



PLYMOUTH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

CENTRAL OFFICE

27 NORTH HARWINTON AVENUE
TERRYVILLE, CONNECTICUT 06786

MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of Plymouth Public Schools is to challenge, inspire, and prepare all students for success in an ever-changing and complex world.

REGULAR MEETING
PLYMOUTH BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
TERRYVILLE HIGH SCHOOL CAFETERIA
33 NORTH HARWINTON AVENUE
TERRYVILLE, CT 06786

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 10, 2024

7:00 P.M.

MINUTES

PLYMOUTH, CT
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
RECEIVED
2024 JAN 18 AM 9:16
TOWN CLERK

Present: Mrs. Kulesa, Mr. Showers, Ms. Tilton, Mr. Foote, Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani, Mr. Perugino and Mr. Zbuska

Attendance by means of electronic equipment: Mr. Seaman and Mrs. Lucian

Also in Attendance: Mr. Falcone, Superintendent; Mrs. Melillo, Assistant Superintendent, Mrs. Mozak-Pezza, Director of Curriculum & Instruction and Mr. Tencza, Business Manager

1. Call to Order & Pledge to the Flag

Mrs. Kulesa, Chair called the Regular Meeting of the Plymouth Board of Education to order at 7:03 p.m. The group joined in the Pledge to the Flag.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

MOTION: To entertain a motion to adopt the agenda as presented. Motion Mr. Showers, second Mr. Foote, any discussion, all in favor, any opposed, any abstentions, motion carries.

3. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: To entertain a motion to approve the minutes of December 13, 2023. Motion Mr. Foote, second Mr. Perugino, any discussion, all in favor, any opposed, any abstentions, motion carries.

4. Presentation

(a). Eli Terry Jr. Middle School – Mr. Vigliotti, Principal

The theme of the presentation by grade 6, 7 and 8 grade students will be "Why We Love ETJMS" and will feature students describing aspects of the school as they have experienced it that are related to the Board goals of well-being, engagement, and achievement. Students will highlight specific memories of their experiences at ETJMS as well as skills and knowledge they have acquired throughout their time there.

PHONE: (860) 314-4783 | FAX: (860) 314-2766 | plymouth.k12.ct.us

Plymouth Board of Education is an Equal Opportunity Employer and Provider.

5. **Student Representatives**

Jacob Darrell

- * Mock Interview were conducted by seniors with business partners, community leaders, school staff and Board Members.
- * 12/11 – Winter Concert
- * 12/21 – In school winter concert

Charlotte Greene

- * 1/12 – 1/18 – Mid Terms
- * 1/11 –Indoor Track will have their first meet on 1/11 @ 5 p.m.

Mark Lussier

- * 1/22 – CPR Training put together by the Student Council from 2:30 p.m. – 3 p.m.
- * Boys' Basketball Game between Terryville and Thomaston. Terryville won by a point.
- * 300 game win for Mr. Fowler
- * Girls' Basketball – games are competitive. The girls are winning within the Berkshire League. The season is just getting underway.

Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani commented on the mock interviews which she was a participant.

6. **Public Comment** (limited to 3-minutes per speaker)

Rebecca Allen – 17 Meghan Boulevard, Plymouth

Summary – Appreciated the Board's attendance and support at the retreat. Pleased with the January agenda, was very much more descriptive.

Greg DeNote

Summary – Attended the retreat. At the conclusion of the presentation by the attorney for Shipman & Goodwin, he felt it apparent: (a) the Board failed to be transparent; (b) failed to comply with the state statute; and (c) specifically referencing the vote to close Fisher School; the vote was completely and categorically done illegally as defined by the presenter.

Going forward, he would like to have the Board Members commitment not to: (a) hold meetings in private; (b) not to hold meetings at restaurants; and (c) not to engage in text messages outside of public meetings. This is what he feels is best for our kids and our town. Again, after attending the retreat, he is completely upset as to the way the Board conducted itself.

Rachel Pineda – 23 Fall Mountain Terrace

Summary – Per Mr. Falcone - You all don't work for the taxpayers. Who are the organizations that supply grants? The Board is fully unprepared for what is coming as far as immigrants. Why is the Board afraid of change or new voices, new perspectives or some perspectives? Appreciates the community of Terryville and Plymouth.

