

Ashford Board of Education
Meeting Minutes – January 21, 2021
7:00 pm
Meeting Held Via Zoom

Note: Per CGS 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 exceptions of motions and votes recorded, the minutes are unofficial until they have been read and approved by a majority vote by 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

Chair John Lippert called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

- Present were members Jane Urban, Kim Kouatly, Marian Matthews, and Al Maccarone. Tess Grous joined at 7:20 p.m. Tina Fradette was absent.
- Also present were Superintendent Dr. James Longo, Principal Troy Hopkins, Asst. Principal Polly Borysevicz, Director of Pupil Personnel Cindy Ford, Business Manager Martha Guidry, Attorney Anne Littlefield, and Zoom meeting host Scott Waddell as well as approximately 20 other members of the school staff and the public.

Student Presentation to Board – Jennifer Lindsay introduced 8th graders Donny Russell, Adriana Torres, and Dylan Yost, who read poetry samples from 7th and 8th grade, including haiku, "sorry not sorry" poems, and phile/phobe poems.

FY 22 Public Budget Input – None.

MOTION by Al Maccarone to add item 9c Question of a CABE Workshop to the agenda. Motion seconded by Marian Matthews and carried unanimously.

Communications

- Received Freedom of Information Act complaint

Opportunity for Public Comment

- Jane Urban thanked administration for quickly and wisely addressing the concern she raised about social distancing of 7th graders during lunch.

Approval of Minutes

- **MOTION by Jane Urban to approve minutes from 01/07/2021. Motion seconded by Marian Matthews and carried unanimously.**

MOTION by Jane Urban to add discussion pertaining to pending FOIC complaint: #FIC 2020-0436; Tess Grous v. Chairman, Board of Education, Ashford Public Schools; and Board of Education, Ashford Public Schools to the agenda. Motion seconded by Al Maccarone and carried unanimously.

MOTION by Marian Matthews to add possible action pertaining to pending FOIC complaint: #FIC 2020-0436; Tess Grous v. Chairman, Board of Education, Ashford Public Schools; and Board of Education, Ashford Public Schools to the agenda. Motion seconded by Kim Kouatly and carried unanimously.

Moved: that the Board of Education enter executive session to discuss strategy with respect to pending claims and/or pending litigation (#FIC 2020-0436; Tess Grous v. Chairman, Board of Education, Ashford Public Schools; and Board of Education, Ashford Public Schools), and further that the Board invite Board Attorney Anne H. Littlefield into executive session in order to inform the Board's discussion pertaining to the FOIC complaint.

Executive session was entered at 7:32 p.m. Present in executive session were board members John Lippert, Jane Urban, Kim Kouatly, Marian Matthews, Al Maccarone, and Tess Grous as well as board attorney Anne H. Littlefield. Executive session was exited at 8:12 p.m. with no action taken.

Possible Action Regarding FOIC Complaint

- The complaint was filed back in September of 2020. Tess Grous is satisfied with the remedies that have been put in place. She will be withdrawing that complaint.

- ***MOTION by Jane Urban to authorize Shipman & Goodwin to enter an appearance on behalf of the Ashford Board of Education and facilitate disposition of the complaint brought to the FOIC. Motion seconded by Marian Matthews and carried unanimously.***

Administrative Reports

Director of Pupil Personnel Cindy Ford

- Cindy compiled the list of home school numbers and non-funded mandates. She will forward that information to State Representative Tammy Nuccio.
- Tess Grous asked if there are more kids in need emotionally because of the pandemic. Cindy said there are definitely more struggles. Some families are making difficult decisions between choices where nothing feels right.
- John Lippert asked if it is difficult to determine those who need services. Cindy said no, but it is sometimes hard to tell if it is a disability that is causing a struggle or a struggle because of the pandemic.

Principal Troy Hopkins

- Jane Urban is excited about the MTR grant Troy applied for and asked when we would find out. Troy thinks we will find out within a month. They did get that grant for a smaller amount a few years ago.
- John Lippert is pleased the Virtual Robotics Tournament was statewide and hosted by us. He would like to see the Wolfbots present to the board.

Assistant Principal Polly Borysevich

- Student presentation next month will be a 4th grade teacher (Mrs. Welz) presenting with a few students on what she is doing for social-emotional curriculum.

