



Monthly Meeting
Avon Board of Education
34 Simsbury Road, Avon, Connecticut

Mission Statement

Our mission is to inspire in each student a joy and passion for learning and a commitment to excellence, personal integrity, and social responsibility.

Tuesday, May 19, 2020, 7:00 pm

via Remote Meeting

Avon Board of Education
34 Simsbury, Avon, Connecticut 06001
Via Zoom

Minutes

Attendance

Members Present: Jackie Blea; David Cavanaugh; Debra Chute; Jeffrey S. Fleischman; Jason Indomenico; Bogdan Oprica; Lisa Seminara; Jay Spivak; Laura Young

Members Absent: none

Administration Present: Dr. Bridget Heston Carnemolla, Superintendent of Schools; Roberto Medic, Director of Human Resources; Heather Michaud, Director of Fiscal Affairs; Donna Nestler-Rusack, Assistant Superintendent

- I. Call to Order
The meeting was called to order by Deb Chute, Board Chair, at 7:00 pm.
- II. Pledge of Allegiance
After the Pledge of Allegiance, a roll call of Board members was also taken. Chair Chute read the District's Mission Statement.
- III. Presentations
 - A. Avon Achiever
 1. Walden Yan (AHS Student) – in recognition for having obtained the highest level of academic achievement and thus named the Valedictorian for the Class of 2020. In addition to Walden's academic excellence he has been an active participant in Student Government all four years, serving as its Treasurer this year. Walden has also shown what it means to be a well-rounded student serving in various clubs as well as participating in school athletics. Walden Yan will be attending Harvard University in the Fall of 2020.
 2. Michael Hanratty (AHS Student) – in recognition for his stellar academic achievement and thus named the Salutatorian for the Class of 2020. In addition to Michael's academic excellence he has been an active member of the Avon High School Community, having served as class president as well as participating in various other clubs and organizations. Michael is also an accomplished golfer and was also the varsity golf team captain. Michael Hanratty will be attending Colgate University in the Fall of 2020.

3. Rich Manning, Jeff Olson, Jason Plourde, Ben Puffer and Manny Rivera (AMS Staff) – in recognition for being part of the custodial team at the Avon Middle School and appreciation for everything they do, especially during this Covid19 pandemic. To quote an AMS student, “Thank you for the time you take every day to clean up this school. Each time I walk into this school, I am greeted by clean hallways and classrooms. Thanks to you, I do not have to go to school in a dirty place... You deserve a big thank you for everything you do! I hope you know that you are appreciated in all that you do for this school.”

B. Avon Board of Education Student Representative

1. Addisen Ganiats

This will be done at the June Board meeting.

IV. Approval of Minutes

A. Board of Education Regular Monthly Meeting, April 21, 2020

Jackie Blea moved to approve the April 21, 2020 minutes of the Board of Education Regular Monthly Meeting. Laura Young seconded the motion.

The motion carried by unanimous consent.

B. Board of Education Special Monthly Meeting, April 28, 2020

Jackie Blea moved to approve the April 28, 2020 minutes of the Special Monthly Meeting of April 28, 2020. David Cavanaugh seconded the motion.

The motion carried by unanimous consent.

V. Communication from Public

There was no communication from the public.

VI. Items of Information and Proposals

A. Student Representative Report –Addisen Ganiats & Alvin Guo, AHS Student Representatives
No report was given.

B. Financial Report – Heather Michaud, Director of Fiscal Affairs

Ms. Michaud brought to the Board’s attention two items that had drastic changes in trend during the month of April due to annualizing all hourly school employees as well as releasing all Spring stipends and coaching which increased the Object Code 100 Line by approximately \$163,000. The other significant change was due to the closing of the transportation purchase orders though the District is currently in legal negotiations and payment will still need to be made. The releases of encumbrances increased Object Code 500 by \$216,000.00. While comparing the past months with previous years, the trend looks very different due to the circumstances but we are still in the black.

