

Ashford Board of Education  
**Meeting Minutes – June 16, 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 7:03 p.m.
- Present were members Tess Grous, Kim Kouatly, Jennifer Leszczynski, Al Maccarone, Marian Matthews, and ex-officio member William Falletti. Jon Laughlin was absent.
- Also present were Superintendent Craig Creller, Director of Pupil Personnel Cindy Ford, Assistant Principal Polly Borysevicz, Business Manager Deana Chrzan, and Zoom meeting host Scott Waddell. Principal Troy Hopkins was present via Zoom. There were 6 members of the public present. There were approximately 40 members of the school staff and the public present via Zoom.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Communications (Secretary)**

- The board received three emails from the community/parents. The first is from Crystal Carvalho (Pompey Hollow Rd.). She is praising the teachers and staff at Ashford School. She is also asking the board to remove Mr. Creller as soon as possible. The second is from Stephanie Ellis. She wrote about the recent Eighth Grade Graduation, the staff at Ashford School, and her own children. She also stated that she has had her own dealing with Mr. Creller and is asking him to remove himself from his position. The last email is from Meghan Dudas. She is deeply troubled by the no confidence vote by the Ashford teachers. She is also urging the board to remove the Superintendent.

**Opportunity for Public Comment**

- Amanda Williams (Old Town Rd.) – spoke about her and children’s experiences at Ashford School. She praised Mrs. Longo, her child’s teacher, and is devastated by her resignation at the end of the year. Amanda expressed her support of the staff at Ashford School and asked the board to help make the school community right again.
- Jane Urban (Wormwood Hill Rd.) – thanked everyone that put in the time and effort to make the graduation/commencement last night wonderful and special. She wanted to especially thank Christine Knowlton for all her work.
- Meghan Dudas (Sand Hill Rd.) – was taken back and very upset when she sent the email communication to the board. She wants to look further and determine where the problem is and whose responsibility it is. She wants the board to see how they got here and remember the most important thing is the kids.
- William Falletti (Squaw Hollow Rd.) – spoke about something being broken at the school that needs to be fixed. He spoke about the recent teacher turnover due to COVID. He spoke about the children being his number one priority in town. Mr. Falletti also shared his experiences with Mr. Creller and shared that he has had positive experiences with Mr. Creller and feels that he is a good man.

**Approval of Minutes: 05/19/2022; 05/23/2022; 06/08/2022**

***MOTION made by Tess Grous to table the minutes from the 05/19/2022 regular meeting. Motion was not seconded. Motion failed.***

***MOTION made by Kim Kouatly to approve the minutes from the 05/19/2022 regular meeting. Motion seconded by Jennifer Leszczynski and carried with 5 yes votes (K. Kouatly, J. Leszczynski, A. Maccarone, M. Matthews, J. Urban) and 1 no vote (T. Grous).***

***MOTION made by Al Maccarone to approve the minutes from the 05/23/2022 special meeting. Motion seconded by Kim Kouatly and carried with 5 yes votes (K. Kouatly, J. Leszczynski, A. Maccarone, M. Matthews, J. Urban) and 1 no vote (T. Grous).***

***MOTION made by Kim Kouatly to approve the minutes from the 06/08/2022 special meeting. Motion seconded by Jennifer Leszczynski and carried with 5 yes votes (K. Kouatly, J. Leszczynski, A. Maccarone, M. Matthews, J. Urban) and 1 no vote (T. Grous).***

***MOTION made by Jennifer Leszczynski to add Bicknell Scholarships to the agenda as item 7b. Motion seconded by Kim Kouatly and carried unanimously.***

### **Consent Agenda Items**

- a. Staff Resignation – Ashley Tullock, Grade 4
- b. Staff Appointment – Samantha Hollis, Preschool
- c. Distribution of May 2022 Financial Statement

***MOTION made by Marian Matthews to approve the consent agenda items. Motion seconded by Al Maccarone.*** Jennifer Leszczynski said Ashley Tullock was absolutely amazing. It was her first year, but she was incredible. Her son is upset that she is moving on and teaching 5<sup>th</sup> grade at another school. Jennifer Leszczynski and Jane Urban wished her luck. ***Motion carried unanimously.***

### **Old Business**

- a. 2022-2023 Ashford School Calendar – The two half day professional development days that remain are 10/24/2022 and 03/20/2023.
- b. Bicknell Scholarships – Jennifer Leszczynski said we have some incredible Ashford students going on in further education. It was a hard decision to make. The four scholarship winners are Alaycia Bovain, Rayann Knowlton, Grace Maines, and Trevor Wilson. The board congratulated the four winners and everyone who applied.

