

Ashford Board of Education
Meeting Minutes – November 18, 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 7:06 p.m.
- Present were members Kim Kouatly, Jon Laughlin, Al Maccarone, and Marian Matthews. Tess Grous joined the meeting via Zoom at 8:27 p.m.
- Also present were Superintendent Craig Creller and Zoom meeting host Scott Waddell. Business Manager Deana Chrzan joined the meeting at 8:22 p.m. Attending the meeting via the Zoom call were approximately 35 other members of the school staff and the public.
- Pledge of Allegiance

Awards and Recognition

- National Education Week – Staff, PTO and Sunshine Club have shown appreciation for teachers with Staff Lounge Soda (Monday), stocking faculty room cabinets with supplies (Tuesday), teachers parking in front parking lot (Wednesday), and coffee bar break center (Thursday).
- ABC Award – This person (to be announced shortly) will be surprised tomorrow with a decorated room and door.
- Veterans Day – Our Veterans Day Committee did an amazing job this year. The building was decorated, letters were written to veterans, and a 26-minute video was created. Shout out to Paraeducator Deb Atkinson; Nurse Martha Sibley-Jett; and Teachers Elissa Turcotte, Kelly Knotts, Jason Horn, Danielle Brodoff, and Valerie Podolski.

MOTION made by Jane Urban to add Board Update to the agenda. Motion seconded by Marian Matthews and carried unanimously.

Board Update

- Going forward, Chair Jane Urban is hoping for efficient and effective board meetings.
- Board members were asked to tell Jen Truax if they will be in attendance at Thursday's meeting when they receive the packet.
- Marian Matthews shared an email from Mark Robbins, who is working on planning the solar project for the school. He would like to meet with the board about requirements for the roof and electrical updates. If we do not have LEDs in the parking lot, we probably need to do that. Craig Creller will reach out to Mark Robbins and Jim Rupert so we can have an update for second December meeting.

Communications

- Emails received by the board or superintendent
 - Regarding parent questioning curriculum opt out, due to Connecticut state statute, they can only opt out on HIV, sex ed, dissection, or firearms.
 - Regarding vaccinations for ages 5-11, the vaccinations are done only with parent consent and parent present.
 - Mrs. Urban received a request from the AEA to have an informal meeting. The Personnel Committee will meet with the AEA.
 - There has been some interest expressed in the Board of Education vacancy.
 - School Nurse Martha Sibley-Jett acknowledged a donation from Suffield Volunteer Ambulance Association. They donated a Stryker EMS Stair-PRO, an emergency evacuation chair. This will allow staff members to safely evacuate an immobile person down the junior high stairwell. Scott Waddell works as a paramedic and an ambulance driver for Suffield Volunteer Ambulance Association, and he helped us to secure this donation.

Opportunity for Public Comment – None

Approval of Minutes: 10/21/21; 11/04/21

- **MOTION made by Marian Matthews to approve minutes from 10/21/21. Motion seconded by Kim Kouatly. Motion carried with two abstentions (K. Kouatly, J. Laughlin).**
- **MOTION made by Marian Matthews to approve minutes from 11/04/21. Motion seconded by Kim Kouatly and carried unanimously.**

Consent Agenda Items

- a. Resignations – Mrs. Emily Deliberto, Ms. Stephanie Noheimer, Ms. Jenna Hebert. We wish all of these staff members the best.
 - We are getting IEP evaluation free from the state in the absence of a school psychologist. Current Ashford teacher Michael Young will be stepping into the grade 2 position, and we are advertising for his position (grade 5/6 math). We have had several applicants for PE position.
- b. Staff Appointment – Marianne Eddy, Business Office (temporary)
 - She is coming in one day a week and working per diem. Payroll will be moving from a third-party system to Infinite Visions, and she will be helping with this process.

MOTION made by Kim Kouatly to accept the consent agenda items. Motion seconded by Marian Matthews and carried unanimously.

Old Business

- a. Second Reading Board of Education Bylaw Revision: Meeting Conduct

MOTION made by Marian Matthews to accept the Board of Education Bylaw Revision: Meeting Conduct, adding a 3-minute time limit per person and 20-minute total time limit for public comment. Motion seconded by Al Maccarone and carried unanimously.

- b. Covid Protocol Updates
 - Martha Sibley-Jett: They have set up two clinics. The first date will be held at school for staff members or community members who want to get their booster and also for ages 12 and up to receive their first vaccine. The second date will be at Knowlton Hall. There will be a second clinic for ages 5-11 that will be held at Knowlton Hall on Saturdays.
 - Craig Creller thanked Martha Sibley-Jett for organizing these vaccine clinics.
 - Craig Creller stated we have not had a Covid case or quarantine in over 5 weeks. Our mitigation strategies are working. The State of Connecticut has implanted the Screen and Stay program, but the administration has decided to keep doing what they are doing through winter break.
- c. October 2021 Financial Statement
 - The audit has been completed, and the numbers have held up.
 - This was revisited later in the meeting when Business Manager Deana Chrzan could be present.

