

Ashford Board of Education
Meeting Minutes – January 20, 2022
7:00 pm

Meeting Held in Person and 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 7:04 p.m.
- Present were members Kim Kouatly and Jennifer Leszczynski. First Selectman Bill Falletti, an ex-officio member of the board, was also present via Zoom. Marian Matthews joined the meeting at 7:07 p.m. Tess Grous joined the meeting via Zoom at 7:08 p.m. Jon Laughlin and Al Maccarone were absent.
- Also present were Superintendent Craig Creller, Business Manager Deana Chrzan, Teacher Catherine Robacker, and Zoom meeting host Scott Waddell. There were approximately 20 other members of the school staff and the public present via Zoom.

BOE Chair Remarks (Jane Urban)

- We have lost a lot of teachers this year. It is something of grave concern to the board but something the board has very little control over and limited involvement in. The board gets involved if there's a grievance, but we also have a few ways to better understand what's happening. The board tries to conduct exit interviews with staff, and the Personnel Committee recently met with the teacher's union, the AEA, at their request. It may be a large-scale pandemic issue, but it is painful for the board, as many members have children/grandchildren in the school.

Marian Matthews joined the meeting at 7:07 p.m. Tess Grous joined via Zoom at 7:08 p.m.

MOTION made by Jennifer Leszczynski to add item 2b Personnel/Exit Interview (Executive Session) to the agenda. Motion seconded by Marian Matthews and carried unanimously.

MOTION made by Jane Urban to add item 8c Superintendent Goals to the agenda. Motion seconded by Kim Kouatly and carried unanimously.

MOTION made by Marian Matthews to add item 8d Solar Proposal to the agenda. Motion seconded by Jennifer Leszczynski and carried unanimously.

MOTION made by Kim Kouatly to enter executive session for Personnel/Exit Interview, inviting Catherine Robacker. Motion seconded by Marian Matthews and carried unanimously.

The board including First Selectman/ex-officio member Bill Falletti and Catherine Robacker entered executive session at 7:15 p.m. The board exited executive session at 7:49 p.m. There was no action taken.

Awards and Recognition – Superintendent Craig Creller

- Thank you to staff for an amazing job with COVID.
- Shout out to Principal Troy Hopkins and Dr. Carly Imhoff. We have applied for the TCLP (Teachers of Critical Languages Program) State Department Foreign Exchange Language Program in Arabic. Choices were Chinese and Arabic.
- Shout out to Director of Pupil Personnel Cindy Ford, who has done an excellent job running the Special Education Department. We are a little below state average in percentage of children that qualify for special education. We have only two opt outs.
- Shout out to Business Manager Deana Chrzan, who has been doing excellent work converting payroll system.
- Thank you to teachers and paras for coming in for professional development today - CPI Nonviolent Crisis Intervention training.
- Shout out to First Selectman Bill Falletti for coordinating with the school on masks and COVID tests.

Communications

- Jane Urban received emails requesting access to meeting minutes and recordings. They are available on both the school website and the town website.

Opportunity for Public Comment - None

Approval of Minutes

MOTION made by Marian Matthews to approve minutes from 12/16/2021. Motion seconded by Jennifer Leszczynski. Second sentence of fifth bullet of Security/Communication/Safety Updates should read: She asked if there is something we can do to help the parents know how to talk to their children about this. ***Motion carried with two abstentions (K. Kouatly, T. Grous).***

MOTION made by Kim Kouatly to approve special meeting minutes from 12/21/2021. Motion seconded by Marian Matthews and carried unanimously.

MOTION made by Kim Kouatly to approve minutes from 01/06/2022. Motion seconded by Marian Matthews. Discussion about ex-officio members and whether or not they can vote. Bill Falletti will research. ***Motion carried with one abstention (T. Grous).***

Consent Agenda Items

- a. Staff Appointments – Eileen Eldridge – Special Education; Sean Vanzant – Middle School Science; Kaitlyn Mielniczuk – Grade 5/6
- b. Staff Resignations – Christopher Moore – Special Education; Catherine Robacker – Special Education; Janel Brown – Special Education
 - We are still looking for a PE/Health teacher and one Special Education teacher.

MOTION made by Kim Kouatly to approve consent agenda items. Motion seconded by Jennifer Leszczynski and carried unanimously.

Old Business

- a. FY23 Budget Status
 - Our budget is due to the town on 02/18/2022. We have received some feedback from the Board of Finance on the preferred format.
 - Finance Committee can review the budget on 02/03/2022 and report to the full board. The full board can then approve the budget on 02/17/2022.

New Business

- a. COVID Updates
 - We have had a total number of 107 positive cases since September, 77 of those since return to school after winter break.
 - If a student tests positive on a weekend, the parents can email or call School Nurse Martha Sibley-Jett.
- b. December 2021 Financial Statement
 - Negative amount for retirement benefits (medical insurance) explained.
 - We will do budget transfers at the end of the year rather than on a monthly basis.
 - We will be doing payroll in house with next payroll, so there will be no more payroll processing charges going forward.
 - Telephone and diesel were under budgeted. Diesel was budgeted \$11,000 less than contract was signed for.
 - Business office has new laptops that are compatible with their software and will allow for remote work if necessary.

MOTION made by Kim Kouatly to approve the December 2021 Financial Statement. Motion seconded by Jennifer Leszczynski and carried unanimously.

Superintendent Goals

- Discussion regarding goals for superintendent. Ideally, board goals and superintendent goals would align.
- Discussion about putting a monthly article in Ashford Citizen.

Solar Proposal

- Marian Matthews received email from Mark Robbins, a notice to proceed for consultant services.
- Jim Rupert said the notice to proceed has to be executed by the Board of Selectman.
- Craig Creller will follow up with the Building Committee and the Board of Selectman.

Next Meeting Date/Agenda Items

- a. Committee Meetings 02/03/2022: Finance Committee - 2022-23 Budget; Curriculum Committee – Goals/Plans/Timeline; Identifying Committee Spokespersons
- b. Business, 02/17/2022: Approval of 2022-23 Budget
- c. Future Workshop on Assessments (03/03/2022)

Opportunity for Public Comment

- Discussion regarding two opportunities for public comment. Jim Rupert, who was on the board previously, said the second opportunity for public comment was added so that community members have an opportunity to comment on things that the board has discussed during the meeting. Bill Falletti said the more we can take public input, the better off we all are.

Adjournment

MOTION made by Marian Matthews to adjourn the meeting at 9:29 p.m. Motion seconded by Kim Kouatly and carried unanimously.

Sara Wilson
Recording Secretary