### **New Business**

- a. Consider Request for International Travel
  - Superintendent Craig Creller: We have a request for our German exchange trip. We are expecting about 20 students to be interested in this trip. We have received deposits from 13 students already. Any travel that is longer than one day has to be approved by the board and the superintendent. It is a difficult decision only because of what is going on in the world right now with the pandemic and the war in Ukraine. We can get all but \$100 of our money back by 08/09/2022. After 08/09/2022, we would lose \$300 per student.
  - Principal Troy Hopkins: We just had a great visit from Einstein Gymnasium in Rheda-Wiedenbruck, Germany. We visited them in the fall of 2018 with 20 students, Dr. Imhoff, Mrs. Craven, and myself. That was the beginning of this program. They visited us the following spring, and then the pandemic hit. We also had Mrs. Podolski go over for a few weeks as part of a teacher exchange that we were starting, but the pandemic got in the way of that as well. We had 18 kids come over. They stayed with host families; several staff members and families hosted. They had a great time. One of the teachers co-taught rugby and cricket to the kids. We would love to be able to visit them again in the fall. We picked some dates out, November 8-21. We would probably send 2 or 3 teachers, depending on the number of kids. It is about \$700 per student. Some of them are applying for scholarships through the GAPP program. We also have money through the Dressman grant that supports international travel. The cost to the Board of Education is minimal. In the past, the district has provided an insurance rider, and there is a cost for substitutes to cover the teachers who go.

***MOTION made by Jane Urban to approve the request for international travel. Motion seconded by Marian Matthews and carried unanimously.***

### **Discussion Concerning Superintendent's Performance Evaluation and Superintendent's Contract**

***MOTION made by Kim Kouatly to enter into executive session for discussion concerning superintendent's performance evaluation and superintendent's contract. Motion seconded by Marian Matthews and carried unanimously. Kim Kouatly amended the motion to include we anticipate inviting Superintendent Craig Creller into relevant portions of executive session. Amended motion seconded by Marian Matthews and carried unanimously.***

The board entered the executive session at 7:41 p.m. William Falletti left the executive session at 8:25 p.m. Craig Creller entered the executive session at 10:58 p.m. The board and Craig Creller left the executive session at 11:18 p.m.

**Discussion and Possible Action Concerning Adoption of Superintendent’s Performance Evaluation**

***MOTION made by Kim Kouatly that the board authorize the board chair to finalize the superintendent evaluation for the 2021-2022 school year and issue it to him on 06/23/2022 without the need for further board discussion. Motion seconded by Marian Matthews and carried unanimously.***

**Discussion and Possible Action Concerning Superintendent’s Contract**

- There is nothing to discuss at this time.

**Opportunity for Public Comment**

- Rachelle Beaulieu (Westford Rd.) – expressed her concern with the current school environment. She has removed her child until the situation is fixed. Rachelle doesn’t know what needs to be done but wants the board to consider finding a solution to create a healthy learning environment.
- Alissa Tatro (Knowlton Hill Rd) – spoke that her personal experiences with Mr. Creller have been positive but the teachers have spoken. She spoke about her support of the teachers and staff and that she trusts them. Alissa spoke about the current issues with teacher burnout, but our teachers are leaving the district, not the profession. She wants the board to think about the children and how these teacher losses are affecting them.

**Adjournment**

***MOTION made by Marian Matthews to adjourn the meeting at 11:28 p.m. Motion seconded by Tess Grous and carried unanimously.***

Sara Wilson  
Recording Secretary