VII. Committees & Liaison Reports

A. Committee Reports

1. Curriculum & Professional Practices – Jackie Blea, Chair

Ms. Blea informed the Board that the meeting has been rescheduled for Tuesday, June 2nd at 6:00 pm.

2. Finance – Jay Spivak, Chair

Mr. Spivak reported that at the last Finance Committee meeting, the financial report and transfers were reviewed. In the Special Ed report, the Escrow account will be returning to the Town’s general fund just over \$31,500.00. The next scheduled meeting is Tuesday, June 9th at 6:00 pm.

3. Negotiations – Jason Indomenico, Chair

Mr. Indomenico stated that negotiations continue with food service workers and secretaries. Since the shut down there is not much to report and hope to hold some online meetings. Mr. Indomenico also mentioned that a letter was sent to union presidents asking for cost reductions due to the current circumstances.

4. Policy – Laura Young, Chair

Ms. Young reported the Policy Committee did not meet in May but will be meeting on Monday, June 8th and will be discussing graduation requirements.

B. Liaison Report

1. Board Representative to Capital Region Education Council – Jackie Blea, Board Rep.

Ms. Blea stated that the next meeting is tomorrow and plans to attend.

VIII. Chair’s Report – Debra Chute, Board Chair

A. Board Chair Update

Ms. Chute commented on the recent car parade to honor the seniors with police and the volunteer fire department helping in the celebration. Ms. Chute acknowledged the other Board members who were also in attendance as well as the work of Wanda Dawiczkyk who organized the event. It was so well received the students would like to make it a tradition.

IX. Superintendent’s Report – Dr. Bridget Heston Carnemolla

A. Hiring Report

The Superintendent informed the Board of the retirements of two high school teachers, Mr. Donato and Mr. LaChance, which were expected. A teaching assistant also resigned.

B. Enrollment Report

The report showed a decrease of five students from last month due to some moves out of state. The biggest drop was in Pre-K with a number of parents opting out of the remote learning, perhaps due to it being a tuition based program.

C. Updates

The Superintendent also acknowledged well attended senior car parade and was glad for the opportunity to greet the students in their cars. Dr. Carnemolla thanked Project Graduation for making the event happen and the town’s emergency management including the police and fire departments that led the parade. Operations as a whole are still governed by the emergency executive order, which is considered law, in conjunction with the State Dept. of Education and the departments of public health. The Superintendent reminded everyone that the decision to reopen is not hers or that of the Board of Education. Even the graduation and summer plans are dependent on the executive order and supersede what would be our normal procedures.

X. Consent Calendar

A. 19-20/59 Approval of Budget Transfers

B. 19-20/60 Approval of AHS Booster Club Friends of Crew donation of two crew shells valued at \$82,095 to the Avon Crew Team

The Board Chair acknowledged the generous donation to the crew team.

Jay Spivak moved to approve the Consent Calendar as presented, David Cavanaugh seconded. The motion carried 9-0-0.

XI. Old Business

A. 18-19/70 Pledge to ACORN for the Turf Field Lighting Project

Dr. Carnemolla reminded the Board of the request that was first made by ACORN in May 2019. ACORN continues to fundraise for the project with the goal of raising \$400,000. The Board had

considered contributing \$30,000.00 utilizing the funds from Facilities Use Enterprise Account (revenue received from rental use of the school facilities). Due to current circumstances ACORN is not close to finishing their fundraising having raised \$250,000. They have also applied for a \$50,000 grant which has not yet been received. The Superintendent suggested that it be left for now without further action. A Board member asked with the lack of revenue coming in due to the closure of the schools and the plans to renovate gym floors whether this would cause a burden on the funds in maintaining the facilities to which Ms. Michaud responded that there is approximately \$100,000 in the account, however due to the closure, the District will not be generating any revenue. Also, a portion of St. Ann's rental fee is to be refunded utilizing these funds while some maintenance and repairs are also taken from this account. Ms. Michaud confirmed that taking the funds out of the account for the pledge could potentially be an issue if there are unforeseen maintenance or repairs. Ms. Michaud added that should the pledge be paid there would not be enough in the fund to pay for the next project after the gym floors. Chair Chute agreed that the funding to ACORN be held off until next year.

