-progress; one goal of Instructional Rounds is to get concrete information sharing between levels of teachers. Mrs. Liu-McCormack asked if there was a disconnect from one building to another. Mrs. Parks said they are looking at ways to make it easier for students.
Ms. Karnal referenced page 2, #3 and page 3, #6 – does the state timeline have to be followed or can we make our own; she is concerned that the state is slowing down. Mrs. Parks said teachers have been working on the Science curriculum, which will be brought to the Board in the spring. Earth Science will be a more rigorous course and may be an elective. Higher-level courses are really electives, but students are encouraged to take them. Dr. Boice said the new curriculum will be coming in May and they will then write performance-based tasks after that.
Mrs. Liu-McCormack encouraged the inclusion of student feedback in the development of the new Science curriculum to provide thoughts on content delivery. She would think that students as learners are pretty bright and would be able to provide some insights as to how the courses went. Mrs. Parks said the curriculum is driven by comprehensive standards that are more focused on Science practice skills; there isn't a lot of leeway there. During the year, teachers will get feedback from students on the instructional piece. Mrs. Liu-McCormack said that students might not feel comfortable giving criticism on their teachers. Maybe we could go through student council. We need a 360 perspective. Attracting kids into STEM – they need to like it. Sometimes people think we're in an ivory tower with our own views, but it would be nice to get another perspective.
Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly confirmed that the ELA curriculum is already embedded with prefixes and suffixes and Latin roots. She thanked the staff for the answers to her questions. She referenced page 27 – she expected 2016 data for STAR Reading. Mr. Cummings explained that the district has raised a concern with how the Student Growth Profile (SGP) is measured; it is a new assessment and the district needs to learn how to calibrate this to meet student needs.

Mr. Llewellyn asked if the SGP was new within STAR, as STAR has been used for several years. Dr. Boice said once they dove into the data, it was an important revelation; we were not aware of this when STAR was used on a limited basis at the middle school. Mr. Cummings said this is the second year it has been used at the elementary level and reiterated that the concern is how SGP is being calculated.
Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly, speaking as a teacher, added that the data would be meaningless without Professional Development. She also asked:

- On page 14, #5 – Does it make sense to include raw scores for non-traditional students? Mrs. Parks said that it is competing data – much like the AP courses - we are trying to get more and more students to take these courses, which affects the AP Scores. The state has identified some highly skilled careers that are under-represented by gender.
- Some targets have already been reached or have even been exceeded – is the idea to adjust the target after 2 years, rather than doing this prematurely? Mrs. Parks said yes.
- How are Outplaced students included in attendance? Mrs. Parks said this is a rule of the CT State Dept. of Education. Ms. Leonardi said Outplaced students are still our students; Mrs. Parks added that Outplaced students are also included in district graduation rates.
- How was the post-grad survey data disseminated? She is interested in general feedback on how this has resulted in change. Mr. Hatzis said the response rates are not great, but the survey does capture a lot of data.

Mrs. Gerber asked – how did we reach out to the graduates, is it possible to use email? Mr. Hatzis said the survey is conducted by Futuristics and mailed to the home address. It is fiscally prudent to remain with the same vendor for next year, to see longitudinal data.
Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly offered that it might help to alert students to this survey before they leave.
Mrs. Liu-McCormack asked if Mr. Hatzis could come back with a quick blurb about the key data take-aways from the survey. Mr. Hatzis deferred to the Chair and the Superintendent, but said he would be happy to share the data. Mr. Dwyer said Mr. Hatzis is busy, but he could work with Dr. Tracy to figure out a time to do that.
Mr. Llewellyn referenced page 13, #3 and asked:

- What is the sample size for Free and Reduced? Should we be concerned about this decline? Mrs. Parks said the sample size is significantly smaller than the all student category: 21 students in 2013-14, 14 students in 2015-16.
- Page 16, #11 - Has heard from high school students that courses have slowed down resulting in worsening scores. He would like to have a way to encourage students to take AP without an adverse impact. Dr. Boice said not all AP students take the AP tests. AP teachers are required to submit a syllabus to the College Board; students who normally would not take AP, are being encouraged and supported by teachers to do so.
- Wants to understand more about Alison Zmuda– is she advocating for doing away with grade levels? Mrs. Parks said Alison Zmuda might provide professional development. Nothing is being changed, rather administrators are exploring best practices – focusing on grades reflecting student learning, rather than behavior and attendance.
- Regarding #16 – Free and Reduced dropped significantly, knowing the sample size would make the data meaningful. Mrs. Parks said she can include those numbers on the assessment report.

Mr. Dwyer mentioned that page 31, recommended changes, has been reviewed by Dr. Jones. Dr. Tracy said changes can be discussed in December.
Mrs. Liu-McCormack commented that perhaps the District Common Assessments don't belong in the District Improvement Plan, rather, they show year-year progress – is it useful, can it be shortened from 4 pages?
Mr. Dwyer thanked the staff for the fine report and the work done this past year.

Old Business

Adoption of Policy 4152.6/4252.6, Personnel – Personal Leaves, Family and Medical Leave Act

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly, Ms. Karnal seconded that the Board of Education adopt policy 4152.6/4252.6.

