

**Board of Education
Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
September, 2022, 4:33pm
Superintendent's Conference Room
501 Kings Highway East, Fairfield, CT**

1. **Call to Order:** Meeting was called to order at 4:33 pm by Chair, Jeff Peterson.

Present: Jeff Peterson (Chair), Crissy Kelly, Christine Vitale, Dr. Tracy, *Interim Superintendent*, Dr. Zakia Parrish, *Deputy Superintendent*, Dr. Courtney Leborious, *Executive Director of Finance and Business Services (joined via Webex)*

2. **Approval of Meeting Minutes: Organizational Business:** Mrs. Vitale moved to approve minutes from June 1, 2022 meeting; Ms. Kelly seconded. Motion carries 3-0.

3. **Business Items:**

- a. **Review of athletics presentation and waterfall:** Todd Parness, Athletic Director of Fairfield Ludlowe High school and Gina DiGiacomo, Athletic Director of Fairfield Warde High School presented the 2021-2022 Athletic Program Annual Financial Report in advance of the presentation to the full BoE on September 13. The athletic directors were happy to report that ticket sale gate receipts were back to pre-pandemic levels. Receipts in 2019-2020 were \$54,120 and were \$54,226 in 2021-2022. In the future, they will be looking to using an electronic payment platform to reduce the need to collect cash. Mr. Peterson asked why the department received additional funding that was in excess of what the BoE approved as part of the year end budget transfer for uniform purchase. Mr. Parness explained that funding is put into an account to pay the arbiters each year, and there was a balance in that account at the end of the year which was used to purchase equipment. Mrs. Vitale asked what would be on the wish list for capital improvements at each high school. Mr. Parness responded that he would like to see the renovation of the concession stand move forward and Ms. DiGiacomo indicated that Warde could use another turf field. The athletic directors will be presenting to the full Board at the September 13 meeting.

- b. **Updates on closing financial balances for the 2021-2022 school year:** Ms. Leborious shared the final summary by major classifications for the 2021-2022 fiscal year. She reported that the surplus had grown from \$75,035 to \$539,355. Mr. Peterson asked how there could be such a large change from the time the BoE approved the final budget transfers at the end of June and the final year-end balance. Ms. Leborious reported that the swing was due to two major drivers a change in the final insurance numbers and a change in the special education transportation expense. Ms. Kelly asked

if the change in the transportation was due to an error in budgeting. Ms. Leborious shared that there was an over encumbrance in SPED transportation, in part because there was an assumption that we would be running all bus runs. The budget was built on the assumption that we would be operating as if it was a typical school year. Driver shortages required the consolidation of some routes. She reported that she and Mr. Papageorge would be meeting with the transportation director monthly to review expenses/invoices, and more frequently at year-end if need be, to ensure that there is not this large of swing in budget projections at year end.

- c. Estimating budget impacts of a possible Dwight closure:** Mr. Peterson explained that this item was added to the committee's agenda due to a request made by another BoE member. Mrs. Vitale shared that given the frequent requests for structural change, she thinks it is a valuable exercise for the committee to consider what the cost savings might be if a school was taken offline; noting that while Dwight was the school referenced, the discussion could be applicable to any elementary school. Much of the discussion has focused on the capital budget, but shuttering a school could also impact the operating budget. Dr. Tracy shared that while there would be a reduction in some staffing, the students would still need to be taught so the reduction to FTE could be minimal. Mr. Papageorge noted that the cost savings would be influenced by what the future use of the building would be. The committee shared with members of the public that no decision has been made about the closing of a school as the Board is still in the process of gathering the necessary data; the BoE is doing its due diligence as the decision to potentially close a school will have long lasting ramifications and should not be taken lightly.
- d. Next steps related to fundraising report from 6/14 BoE meeting:** Ms. Leborious reported that she would begin working with the principals to see if some of the older, inactive, student accounts could be closed and funding reallocated.
- e. Timing of future Finance Committee Meetings:** Due to changing work schedules and childcare needs of committee members, the scheduled 3:30pm start for future meetings may be a challenge. The committee did not opt to change the current schedule, but agreed to review monthly. Ms. Leborious shared that she was flexible on start times.
- 4. Superintendent's Report:** Dr. Tracy reported that staff is finalizing the budget calendar for the 2023-2024 budget. The BoE will be asked for its budget priorities for the next school year at the October 11, 2022 regular meeting. Dr. Tracy asked the committee for guidance in regards to the amount of a potential increase, noting that there are fixed charges and contractual obligations that will need to be met.
- 5. Open Committee and Public Comment:** There was no open board comment. Public Comment: Johnna Hoffman shared that she is the Dwight PTA President and that parents are concerned that discussions about closing Dwight seem to be happening out of the public forum; she was surprised to see the closing of Dwight on an agenda. The Dwight community

wants to keep their neighborhood school. David Krasnoff, 155 Burr Street shared that he is a Dwight parent and also a real estate agent. He is concerned that SLAM is underestimating the number of new families in the Dwight district; he is concerned that there will not be enough elementary seats in the district if Dwight were to close.

6. **Adjournment:** Mrs. Vitale made motion to adjourn, Ms. Kelly seconded. Motion carries 3-0. Meeting adjourned at 6:30pm