

Ashford Board of Education  
**Meeting Minutes – January 6, 2022**  
**7:00 pm**

**Meeting Held Electronically 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 Jane Urban called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.
- Present via Zoom were members Kim Kouatly, Jon Laughlin, and Jennifer Leszczynski. Tess Grous joined the meeting at 7:04 p.m. Al Maccarone joined the meeting at 7:07 p.m. Marian Matthews joined the meeting at 7:09 p.m. First Selectman Bill Falletti, an ex-officio member of the board, was also present via Zoom.
- Also present via Zoom were Superintendent Craig Creller, Principal Troy Hopkins, Assistant Principal Polly Borysevicz, Director of Pupil Personnel Cindy Ford, Business Manager Deana Chrzan, School Nurse Martha Sibley-Jett, and Zoom meeting host Scott Waddell as well as approximately 25 other members of the school staff and the public.

***MOTION made by Jennifer Leszczynski to add item 4a COVID Update to the agenda. Motion seconded by Kim Kouatly and carried unanimously.***

Tess Grous joined the meeting.

**Public Comment – None**

Al Maccarone and Marian Matthews joined the meeting.

**Board of Education Workshop (Nick Caruso, Senior Staff Associate, CABE)**

- Board members introduced themselves and shared why they wanted to serve on the board as well as what they hope to get out of the workshop tonight.
- Board of Education Roles and Responsibilities
  - The board is responsible for setting the direction; they are the policy makers.
  - How many board members does it take to screw in a light bulb? None. The board says, "Let there be light." The superintendent decides what type of light to use and designates someone to screw in the light bulb. It is the board's responsibility to evaluate the quality of the lighting.
  - There is a direct connection between success in school and success in life. There are 390 kids in Ashford School who need the efforts of the board.
  - Boards do not need to be involved in politics.
  - Eisenhower Matrix: Things are important or unimportant. They are also either urgent or not urgent. In the time of COVID everything is important and urgent, and the superintendent is making a lot of decisions. The board's responsibility is to support the superintendent.
  - "I read, I study, I examine, I listen, I reflect; and out of all this I try to form an idea into which I put as much common sense as I can." – Marquis de Lafayette
- Legal Responsibilities of Board Members
  - State Constitution: There shall always be free public elementary and secondary schools in the state.
  - Each board of education is responsible for maintaining good public elementary and secondary schools. The board is a state agency, responsible for implementing the educational interests of the state.
  - Equal opportunity is key in the educational interests of the state.
  - School funding issues were explained. Board members should advocate for their funding needs without apologizing. It is not overspending that is causing this dilemma.
  - School districts are responsible for providing educational opportunities for their students to interact with students and teachers from other racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds.
  - School districts are obligated to adhere to mandates.

- The most important responsibility of the board is to hire a superintendent. The superintendent has executive authority over the school system. The board is responsible for evaluating the performance of the superintendent. It is the superintendent's job to evaluate teachers.
- Boards are also responsible for setting policies.
- Parent complaints should not go to the board. They should be directed to teachers or administrators.
- The board is responsible for preparing an itemized estimate each year to submit to the Board of Finance (budget). It can be expended by and in the discretion of the Board of Education.
- Personnel issues should not be discussed by the board unless recommended by the superintendent. FOIA discussed. Caution against exit interviews. Teachers are a very well protected class.
- All business of the board must be done under public scrutiny. Board advised to not use email to deliberate board business. Caution against using reply all. Use school email accounts for board business.
- Board advised to not start talking solutions until they have agreed on what the problem is.
- Ex-officio members are members of the board. The town of Ashford has no charter, so they operate under state statute. Ex-officio members can speak, vote, and participate in executive session.
- The superintendent should almost always be part of executive session.
- The 1% fund by statute can actually be a maximum of 2%. The statute does not specify the reason or use of the funds, nor does it limit the use of the funds. There has been a good dialog with the town about the use of this fund.

### **Capital Projects**

- Heat exchanger and full-size school bus were fully funded this year.
- Superintendent Craig Creller stated priorities are roof and oil tank.
- Other items that could be on the 5-year plan are solar, windows, locker replacements, CORE renovation, and fire alarm system.
- Possibility of electric bus discussed once solar is in place.

***MOTION made by Marian Matthews to nominate Craig Creller to serve on the Capital Projects Committee on behalf of the Ashford Board of Education. Motion seconded by Tess Grous and carried unanimously.***

***MOTION made by Marian Matthews to put roof, solar, and windows in the capital improvement plan for 2022-2023 and removal and replacement of oil tank in the capital plan for 2023-2024. Motion seconded by Al Maccarone.*** Discussion about removal and replacement of oil tank. The tank has had an ultrasound and must be removed by summer of 2023. There is a possibility of not needing a replacement oil tank if we proceed with geothermal. Discussion about whether or not to include windows. Window replacement is a two-step process. They do contain asbestos. It would be \$23,750 to create a comprehensive energy and window plan. ***Marian Matthews amended motion to authorize the superintendent to place the roof, phase one of the solar and window project, and removal and replacement of the oil tank onto the capital budget for 2022-2023. Motion seconded by Al Maccarone and carried unanimously.***

### **COVID Update**

- Ashford School continues to do outstanding work. We have had only 50 total cases since September. There have been 17 cases this week.
- New memo issued today on COVID protocols. The only change is reducing quarantine per CDC recommendation from 10 days to 5 days. Ashford School will continue with contact tracing.

### **BOE/Superintendent Strategic Planning Goals**

- This will be discussed at another meeting.

### **Adjournment**

***MOTION made by Marian Matthews to adjourn the meeting at 10:21 p.m. Motion seconded by Kim Kouatly and carried unanimously.***