New Business

- a. Distribution of Bylaw and Policy Revisions Provided by Counsel (first reading)
 - Craig Creller suggested that we adopt the 1000-6000 series in December. The 9000 series do not have to be adopted until the new year.
- b. Request Approval of Parenthood Leave (Mrs. Kate Craven)

MOTION made by Marian Matthews to approve parenthood leave request by Mrs. Kate Craven. Motion seconded by Kim Kouatly and carried unanimously.

- c. Board of Education Vacancy
 - We have 30 days to fill the vacancy. At the next meeting, we will be implementing a process and appointing a member.
 - Interested candidates should submit a one-page letter of interest that addresses interest in the position and qualifications.
 - Possible special meeting on Tuesday, 11/30/21, depending on number of people interested in board vacancy.
 - This will be advertised with town alert system and K12.
- d. Calendar Change – Exchange February 24 and 25 for half-day PD days (January 6 and 20; March 17; and April 7)
 - Craig Creller said moving PD to half days would allow involvement of paraeducators, bus drivers, and custodians in professional development.
 - Jane Urban mentioned loss of equivalent of two full days of school for students and possible difficulty for some parents arranging after-school care with January dates coming up soon.

- The half-day PD days are scheduled on Thursdays because those are faculty meeting days, so staff members are already staying longer.

Business Manager Deana Chrzan joined the meeting at 8:22 p.m. Tess Grous joined the meeting via Zoom at 8:27 p.m.

MOTION made by Marian Matthews to accept the calendar change. Motion seconded by Al Maccarone. Motion carried with 4 yes votes, 1 no vote (J. Urban), and 1 abstention (T. Grous).

October 2021 Financial Statement (revisited with Business Manager Deana Chrzan in attendance)

- Non-certified staff: Negative cafeteria line item explained. On 12/30/21 we will get our first reimbursement from the USDA. Our reimbursements are almost double from last year due to increased participation in free breakfast and lunch.
- Jane Urban asked about paraeducator line item percent being high for this time in the year. We have some on leave and two open positions.
- Employee insurance: We have had more staff in the special education program take the HSA benefits. Benefit situation is fluid.
- Jane Urban asked about negative line item in retirement benefits. Mrs. Chrzan will look into it. It could be an error.
- Group life insurance: This is contractual. It could rise slightly, but it will not rise much.
- Other professional services: We had a child come in who needed some audiological services requiring an outside contractor. This line item includes insurance broker, business consultant used in the summer, and CPR training for the staff.
- Payroll processing: We had planned to transition to Infinite Visions software at the end of the last fiscal year. Due to turnover in the business office, we are still using a third-party service. There will be payroll processing charges into beginning of the year to process W2s and 1095s.
- Repairs and maintenance: Asbestos work is done for the year. We had to have the sanitary system tanks pumped as well as have some of the lines dug up due to tree roots and other blockages. Maintenance on HVAC system and generator is done for the year.
- Insurance: We had an estimate for transportation insurance. The actuals came in. Cybersecurity policy is not due until February or March.
- Tuition: We have a negative in the special ed outplaced tuition. We are expecting excess cost reimbursement from the state.
- Telephone for central office and school: We had repairs to the system.
- Supplies: We are hoping to use grant money to offset.
- Instructional supplies: We had supplies for athletics.
- Heating oil: For next school year, diesel is up 40 cents per gallon and heating oil is up 67 cents per gallon. We are not locking in for next year at this point. We will reassess every other week until we are comfortable in committing, or we may decide not to commit for a year. The town will be reimbursing us for their portion of heating oil.
- Noninstructional rentals, furniture, and building equipment: This was for the walls in two rooms as well as purchase of desks and chairs to help with social distancing. Some of this may be covered by grants.
- Dues and fees: This includes CABA district membership. Permits for all work done at the school are included in this line item.
- Craig Creller: When we encumber, we believe that we will spend 93.3% of our budget. We do have some budget pressures. We need to hire a psychologist, a couple teachers, and a couple of paraeducators. We have an approximate cushion of \$267,000.
- Jane Urban asked Craig and Deana to reach out to the Board of Finance to determine what format we should have for the budget submission.

First Selectman Bill Falletti joined the meeting via Zoom at 9:02 p.m.

Next Meeting Date/Agenda Items

- Next meeting is 12/02/21
- New board member selection
- Committee meetings: Curriculum, Finance

- Communications
- Public comment
- Covid update
- Possible special meeting Tuesday, 11/30/21

Executive Session

- a. Personnel Issues (2)
- b. Potential Grievance and/or Litigation (2)

MOTION made by Al Maccarone to enter executive session and invite Superintendent Craig Creller and Business Manager Deana Chrzan. Motion seconded by Kim Kouatly and carried unanimously.

The board, Craig Creller, and Deana Chrzan entered executive session at 9:10 p.m. Deana Chrzan exited executive session at 9:40 p.m. The board and Craig Creller exited executive session at 9:54 p.m. There was no action taken.

Adjournment

MOTION made by Marian Matthews to adjourn the meeting at 9:55 p.m. Motion seconded by Al Maccarone and carried unanimously.

Sara Wilson
Recording Secretary