

Ashford Board of Education
Special Meeting Minutes – March 20, 2014
7:30 p.m.

Note: Per C.G.S. §10 – 218, Board of Education meeting minutes are provided in a draft format within 48 hours of the date the meeting was held. With the exception of motions and votes recorded, these minutes are unofficial until they have been read and approved by a majority vote of the Board. Should edits be necessary, they will be made at a regularly scheduled meeting, noted in the meeting minutes, and so voted upon.

Call To Order

Vice-Chairperson K. Rourke called the meeting to order at 7:44 pm. in the Ashford School cafeteria.

Board Present

Present were members J. Lippert, D. Wesson, K. Rourke, L. Donegan and K. Warren, J. Rupert (9:20 pm). Also present were Dr. J. Longo, Superintendent (9:22 pm), Principal T. Hopkins, Asst. Principal C. Ford and J. Barsaleau, recording secretary. Unable to attend was board member B. Supina. There were several residents and Ashford School staff members in the audience.

Motion made by D. Wesson to add to the agenda public comment on the Ashford Board of Education budget, Ashford Board of Finance policies and budget calendar, seconded by K. Warren and carried unanimously.

K. Rourke read items 6 and 7 of the “Ashford Board of Finance Budget Policies for Fiscal Year 2014-2015” aloud, and reminded those present that time is running short concerning this budget with the public hearing date set for April 8th.

Marilyn Rossi asked what the outcome would be if a budget does not pass by July 1st. The response was that the current operating budget remains in effect until such a time a budget is approved by referendum. Another audience member asked if there was a way for the board to know the reason or reasons why a budget may not pass at referendum, and if it was possible to form a “coalition” to get the budget increased from the amount proposed? The board responded that if the budget fails at referendum, the budget is revisited and everything within it is “on the table”.

Jennifer Mozeiko asked why there had been no changes made to the board’s budget since the March 6th meeting? The board responded that the board chair and superintendent are currently attending the Board of Finance meeting and until they have finished their review, no changes will occur.

Susan Cunningham, Ashford School reading specialist, stated she was affected by the reduction in staff that is proposed. She asked on behalf of herself and others whose positions are affected, what the board’s priorities would be if able to reallocate funds, would they reinstate those positions or add new positions? The board’s response was that the proposed budget, with these staff reductions, was the least catastrophic of the options discussed, keeping in mind that enrollment has declined.

Persons to be Heard

Ginger Lusa, Ashford School teacher, sought confirmation that the April 8th public hearing was a critical date for people to be in attendance to speak to the budget publicly? The board responded that those interested in the budget should attend the April 8th meeting. Mrs. Lusa asked if any paraprofessional reductions were in this budget? The board responded there were not.

Board member J. Lippert spoke of the creation of a Facebook page by a resident and he was appreciative of this effort to improve communication.

Communications

K. Rourke read the following communications:

- Dr. Longo provided a letter indicating offering to forego his proposed salary increase for next year;
- Jennifer Mozeiko wrote a letter to both the Board of Education and Board of Finance addressing concerning proposed BOE budget reductions and supporting a 5% budget increase;
- Steve Mortyko submitted a letter regarding electronic communications
- Nichole Rice sent e-mail correspondence requesting an additional meeting be scheduled to address the budget for those in attendance at the Board of Finance this evening.

Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the special meeting minutes of 2/20/14 made by L. Donegan, seconded by D. Wesson and carried unanimously with one abstention (K. Warren).

Motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of 2/20/14 made by L. Donegan, seconded by D. Wesson and carried unanimously with one abstention (K. Warren).

Motion to approve the special meeting minutes of 2/27/14 made by K. Warren, seconded by D. Wesson and carried unanimously.

Motion made by K. Warren to approve the regular meeting minutes of 3/06/14 with the following amendment: strike J. Lippert as present, and note as to unable to attend. Motion seconded by D. Wesson and carried unanimously with two abstentions (L. Donegan and J. Lippert).