Dan Gentile – 269 Mt. Tobe Road, Plymouth

Summary – Feels it to be very difficult for the Board Members to sit at their seats and take criticism for what they do. They do not deserve to be yelled at. These are individuals who volunteer many hours, working with what the state hands down to them. Every day mistakes are made. No one is perfect. Demeaning individuals is not good, pointing fingers is not good, nor is hatred. Working together and educating our children is what we need to do. They need to understand how to go forward in life. He thanked the Board Members for volunteering their time and appreciates what they do. Let's all work together as a community. The best interest of the students is what it's all about.

7. **Superintendent's Update**

- * The Terryville Lions Club has partnered with Amazon to distribute over-stocked items to our community. They recently received 16 boxes of: office supplies, pencils, highlighters, notebooks, pens, along with other items. A number of these items were donated to all four of our schools. Thank you to Mr. Sandshaw and the Terryville Lions Club for their continued support of our students, teachers and schools.
- * The high school will be holding midterm exams starting on Friday, January 12 and running through next Thursday, January 19. However, it is important to note: If there is a school delay or cancellation due to weather, Mr. Hults will reach out to high school students and parents with regard to any necessary modifications that need to be made to the testing schedule.
- * Mrs. Mozak-Pezza, Director of Curriculum & Instruction provided the Board with a quick update on the work being done with our teachers on updating our curriculum to: (a) Enhance our course offerings and (b) provide a scope and sequence for consistent teaching and learning.
- * Update on adding a grade 4 teacher
 - (a) Survey was sent out to all of the 4th grade parents before winter break. Fifty of the 103 families responded.
 - (b) Forty-six percent of those families indicated they would be willing to adjust their child's classroom placement midway through the school year to lower class sizes.
 - (c) A long term substitute position was posted and Ms. Suffridge and her team will be completing interviews on Tuesday, January 16.
 - (d) This additional position of a long term substitute for grade 4 will be paid by utilizing funds from certified and non-certified positions that have gone unfilled for periods of time this year. This long term grade 4 substitute teaching position is through the end of this school year.
- * As previously mentioned, on Friday, January 5, Mark Fowler won his 300th game as the head coach of the Terryville High School Varsity Basketball Team. Congratulations and thank you for your continued commitment to the program. Three hundred wins is truly an amazing accomplishment.

8. **Unfinished Business**

(a) **Plymouth Board of Education**

SECOND READ

Modified Policies

- * Series 1000 – Community/Board Operations
 - * P-1004 – Non-Discrimination
- * Series 4000 – Personnel
 - * P-4005 – Reports of Suspected Abuse or Neglect of Children or Reports of Sexual Assault of Students By Employees
 - * P-4014 – Non-Discrimination
 - * P-4015 – Increasing Educator Diversity Plan

(Formerly Titled – Plan for Minority Educator Recruitment)

- * Series 5000 – Students
 - * P-5001 – Administration of Student Medications in the Schools
 - * P-5002 – Student Attendance, Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism
 - * P-5011 - High School Graduation Requirements
 - * P-5015 – Non-Discrimination
 - * P-5016 – Recess and Play-Based Learning
(Formerly Titled – Physical Activity, Under Directed Play and Student Discipline)
 - * P-5018 - Policy to Improve Completion Rates of the FAFSA
 - * P-5027 - Suicide Prevention and Intervention
 - * Series 6000 – Instruction
 - * P6004 - Homework
 - * P-6008 – Parental Access to Instructional Materials
 - * Series 9000 – Bylaws of the Board
 - * P-9007 – Construction and Posting of Agenda
-

SECOND READ

New Policy

- * Series 5000 – Students
 - * P-5034 – Admission to the Public Schools at or Before Age Five

Questions

Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani

- (a) Rather than include an individual's name as a contact, can this be just generic?
- (b) Series 4000 – What is the plan to increase the diversity? Does the district already have one or is this just a policy that needs to be put in place?
- (c) P-5027- Does the district have any of the Suicide Prevention & Intervention mentioned in the policies, i.e. some of it seems optional but she does not know what the district has.

