

Ashford Board of Education
Meeting Minutes – December 16, 2021
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 in the meeting room were members Tess Grous, Jennifer Leszczynski, Marian Matthews, and Al Maccarone. Jon Laughlin was present via Zoom. Kim Kouatly was absent.
- Also present were Superintendent Craig Creller, Business Manager Deana Chrzan, First Selectman Bill Falletti, and Zoom meeting host Scott Waddell. Attending the meeting via the Zoom call were Principal Troy Hopkins and approximately 25 other members of the school staff and the public.
- Pledge of Allegiance

MOTION made by Jane Urban to add items 8h Staffing and 8i Staff Resignation to the agenda. Motion seconded by Al Maccarone and carried unanimously.

MOTION made by Al Maccarone to add items 10a Personnel and 10b Security to be discussed in executive session to the agenda. Motion seconded by Marian Matthews and carried unanimously.

BOE Chair Remarks

- Chair Jane Urban attended a session at CAFE training called "Common Mistakes Board Members Make." The talk was started with the question, "How many board members does it take to screw in a light bulb?" The answer was zero. The board says "Let there be light," the super decides if they are LED or fluorescent and designates who is going to screw in the light bulb, and the board must then evaluate the quality of the lighting. Sometimes we spend too much time trying to screw in light bulbs. Jane asked the board to keep this in mind when they are planning their work. It is the board's job to outline the vision and the superintendent's job to implement the vision.

Awards and Recognition

- Superintendents, principals, and some curriculum folks shared data for incoming freshman at E.O. Smith today. Our strongest area was science. Our weakest area was math.
- Shout out to parents and the school community for doing an amazing job implementing COVID mitigation strategies at Ashford School.

Communications

- Three emails were received. Two were related to the recent school threat. The other email touched on that threat and also asked about staffing changes in the middle school grades. These topics will be addressed later in the meeting.

Opportunity for Public Comment

- Kim Lappen (Mansfield Rd) has three children in Ashford School. She has not been receiving the K12 notifications regarding security and communication issues. She would like there to be some sort of a text system, as there are some email accounts that are bouncing these K12 alerts and some people do not always check email. She is concerned about why we are losing so many staff members and feels like something is changing in the school. Her son has one-on-one para on his IEP. She feels like staff members are being pulled in other directions and are not able to meet the requirements on his IEP.
- Carolyn Trotta (Lakeside Dr) has two children in Ashford School. She has several concerns about staffing. The 6th grade lost a teacher who moved to 2nd grade. She would like some information regarding how these decisions are made. More children were impacted in 6th grade than there are in that 2nd grade classroom. They lost the math specialist. Her 8th grade child has an IEP for small testing environments, and there was no one available for her last test. She feels that the former reading specialist was a valuable asset. She asked about the process for getting a 6th grade teacher.
- Lisa Centola (Seckar Rd) commented on safety and some of the things that are happening nationally, wanting to know what the school and board are doing about these issues.

Approval of Minutes

MOTION made by Marian Matthews to approve minutes from 11/18/2021. Motion seconded by Al Maccarone. Motion carried unanimously with one abstention (J. Leszczynski).

MOTION made by Al Maccarone to approve minutes from 12/02/2021. Motion seconded by Jon Laughlin. The sentence about no action taken after executive session should be omitted as there was action taken to appoint new board member. Motion carried unanimously with two abstentions (J. Leszczynski, M. Matthews).

Consent Agenda Items

- a. Staff Appointment – Marianne Eddy, Business Office
- b. Staff Appointment – Sara Wilson, paraeducator

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

Old Business

- a. Second Reading, Approval of Board of Education Policies as Provided by Counsel (1000-6000)

MOTION made by Marian Matthews to approve the Board of Education Policies as provided by counsel (1000-6000). Motion seconded by Al Maccarone and carried unanimously with one abstention (J. Leszczynski).

- b. Second Reading, Approval of Board of Education Bylaws as Provided by Counsel (9000)

MOTION made by Marian Matthews to approve the Board of Education Bylaws as provided by counsel (9000). Motion seconded by Al Maccarone and carried with 4 yeses, 1 no (T. Grous), and 1 abstention (J. Leszczynski).

- c. November 2021 Financial Statement

- Deana Chrzan apologized for error in how the document was labeled. It is actually November rather than December.
- Some line items discussed including cafeteria staff and employee benefits. There was an incorrect payroll posting in September that has been corrected. There are no large-scale changes or concerns at this time.

MOTION made by Marian Matthews to accept the November 2021 Financial Statement. Motion seconded by Al Maccarone and carried unanimously.

New Business

- a. COVID Updates

- We have had no new cases since Thanksgiving.
- We are the only school with an in-house testing program, which is a huge benefit to the community.
- There are upcoming vaccination clinics. No student will be vaccinated without parental consent and a parent present.
- Weekly testing is an optional program for students and staff.

- b. CABE Training Updates

- SEL curriculum in every school is a priority, and we can be proud of Ashford School and the SEL curriculum already in place.
- An effective board meeting is legally compliant, procedurally efficient, and fair. A board self-evaluation was strongly recommended as well as working on policies as a board.
- The State Department of Education is developing model K-12 curriculum that will be available to all school districts.
- One of the other priorities is supporting behavioral health, which we are already doing with our Community Health Center.
- They recommended focusing agendas on critical data points. The workshops are helping with this.
- The Connecticut Lighthouse Project evaluates the role school boards play in student achievement.
- "Diversity is being invited to the party, and inclusion is being asked to dance."