B. 19-20/58 School Closure Updates

Dr. Carnemolla asked Mr. Medic to speak about the results of the survey recently sent out to families. Mr. Medic spoke about the Remote Learning Survey which was created by district and school level administrators and sent out via a communication from the Superintendent on April 30th. Over 1,000 responses were received. Overall the feedback was favorable. 97% responded said their children had access to the appropriate technology; 93% indicated their children had access to their teachers; 89% responded favorably about communication from building administrators and teachers. There were varying levels of favorability in terms of the academic expectations of students, while some parents felt their students were not appropriately engaged, some felt the resources for remote learning were missing the marks, and a sizeable number of parents felt the rigor or balance of the work load was inconsistent. Many of the comments were positive, thanking staff for their efforts. Parents requested more live instruction and smaller group settings or individual sessions. There were also requests for more opportunities for students to engage with their teachers and other students in non-academic settings. These comments are influencing the next steps administrators are planning and taking. Also being reviewed are grading and report cards during the closure. The Superintendent acknowledged the efforts of Mr. Medic in reviewing all the raw data and processing the information. Dr. Carnemolla commented that she felt that the District was ending the year close to how they had hoped. Responding to a Board member's question, Dr. Carnemolla acknowledged that one of the goals before the closing was to utilize a one to one technology approach which they are now doing. Use of technology has also been utilized more as teachers are forced to utilize various forms of technology with remote learning. A tremendous amount of professional development around technology has also been offered. Open Choice funds will be requested at the Finance Committee to purchase a filtering system for Chromebooks to allow them to be used more extensively. The Superintendent added that the closure has not stopped what was already being discussed in the District such as looking at ways to differentiate curriculum for all students and the process in identifying gifted and talented students continue to be revised, which will be discussed further at the next C&PP meeting. Dr. Carnemolla also commented on the work that is continuing with the administrative team including how to move the District forward, review the curriculum to prioritize the standards, assess the standards to ensure we make progress in the remote environment and how to bring the school buildings together to have further discussions.

Ms. Michaud informed the Board regarding the prepaid bus contracts in the District. Legal counsel reviewed the contracts and drafted agreements to the District's two main bus companies

and now awaiting the required data from the bus companies to calculate the payments. Ms. Michaud also reported about a 25% decrease in electrical usage during the closure period and expects a substantial savings.

XII. New Business

A. 19-20/61 Use of Facilities Funds - Gymnasium Floor Refinishing

There was no discussion or questions from the Board members.

Jay Spivak moved to approve an expenditure from the Use of Facilities Enterprise Account for the purposes of refinishing the PGS and AMS gymnasium floors totaling an estimated \$40,333.00. Should funds become available in the General Fund to cover this expense either partially or in full, the General Fund will be utilized first then the Use of Facilities funding. Jackie Blea seconded the motion.

The motion carried 8-0-1 (yay – Blea, Cavanaugh, Chute, Indomenico, Oprica, Seminara, Spivak, Young; nay – none; abstain – Fleischman

B. 19-20/62 Non-Lapsing Fund

The Superintendent reviewed for the Board the events that occurred regarding the non-lapsing fund and how a discussion was previously had where she was instructed by the Board to write a letter or interest to the Town Manager indicating interest in establishing a non-lapsing fund.

Dr. Carnemolla hoped to continue the discussion tonight to provide everyone a better understanding of the fund and how it could be used. Dr. Carnemolla also clarified that funds will still be returned to the Town to help them replenish their funds which was used to offset the District's budget rather than putting the funds into the non-lapsing account that is being discussed. The Superintendent felt that establishment of a non-lapsing fund is for future use and would be in the best interest of the Town and Board to have such a fund established by October.