Motion Passed: 8-0

Approval of Deletion of Policy #4935

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly moved, Mrs. Gerber seconded that the Board of Education approve the deletion of Policy 4935.

Motion Passed: 8-0

New Business

Approval of the Installation of Charging Stations at Fairfield Warde High School and Fairfield Ludlowe High School

Mr. Calabrese moved, Mr. Dwyer seconded that the Board of Education approve the installation of two EV Charging Stations at Fairfield Warde High School and two EV Charging Stations at Fairfield Ludlowe High School (four units total) which will be paid for by a grant from the CTDEEP.

Mr. Thompson, a volunteer with the Town's Clean Energy Task Force, said the task force promotes clean energy within Fairfield, which includes solar, sustainable transportation and energy efficiency. The grant for this project comes from the state and bids have been received; installation of the charging stations is 100% reimbursable. There are currently 13 charging stations in the Town. The worst case scenario for the yearly cost is $600 per school.

Mrs. Gerber expressed concern over the cost and thanked Mr. Thompson for the responses to her initial questions and asked:

- If no one uses the stations, would there be no expense? Mr. Thompson said yes.
- At the rec center, is that tied to the solar panel? Mr. Thompson said it is still on the grid.
- The biggest concern is the yearly cost. Mr. Thompson said one of the grant conditions is that is must be free for the first 3 years, after which there could be a charge. Metering would prove difficult, a club-type membership would be more advisable.
- How would usage be controlled at night – there are many evening events at the high schools. Mr. Thompson said that while the grant has the condition that it must be free to the public, they noted in the grant that overnight parking is disallowed.
- What is the usage at the Riverfield station? Mr. Thompson said 1 or 2 people have used it.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly echoed Mrs. Gerber's concerns and asked why this is not in the Town's budget and whether it should be located in a more accessible location. Mr. Thompson said this is included in the BOE budget as it is using the school grid; this is a fleet grant and the BOE is among the biggest employers in Fairfield.
Ms. Pytko echoed Mrs. Gerber and Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly's concerns. Mr. Thompson added that each high school has solar panels.
Mr. Dwyer said crossing guards, nurses and security staff are carried on the Town side of the budget – that is where the supervisory responsibility lies. Absorbing this into our budget is fair.
Mr. Llewellyn asked if the grant requires that it be open to the public, how can this be restricted to only teachers and students? From a security perspective, isn't it better to put them near the stadium? Could we add timers? Mr. Thompson said usage could be restricted with signage; the vision is to form a club with appointments. Mr. Cullen said the placement requires proximity to a power source.
Mr. Calabrese said this is a no-brainer. He sees the 2 that are at the Rec. Dept. and people are plugged in every day. There is no loss of parking, no cost to the Town, and it goes with the rest of the solar program; he likes it.
Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked if the BOS and BOF supported this project.
Mrs. Gerber said the BOS voted in favor quickly, the BOF postponed the vote until November and requested BOE approval first. Mr. Thompson added that the grant deadline was extended to December 31st and noted that any work done may not impact school operations.
Mrs. Gerber asked if this approval was setting a precedent for future projects, since we didn't approval Riverfield.
Mr. Dwyer said he didn't think so, but will check.
Mrs. Liu-McCormack asked if the operating budget was paying for Riverfield and was concerned that this could be setting a precedent in funding non-education energy projects. Mr. Thompson said the outlet at Riverfield is tied to the school's panel but uses 1/5 of the power of these charging stations.
Mr. Dwyer said the Town installed the solar panels that saved $80K in our budget. Mr. Thompson added that this project provides electric vehicle educational awareness.
Mr. Llewellyn asked – how was Riverfield paid for? Is it possible to add a timer? Mr. Thompson said Riverfield was part of the capital school construction project; he wasn't sure about adding timers.
Mrs. Gerber asked if there were some way to control it with timers, to enable staff and student use during school hours; she expressed some concern about public use during school events that take place after hours. Mr. Cullen said there isn't a way to control it during the day but overnight parking is disallowed without a permit and the police monitor this. Mr. Thompson said while he liked the timer idea, he wasn't sure if it was possible.

Ms. Karnal suggested using identification cards to control access and Mr. Thompson said that would be costly.
Mrs. Gerber clarified that people can't be charged until after 3 years; if there were a low cost alternative for the district to be able to switch off the chargers, then she could support this.
Mr. Llewellyn said an amendment could be made or the vote could be postponed; he asked the Chair if that would set back the Town bodies.
Mr. Dwyer said he wasn't sure. Mr. Thompson said the task force has a small discretionary budget and he could look into covering the cost of the timers.

Mr. Llewellyn moved, Mrs. Gerber seconded to amend the motion to read:
"that the Board of Education approve the installation of two EV Charging Stations at Fairfield Warde High School and two EV Charging Stations at Fairfield Ludlowe High School (four units total), ***which will be controlled by timers, to allow use Monday-Friday 7AM-7PM***, which will be paid for by a grant from the CTDEEP ***or the Clean Energy Task Force***." (added language in bold)

Public Comment

Suzanne Miska, Ryegate Road: Location of stations and maintenance issues and costs, concerns with changing the language impacting getting the grant.