However, it states “Boards of Education should take note that, if they choose to adopt a student assistance program and/or use an assessment recommended by the CSDE, they must ensure such program and assessment comply with Public Act 23-167”. Is the district doing that portion or is that just going to be in the policy?

- (d) P-5018 – FAFSA – What is the reason for all of the extra. Trying to get every student to apply for FAFSA?
- (e) P-5018 – Gifts, Grants and Donations to Implement Policy – The Board may accept gifts, grants and donations, including in-kind donations, to implement the provisions of this policy. Is there a reason why they are pushing FAFSA?
- (g) P-5001 – Administration of Student Medications in the Schools – She feels there should be a “secure box” containing opioid antagonists”. However, she does not understand the portion of “vending machine” and why this is in the policy. What type of vending machine?

Response – Mr. Falcone, Superintendent

- (a) Mrs. Melillo is the Title I Coordinator, therefore, a name needs to be in place for the individual who performs this particular job. She also has specialized training for Title IX. If she were to leave the district, the policy can be updated without going to the Board.
- (b) This is a required policy. The district needs to have a place in place by March 1st of this year. We are working with EdAdvance on creating the plan.

(c) With respect to the first page of the policy, pertaining to the training provided to the teachers and school staff, this would be more of our school counselors, social workers, school psychologists, the guidance office. These individuals would take this on. The teachers having training. However, it is more of what does one do in a situation when you have, your suspecting a concern with a child and then where do you go with that information. That type of training is in there.

The district does that as well. But, we call in support 211, when we have concerns about a student, their safety and wellbeing. If it goes past our scope, we call 211 and they do risk management.

(d) This is legislation. However, the key to this policy, there is an out. The district needs to do its best to get parents, families and students to fill out the FAFSA form as a graduation requirement. If this is not done at a certain time, there is a waiver form that can be filled out that allows the student to graduate high school without filling out the FAFSA.

(e) Incentives that they are looking to provide for students to fill out the FAFSA Form. There could be more than one reason. However, I could not give you those reasons.

(g) Mr. Falcone suggested looking further into this portion of the policy and hold off approving P-5001, if the Board is not comfortable, and to get further information from Attorney Mills about the actual wording from the legislation. He will have clarification for the next meeting.

Questions

Mrs. Tilton

(a) P-4005 – Reports of Suspected Abuse or Neglect of Children or Reports of Sexual Assault of Students by Employees. Item #16 – Training – “Each employee must repeat these trainings at least once every 3 years. She feels it would be a benefit to employees to have the mandated reporter training annually as opposed to once every 3 years. Is there an expense cost associated with this?

(b) P-4015 – Increasing Educator Diversity Plan “The Board” will do certain things. Will this fall under the oversight of one of our committees? Who will determine who will participate? Who is responsible? Who will do the tracking?

(c) P-5001 – High School Requirements

Response – Mr. Falcone, Superintendent

(a) We have the program. There would not be additional costs. It would entail just the time which is fine if that is the feeling of the Board to train annually. His recommendation is not to vote on anything or put anything into policy until the Board has clarification and/or if that is something the Board wants to do. It is an adjustment that can be made and put into the policy for next time.

(b) There is a time line with the equity plan. We are going to do this together in collaboration with EdAdvance. From there, Mr. Falcone should have some clarification. If the Board wants to table this until we have further information from EdAdvance, how that plan is going to look and what can be presented to the Board, that is fine as well.

(c) Small change in the homework policy. Very minor. Makes a difference for the high school teachers.

MOTION: To entertain a motion to approve the modified policies and new policy as presented with the exception of P-4005, P-4015 and P-5001 which we will table for another time.

Motion Mr. Showers, second Mr. Zbuska, all in favor, any opposed, any abstentions, motion carries.

(b) Camera Security System

Mr. Falcone – This is a grant that was received and would replace the camera system within all of the schools. The district would need to first purchase the equipment and the cameras. The district would then receive reimbursement for the money. In order to do this, a request was made by Mr. Falcone and Mr. Tencza, if the Board would allow them and/or a Board Member to go to the town to request permission to utilize money from the sinking fund to pay for the project. The funds would be reimbursed less 28%.