- c. Security/Communication/Safety Updates

- Sometimes we will precede a longer email with a text or voicemail to let everyone know to look for the email. Parents were encouraged to make sure they have the correct email and correct phone in the system. They can do this via the website or by calling Jen Truax at 860-429-1927, ext 365.
- Bus monitors have been in place for the last two weeks.

- After hours hotline where a parent can leave an important message for administration: 860-207-6305.
- Jane Urban wants kids to be encouraged to come forward if they hear or see something concerning. She asked if we have a standard operating procedure for staff if they become aware of a threat. Craig Creller said we have an All Hazards Plan, and we practice four different types of safety drills throughout the year.
- Jennifer Leszczynski wants to make sure kids know how to report anonymously. She asked if there is something we can do to help the parents know how to talk to their parents about this. She also asked if this has increased anxiety for children coming to school.

d. Number and Denomination of 2021-2022 Bicknell Scholarships (January 2022)

MOTION made by Marian Matthews to authorize four \$1000 2022 Bicknell Trust Scholarships. Motion seconded by Al Maccarone and carried unanimously.

- Jon Laughlin, Jennifer Leszczynski, and Al Maccarone volunteered to review scholarship applications.
- e. Approval of "EdSpecs" for new Ashford School Roof
- Marian Matthews discussed the building committee meeting last week. The hope is to start on the roof summer of 2023. Mike Sorano is putting together a request for proposals for us to use. Mark Robbins recommends having an outside investor provide the money to purchase the solar since we cannot, as a nonprofit, take all the tax credits. We would be leasing it and could consider purchasing it after 3-5 years. There is room on the roof to put enough panels to supply electricity for the school as well as potentially charging station(s) and more mini splits.

MOTION made by Marian Matthews that the Ashford Board of Education authorize the Superintendent Craig M. Creller to apply to the Commissioner of Administrative Services to accept the grant for the new roof at Ashford School. Motion seconded by Al Maccarone and carried unanimously.

f. First Reading of Capital Improvement Plan/Items

- Capital improvements submitted to the town last year were heat exchanger, full size school bus, lockers, and finishing CORE room.
- Heat exchanger and full size school bus were actually funded by the town last year.
- We need to prioritize capital plan for next 5 years during first January board meeting.

g. Appointment of Two BOE Members to E.O. Smith Reapportionment Board

- There was an internal audit done about the apportionment at E.O. Smith. Historically, that committee consisted of Board of Selectman and two members of E.O. Smith. They are wanting two members of Ashford Board of Education rather than two members of the regional board.

MOTION made by Al Maccarone to appoint Jane Urban and Tess Grous to the E.O. Smith Reapportionment Board. Motion seconded by Jennifer Leszczynski and carried unanimously.

h. Staffing

- According to the teacher contract, we are required to open the position to internal candidates. A 6th grade teacher applied for and was selected for the open 2nd grade position. These mid-year staffing changes were necessitated by the resignation of a 2nd grade teacher.
- We hired a new 5/6 math teacher to start 01/18/2022.

i. Staff Resignation

- Mrs. Dory Moore, 7th and 8th grade science teacher has resigned.

MOTION made by Al Maccarone to accept the resignation of Mrs. Dory Moore's with great regret. Motion seconded by Tess Grous. Jennifer Leszczynski will reach out to Mrs. Moore to see if she will do an exit interview. Motion carried unanimously.

Next Meeting Date/Agenda Items

- a. CABE BOE training 01/06/2022
- b. Capital improvement discussion 01/06/2022
- c. Superintendent goals for evaluation
- d. Board self-evaluation 01/20/2022

Opportunity for Public Comment

- Rachelle Beaulieu (Westford Rd): Her child has been impacted by loss of 6th grade math teacher, having to learn a new instruction style. She feels there should be some consideration for the incremental loss that happens with transition. It has the potential to cause gaps that do not arise until high school and then require tutors. Internet Safety Concepts is an organization that could help parents and students with internet safety.

- Carolyn Trotta (Lakeside Dr): She is sorry to hear about Mrs. Dory Moore leaving. Lockers are a concern because children are struggling to open their lockers between classes.
- Tess Grous asked about their being two opportunities for public comment on this agenda and only one in the past couple of meetings. For the last several years, there have been two opportunities for public comment. Craig Creller had recommended only one, but Chair Jane Urban has decided to have two opportunities for public comment.

Executive Session

MOTION made by Marian Matthews to enter executive session, inviting Superintendent Craig Creller and Principal Troy Hopkins to discuss personnel and security. Motion seconded by Al Maccarone and carried unanimously.

The board, Superintendent Craig Creller, Principal Troy Hopkins, and First Selectman Bill Falletti entered executive session at 9:44 p.m. Bill Falletti exited the executive session at 10:20 p.m. The board, Craig Creller, and Troy Hopkins exited the executive session at 10:39 p.m. There was no action taken.

Adjournment

MOTION made by Marian Matthews to adjourn the meeting at 10:40 p.m. Motion seconded by Tess Grous and carried unanimously.

Sara Wilson
Recording Secretary