Mrs. Gerber asked – Will this new language present a problem for the grant? Do you know the long-term cost for maintenance? Mr. Thompson said he would check with CT DEEP on the new language; there is a warranty in place for several years, after which a Town contractor could provide service.
Mr. Llewellyn asked – is there is a minimum timeframe to keep this installed? Mr. Thompson said the BOE is not required to fix it if it breaks at any time. The unit cost is approximately $1500 each, the real cost is for the installation and labor.
Mrs. Liu-McCormack asked where the cost for repair and maintenance would be absorbed; Mr. Thompson said that is to be determined.
Mr. Llewellyn asked – who owns this? Mr. Thompson said the Town of Fairfield.
Mr. Dwyer said we can choose to not fix it.
Mrs. Liu-McCormack confirmed that the school pays for the electricity out of our school budget for the 3 years, and there are no other charges.
Mr. Llewellyn added that it is under warranty for 3 years and confirmed no night or weekend usage. Mr. Thompson said that was his understanding – the way the grant was written.

Motion Passed 5-3
Favor: Ms. Karnal, Mrs. Gerber, Mr. Dwyer, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly, Mr. Llewellyn
Oppose: Mrs. Liu-McCormick, Mr. Calabrese, Ms. Pytko

The original motion, as amended, Passed: 6-2
Favor: Ms. Karnal, Mrs. Gerber, Mr. Dwyer, Mr. Calabrese, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly, Mr. Llewellyn
Oppose: Mrs. Liu-McCormack, Ms. Pytko

First Reading of the 2017-2018 School Calendar
Dr. Tracy thanked Mrs. Parks for her work on the calendar.
Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked if the 17th of October, PD early dismissal, could be moved to the 18th? Mrs. Parks said this has not been discussed.
Mr. Llewelyn asked if this is in sync with the move to the regional calendar. Mrs. Parks said yes.

First Reading of Policies 5111 and 5113
Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly referred to page 4 of policy 5111 to see existing policy language. The chronic absenteeism section of policy 5113 is where major work was done. She would appreciate questions emailed in advance.

Mr. Llewellyn asked – in regards to immediate transfers as stated on page 2 of the first policy- what are Unified Districts 1 and 2? Dr. Tracy responded that Unified District 1 is the Dept. of Correction and Unified District 2 is the Dept. of Children and Families. Mr. Llewellyn also asked on 5113, page f, why changing from district to school level?
Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said this allows latitude in the appeals process. Mr. Coyne added that the handbooks are identical in addressing absences.
Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly added that if policy 5113 is approved, then 3 policies will be placed on the agenda for deletion, as they will be redundant.

Discussion and Possible Action on the Consulting Agreement between Dr. Toni R. Jones and the Board of Education

Mrs. Gerber moved, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly seconded that the Board of Education approve the consulting agreement dated October 4, 2016, between the Fairfield Board of Education and Dr. Toni R. Jones.

Mr. Dwyer said the consulting agreement is the daily pay rate based on the contract salary.
Mr. Llewellyn said this is a wonderful idea. He requested to be notified if Dr. Title's contract goes over; expenses should be limited in terms of the Racial Imbalance Plan.

Motion Passed: 8-0

Approval of Minutes

Approval of the Minutes of the Special Meeting of September 22, 2016

Mrs. Gerber moved, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly seconded that the Board of Education approve the Minutes of the Special Meeting of September 22, 2016.

Motion Passed: 6-0-2
Approve: Ms. Karnal, Mrs. Gerber, Mr. Dwyer, Mr. Calabrese, Ms. Pytko, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly
Abstain: Mrs. Liu-McCormack, Mr. Llewellyn

Superintendent Report

Dr. Tracy said the official enrollment as of September 30, 2016 shows a total of 9,984 students in district, down 74 from last year; this will be incorporated into FY-18 planning and submitted to CSDE. He joined new administrators at CES and participated in a panel answering their questions. This group also meets regularly with Mr. Coyne. He continues to work with Dr. Jones on the budget as well as the Racial Imbalance Plan. The next meeting will include BOE discussion of budget ideas.

Committee/Liaison Reports

Mrs. Gerber reported that the OHBC October meeting is canceled, bids are expected for the connector in November; she will keep the Board informed.
Ms. Pytko reported that the SEPTA meeting will take place tomorrow at McKinley school.

Open Board Comment

Mr. Dwyer asked the Board to review the DRAFT 2017 BOE meeting schedule, there are 2 remaining conflicts with the BOF. This schedule will be set in December after the Organizational Meeting. October 24 is the Town Hall meeting and will take place at one of the schools.

Adjournment

Mrs. Gerber moved, Ms. Pytko seconded that this Regular Meeting of the Board of Education adjourn.

Motion Passed: 8-0

Meeting adjourned at 10:26PM

Respectfully Submitted by
Jessica Gerber
Fairfield Board of Education, Secretary