Ms. Michaud explained how this type of account works under the law and provided information on the technical pieces of the fund and how it would look under the Avon Board of Education accounting structure. Ms. Michaud referenced Board of Education Policy 3171.1 which was established several years ago regarding non-lapsing education funds. CT General Statutes allows for up to 2% of a Board of Education's adopted budget to be deposited annually into a non-lapsing account. There is no ceiling or threshold balance established by law but is established through resolution by towns and Boards of Education. The fund would be established in the Board's current accounting system and would be similar to the Facilities Use Fund and would be audited in a scrutinized manner. Ms. Michaud suggested that this type of account would be suitable for deposit of the Open Choice funds since funds must be used for educational purposes. Currently the District must ask the Town for supplemental appropriations after the Open Choice funds are received and given to the Town. Ms. Michaud knows of 27 districts in the state that utilizes non-lapsing accounts. The Town currently has non-lapsing funds created for its own use. Ms. Michaud also explained the difference with the Special Education Escrow Fund where funds are held by Shipman & Goodman and is held for a one year period after which unused funds must be returned to the Town. Ms. Michaud also clarified that non-lapsing fund, enterprise fund and special revenue funds are one in the same. Discussion continued regarding source of funds, oversight/approval and use of funds, negotiating with the Town the terms of the fund to come to resolution, the review and revision of the Board policy, diverting surplus funds, cost mitigation, budgeting strategies and flexibility, Open Choice revenue, surplus of tax dollars, Town's revenue accounts, the budget process, Special Education costs, returning surplus funds

to the Town, not fixing what's not broken, supplemental appropriations, being fiscally responsible, working together with the Town, the Special Ed Escrow account.

The Superintendent stated that if the District were looking to establish a non-lapsing account just to put surplus funds in immediately and not giving money back to the Town to refund their unassigned fund it would not be a good decision especially in respects to their relationship with the Town. Dr. Carnemolla stated that if there is the potential to help the Town replenish their "rainy day" fund, it should be done. The conversation regarding the non-lapsing fund is about the future and the current circumstances has made that clear. It is in the District's best interest and it is in the Town's best interest to have the fund to better manage the District's budget. Dr. Carnemolla made it clear that she did not want to see this issue be divisive among the Board members. The options are to do nothing for now and wait a couple of months or do nothing at all and never have the conversation again.

The Board agreed to pursue the non-lapsing fund and allow the Superintendent to continue the discussion with the Town but not pursue to establish the fund until the Board decides. No motion was made as the motion was already made in a previous meeting however a roll was called to let the motion stand. All were in agreement.

C. 19-20/63 Graduation Ceremony

Dr. Carnemolla reviewed the plans for graduation which the District is fortunate to be having at the Farmington Polo Grounds and is booked for June 17th. Currently plans are for students to receive their caps, gowns and diploma covers earlier and have photos taken. A video will be created of all students and will feature music hopefully from the band and choral groups. Students will arrive to the polo grounds with their families in their own cars and wait in their cars to receive their diploma. The Superintendent and Mr. Renkawitz will meet with the high school class officers tomorrow to work on more details and logistics. The Board thanked the administration for making it special for the seniors and acknowledged how fortunate we are to have the polo grounds.

XIII. Communication from Avon Board of Education Members

Mr. Oprica thanked the Superintendent for the update on the continuing progress on strategic initiatives as it keeps everyone accountable and progressive. Education is an opportunity to have unlimited potential where we can strive to always do better and to do more. Mr. Oprica asked to have the Strategic Plan Update reinstated on the agenda which the Chair agreed to do.

XIV. Adjournment

***Jackie Blea motioned to adjourn the meeting, Laura Young seconded.
The Board adjourned by unanimous consent at 10:00 pm.***

Minutes prepared by Shirley Moy, Board Recording Secretary

Minutes respectfully submitted by Jeffrey S. Fleischman, Board Secretary

Jeffrey S. Fleischman, June 13, 2020

Board minutes are approved at the next regular monthly Board meeting, and any corrections to the minutes, if needed, will be made at that time.