

Ashford Board of Education Ashford, Connecticut

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.

Special Meeting Minutes – March 20, 2014

Vice-Chair K. Rourke called this special meeting to order at 7:09 pm. Present were board members K. Rourke, D. Wesson, K. Warren, L. Donegan, and J. Lippert. Unable to attend was member B. Supina. Also present was Principal T. Hopkins, Asst. Principal C. Ford and recording secretary J. Barsaleau. Chair J. Rupert and Superintendent Dr. J. Longo were attending the Board of Finance meeting at town hall.

There were several Ashford residents and Ashford school staff members in the audience (sign in sheet attached).

Public Budget Address

Vice Chair Rourke opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and thanking the audience for coming to this meeting. She then went on to explain the public address procedure, and stated that the board may not be able to respond to all comments or addresses this evening.

The floor was opened for comment/address.

Martha Sherman, a former Ashford School student and senior at E.O. Smith High addressed the board concerning cuts to the health and flight program, if affected. She shared her feeling that health education is one of the most important programs at the school and how it shaped her life. Upon arriving at E.O. Smith, she found that students from Ashford had far more knowledge of health than peers from Mansfield and Willington. She spoke of the plan to have the health teacher work from a cart rather than a classroom, as it would take away the student privacy and could result in student's feeling like they cannot ask questions in an appropriate setting. She stated that Flight was very important in creating close, lasting relationships going into high school and beyond.

Martha Hardisty, teacher, thanked Martha for her kind words and support. She went on to read a prepared statement (attached) concerning reductions to health and physical education in next year's proposed budget and the impact those reductions would have.

Caleigh Campion, former Ashford school student and senior at E.O. Smith. She echoed the statement earlier that the health education and flight programs create a close-knit community, she spoke of the importance of Mrs. Hardisty's teaching; of the SOAR program value in building character development, valuable skills learned, and agreed that a cart would not be good for health instruction as there would be no place for personal questions or concerns.

Steve Mortyko, opened his address by thanking the board for the opportunity to speak. He shared that he was very concerned about planned personnel cuts in the budget. He stated that he had been working on his own line by line analysis of the budget and calculated that the position reduction savings totaled about \$74,000, and would like to see these avoided. He asked several questions about accuracy and the calculations used to determine the numbers in the spreadsheet portion of the budget.

At this time, K. Rourke and D. Wesson, members of the board's financial committee responded to the specific questions. He suggested that the board might revisit and enhance the summaries in the narrative so people may better understand the budget, and added his hope that the budget that is proposed did not include cuts.

Rebecca Haeger, stated that it is wonderful to live in Ashford, and realizes that the board is probably not happy with having to submit this budget with cuts to core programs. She encouraged the board to "be brave, and go to the town with a 5% increase and the people will stand behind you on that."

Vice- Chair Rourke asked if anyone else wished to speak. There being no responses, the floor was closed.

Motion to adjourn the special meeting (7:43 pm) made by K. Warren, seconded by L. Donegan and carried unanimously.

The audience was invited to stay for the regular board meeting if they so desired, and that there was further opportunity to speak, as it is a regular agenda item.

Recorded by:

Jennifer Barsaleau
Recording Secretary