Business Manager Martha Guidry

- They have launched Infinite Visions. There have been some glitches. They do not have strong technical support. John Lippert asked why is Infinite Visions not providing sufficient support? Martha said their training approach is not effective. She is spending a lot of time on the phone and waiting for emails to resolve issues.
- The cafeteria will be launching a different meal program starting 02/01/2021. Parents should be able to revise and review. It will make things more efficient. If no lunch is ordered, peanut butter and jelly sandwich is the default, which could be a problem for kids with allergies. Tina Fradette is the spokesperson for Cafeteria Committee. We will ask her to look into seeing if we could offer a default option for kids with allergies.
- There are some distance learners without technology to order or transportation to pick up. They can call to order, and meals are being delivered.

Old Business

- ***MOTION by Marian Matthews to discuss Capital Projects List before FY22 budget. Motion seconded by Al Maccarone and carried unanimously.***

a.1. Capital Projects List

- Marian Matthews: The drop ceilings for the library media center and primary wing classrooms do not need to be on the list. That will go in with bonding project. Hiring a consultant needs to be added. We need to consider standard bus versus electric bus.
- Jane Urban asked why the portico and bollards are not included in the bonding project.
- Dr. Longo talked to Jim Rupert today. Jim said all we need is the most up-to-date 5-year plan.
- Bonding to include roof, solar, windows, insulation, HVAC (geothermal, boiler upgrades, or mini splits), and fuel tank removal or replacement. We need to add drop ceilings, portico, and bollards to bonding.
- There was no capital money received for 2020 to cover "tech space"/CORR, upgrade to generator, or new lockers.
- Troy Hopkins said the current lockers are not large enough for backpacks and coats. New lockers would be around \$15,000-17,000. Lockers are not being used this year.
- "Tech space/CORR would be around \$140,000 to finish.
- Al Maccarone said the capital projects list needs to reflect clear priorities with dollar amounts attached.
- Dr. Longo said things that we want in the future need to be in the 5-year plan. He will get prices for standard bus and electric bus. There are grants available for electric bus.
- John Lippert mentioned other items that have been on this list in the past, including fencing around the fields.
- Dr. Longo said plumbing needs to be in the bonding, to replace old lead pipes. Water does get tested every year.

a. FY22 Budget

- Custodian and paraprofessional funded by COVID will not be put in the budget. Custodians have an efficient plan. Not filling those positions estimated to save about \$70,000.
- Marian Matthews asked about tuition reimbursement. Tuition reimbursement for teachers and paraprofessionals is contractual. Administrator tuition reimbursement is optional. Dr. Longo said our contract is one of the few left in the area to include tuition reimbursement for teachers.
- Dr. Longo said he talked with Scott Waddell and decided they can let the computer lab go.
- The board would like a breakdown of dues and fees.
- Jane Urban said she wants the budget to reflect what we need, not what we want.
- Martha Guidry and Jane Urban asked about outsourcing transportation and would like to see a cost comparison for that. Question was asked, why do we pay insurance on the buses if the town owns the buses?
- Dr. Longo will meet with administrative team on Tuesday and go through the budget line by line. Board members can get any questions/concerns to Dr. Longo before then. Hard copy of budget needs to be given to the Board of Finance by 02/18/2021 and presented to Board of Finance 02/25/2021.

Marian Matthews left the meeting.

b. Revisit/Re-approval of Existing Board of Education Bylaws – to be addressed at a later meeting.

New Business

a. Approval of 2021-2022 School Calendar

- Jane Urban asked about the week off in February for students. It is a change from what we have done in the past. Dr. Longo said it worked out really well this year. That would give two professional development days back to back, which could be a benefit for staff. Dr. Longo will get staff feedback on the calendar.
- Jane Urban said she is interested in knowing what happens during professional development days.

b. Authorization of 2021 Bicknell Trust Scholarships

- Trust fund held its own. Last year they gave 4 scholarships of \$1000.
- **MOTION by Al Maccarone to authorize four \$1000 2021 Bicknell Trust Scholarships.** Kim Kouatly brought up the \$4900 withdrawal to Ashford School in November 2020. **Motion seconded by Jane Urban and carried unanimously.**

c. CAFE Workshop

- Al Maccarone proposed two potential dates for CAFE workshop. Tess Grous and Kim Kouatly cannot meet on 01/28/2021. Jane Urban cannot meet on 01/27/2021. Al Maccarone will schedule it for 01/27/2021.

Opportunity for Public Comment

- Tess Grous asked Dr. Longo to share information about the March professional development days. She asked if anyone had been invited, other schools? Dr. Longo said no one has been invited. He is not sure if it will be Zoom or in person. It will be at Ashford School.

Next Meeting Date/Agenda Items

- Committee break out time?
- Budget
- Approve calendar
- Capital projects?

Adjournment

MOTION by Kim Kouatly to adjourn the meeting (10:30 p.m.). Motion seconded by Al Maccarone and carried unanimously.

