

Ashford Board of Education
Special Meeting Minutes – Annual Retreat
August 24, 2017
4:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Library Media Center

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

Board Chair J. Rupert called the special meeting to order at 4:31 p.m. Present were members: J. Lippert, K. Rourke, K. Warren, J. Calarese and M. Matthews (4:50p.m). Also present were Superintendent Dr. J. Longo, Business Manager L. Dyer, Principal T. Hopkins, Asst. Principal G. Dukette and Director of Pupil Personnel, C. Ford. Audience present: K. Johnston, R. Haeger, G. Zaicek and B. Metsack. Unable to attend was board member L. Donegan.

Persons to be Heard

R. Haeger spoke recognizing the hard work of the Board of Education. She inquired about reading and writing instruction, and stated that she had heard that physical education classes would be half-year only. Mr. Hopkins responded to that concern, indicating that he did put out a draft statement on the website asking for feedback concerning physical education and health, but had not received any response to date. He was concerned that the PTO and parents in general did not let him know of their concerns prior to the retreat. However, after consideration of all of their options, the administration did not implement the half-year proposal, but chose to continue with a schedule very similar to last year.

Administrative Reports

a. Business Office – Lisa Dyer

L. Dyer distributed actual and budgeted expense and encumbrance report. There are no 2017-2018 figures available as there has been no FY 18 budget passed by the state or directly addressed by the board of finance. Everyone is awaiting state action prior to local action. While awaiting the town's decision and the approval of a 2017-2018 school budget the school is only funding essential expenses such as contracted salaries and utilities. Wherever possible, other purchases are being delayed pending budget approval.

b. Superintendent Report – Dr. Longo

Dr. Longo reported that he has met with technology coordinator Scott Waddell concerning website updates and the school technology committee will be updating the website again making it more user friendly and informative. Dr. Longo also spoke of staff morale, improvements in home-school-community relations, and his concern about the impact of starting the year without an approved budget. Operating with a zero budget will be a challenge, but everyone understands that town action is being held up by the state, and that they cannot make decisions without a clear understanding of the amount of support the state will provide. He also briefly reviewed those topics listed in his written report such as "habits of mind," "21st century skills," and "project based instruction," and followed that by opening up his report to BOE questions.

During that question period members commented on the following: The fact that there is a positive relationship between Dr. Longo, the first selectman, and the school. It also appears that parents of Ashford School students strongly support and speak highly of the school for the most part. However, the BOE would like to see more ways to reach out to those citizens who do not have students in the school. Mr. Hopkins and Mr. Dukette both cited several school-sponsored activities such as career day, community service and special STEAM events that invited community members to connect with the school. They also indicated they will find more ways to connect next year.

Reports from Principal Hopkins, Assistant Principal Dukette, and Director of Special Education Ford will be provided at the regular BOE meeting following the retreat.

Board of Education Goals and Mission for 2017-2018

The goals discussion opened up with Jim Rupert reading a list of concerns that he would like to see built into the BOE goals. This was followed by suggested goals provided by Dr. Longo and then a summary of BOE concerns highlighted by John Lippert. Members also discussed or stated the following: zero

tolerance for bullying, restorative justice; challenge to identify and maintain standards the board will set over the next few years, and ways to improve communication. The BOE also discussed the idea of goals related to long term preventative repairs and maintenance of the building as well as maintenance concerns identified during the building inspection “walk through” by Jim Rupert and John Calarese such as: window/heaters blocked in classrooms by staff, fire extinguishers need to be checked monthly, too many microwaves in classrooms, cluttered custodial storage closets that is preventing easy access to system control panels as identified by inspection as well as the energy audit. Furthermore, the board of education budget should reflect our goals and mission. So, when the budget narrative is written it should tie to the BOE goals. We should also continue efforts to cooperate with area communities for potential money saving sharing of services, particularly Mansfield/Ashford/Willington.

Goals topics identified by John Lippert were:

1. Financial planning
2. Academic focus on middle school and prep for high school
3. Improving communication between BOE and administration
4. Energy conscious and facilities management
5. teaching students to thrive in the Global economy

In this discussion, Dr. Longo was asked to merge his suggested goals with those identified by John Lippert and Jim Rupert, and to provide a list of suggested goals to the BOE.

Three-Year Plan

The Goals discussion was followed by a quick review of last year’s “Three Year Plan,” However there was not time to carefully review and update it, so Dr. Longo was asked to bring it back in an updated state to the next BOE meeting. He indicated that he would meet with the administrative team to prepare suggested goals as well as an updated three-year plan for presentation on September 7th.

Capital Projects Priorities and Concerns

The BOE needs to update their priority list for capital projects. It was decided that the BOE would consider that at a future BOE meeting keeping in mind that in 2023 the town planning to bond. The board of education needs to work on which projects should be considered as part of this bonding and which would be part of their annual capital fund projects list.

Dr. Longo suggested that many of the concerns started but not completed during the retreat could be addressed by BOE committees and presented to the BOE. It was decided that the BOE would address committees during their development of a 2017-2018 BOE meeting schedule.

The retreat ended at the scheduled time of 7:00 p.m.

Recorded by: Kay M. Warren, Secretary