Committee Reports

a. Finance

The board's finance committee met earlier this evening to review the cafeteria financial reports and FY 13-14 budget through January 2014. The cafeteria has a surplus of \$10,000 at this time; there are plans to purchase replacement tables. Lines over budget within the budget objects were reviewed. It was noted that under Non-Certified (112) staff all transportation related expense for Region 19 are encumbered, but there are still contractual payments due; maintenance is over budget due to work necessary to repair/replace pneumatic HVAC controls; special education (370) is over budget due to outplacement tuition increases, the board anticipates the release of excess cost funds that have been requested. Upon receipt those funds will be applied to this line. Plant Fuel (411) has exceeded the number of gallons in the contracted agreement. Four thousand gallons were purchased at market price. The Miscellaneous object line (700) represents funding that the board was required to expend per the terms of the school security grant.

Administrative Reports

a. Superintendent

As Dr. Longo has not yet arrived, K. Warren motioned to hear the Superintendent's report later in the meeting. Motion seconded by L. Donegan and carried unanimously.

b. Director of Pupil Personnel

K. Rourke read Mrs. Hartigan's report. The board shared its appreciation and thanks to Mrs. Hartigan for continuing to perform many of her duties as director, despite being on medical leave. They also praised Asst. Principal Ford for her efforts and assistance during the absence of the director.

c. Principal

Mr. Hopkins presented a draft schedule reflecting the proposed staff reductions and explained the calculation of instructional hours. The draft proposed is based on 45-minute classes for grades 5-8, and grade 3 and 4 health instruction would be taught by the homeroom teacher using an interdisciplinary approach. He noted that technology education instruction is added for grades 5-8 to this draft, as it is currently lacking. Students will be better prepared going into high school. Dr. Longo received a grant this summer that has provided funding to create a computer lab, which would be used not only for testing, but also for access to technology education and other opportunities. Board members asked questions and sought clarification on some items, and discussion followed. Any questions should be e-mailed to Mr. Hopkins.

Old Business

a. Minimum Budget Requirement

Dr. Longo and J. Rupert will be meeting with town officials and others next week to discuss this matter.

b. 2014-2015 Budget

K. Rourke suggested there be another meeting next week to review this evening's input.

D. Wesson addressed the letter presented by Dr. Longo concerning wages and thought it should be discussed at a later meeting as Dr. Longo is the face board in district matters and has obtained two competitive grants this year. J. Lippert stated his appreciation of Dr. Longo's efforts, and noted he is doing an outstanding job.

J. Rupert and Dr. Longo arrived from the Board of Finance meeting. J. Rupert reported that the Board of Finance feels there are items within the proposed budget that are overfunded and provided documentation for board review. These included insurance, outside services and gasoline/diesel. The Board of Finance also indicated they would be willing to support future budget increases if there is a clear vision and plan for new or expanded programs presented with the budget. Board members held discussion on these points. J. Rupert will request an electronic copy of the document prepared by the Board of Finance and

forward to board of education members. Dr. Longo will direct the business office to conduct a budget analysis. J. Rupert suggested to the Board of Finance that there be a three board meeting prior to the beginning of budget planning next year to discuss and decide on a presentation format that is acceptable to all parties.

K. Rourke asked for any further comments prior to moving on to New Business:

A member of the audience asked if Ashford seeks Medicare reimbursements for some student related expenses. This has been discussed previously, but Dr. Longo will consult with the director of special education.

Steve Mortyko echoed some of the commentary of the Board of Finance, his own “crude” analysis of the budget revealed what seemed to be areas that appear overfunded.

Greg Robinson questioned why both the Board of Education and Board of Finance have been meeting on the same dates. Response: Tonight was a regularly scheduled meeting night for the Board of Education, however, during the annual budget process, this conflict is often unavoidable. Both boards traditionally meet on alternating Thursdays.

New Business

a. Collective Bargaining Strategy (Non-Meeting)

Next Meeting Date/Agenda Items

Motion made by J. Rupert to move item 9 “Next Meeting Date/Agenda Items” as the next order of business, and address item 8 “New Business”, and 8a, “Collective Bargaining Strategy (Non-Meeting)” following adjournment of the meeting. Motion seconded by L. Donegan and carried unanimously.

The board will hold a special meeting on March 27th at 6:30 in the library/media center to discuss budget. The next regular meeting is April 3rd, items to be discussed will be MBR and carryover fund.

Superintendent Evaluation (Executive Session Anticipated)

Final edits were made and the document sent to Dr. Longo

Motion to adjourn

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting at (10:31 pm) and move to non-meeting to discuss collective bargaining strategy, made by D. Wesson, seconded by K. Rourke and carried unanimously.

Recorded by:

Jennifer Barsaleau
Recording Secretary