Questions: Should a dollar amount be listed in the motion? Was the amount \$250,000 or \$75,000?

Response: This is a grant for \$240,000 is the potential amount. The Board's portion would be 28% which is roughly \$72,000 which the Board would be responsible for. Amount to be included in the Motion is not necessary. Just a need to actually move forward.

MOTION: To entertain a motion to authorize the Superintendent in conjunction with the Business Manager to request permission from the Town of Plymouth to access the sinking fund and to utilize those funds for a camera security system at Terryville High School.

Motion Mr. Perugino, second Mr. Showers, any discussion,

ROLL VOTE: Mr. Showers: Yes Ms. Tilton: Yes Mr. Foote: Yes

Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani: Yes Mr. Perugino: Yes Mr. Zbuska: Yes

Mr. Seaman: Yes Mrs. Kulesa: Yes

VOTE: 8 - In Favor 0 - Opposed 0 - Abstentions

Motion carries

(c) Irrigation System at Terryville High School

MOTION: To entertain a motion to authorize the Superintendent in conjunction with the Business Manager to release a Request for Proposal (RFP) and execute a contract for an irrigation system at Terryville High School with reimbursement. Motion Mr. Showers, second Mr. Foote, any discussion

Questions/Comments: Section 3 – Specifications for Athletic Fields – The installation for appropriate water pumping equipment. The equipment given is the absolute minimum. This could be a low figure. If there was a section where water is taken from the reservoir and pumped up to the school. If pumping water out of a reservoir, a pumping station is needed. Is there a pumping station? Fine silt can clog the sprinkler head. Caution will be needed. What is the cost of the water supply coming to the school as opposed to all the equipment? What is the comparison of the two costs? Currently, how is water brought to the fields? Why are we taking water from the reservoir? Is there a problem with water on the fields? We must be cautious about draining the reservoir. Do we have approval from DEP? Mr. Zbuska would like to inquire to see what type of system for pumping out of a reservoir, etc. from other towns and communities utilize.

Response: Mr. Falcone and/or Mr. Tencza – We do not have a pumping station there. The RFP may be modified to include that if we work off the city water system. Two issues that may arise: a pressure issue, a second special pressurized system to be installed. Cost unknown. An increase in water usage. The Board may choose Option A or Option B in the RFP and once quotes are received choose which option they prefer. Currently, there is no irrigation on the fields. Irrigation would help to thicken the grass on all of the fields. We do have approval from DEP. Board has two options: Option 1 – current option – pumping from the reservoir and Option 2 – Revise and add second option to RFP for water supply or leave the RFP as is.

ROLL VOTE: (with the understanding the Superintendent and the Business Manager will add the part about the Connecticut Water Company supplying the water)

Mr. Showers: Yes Ms. Tilton: Yes Mr. Foote: Yes

Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani: Yes Mr. Perugino: Yes Mr. Zbuska: Yes

Mr. Seaman: Yes Mrs. Kulesa: Yes

VOTE: 8 - In Favor 0 - Opposed 0 - Abstentions

Motion carries.

9. **New Business**

(a) Board of Education Committee Assignments

Finance Committee

Mr. Showers
Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani
Mr. Seaman

Curriculum Committee

Ms. Tilton
Mrs. Lucian
Mr. Foote

Facilities Committee

Mr. Perugino
Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani
Mr. Showers

Policy Committee

Mr. Zbuska
Ms. Tilton
Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani

(b) Superintendent's Budget Presentation 2024 – 2025 to the Plymouth Board of Education

Mr. Falcone, Superintendent and Mr. Tencza, Business Manager presented the 2024 – 2025 proposed budget to the Board of Education.

The budget was created with a focus on 3 priorities:

- (a) Maintaining current staffing;
- (b) Maintaining current programs; and
- (c) Incorporating long term budget strategies which align to district goals and vision for future improvement.

The proposed budget request is an additional \$876,641 or 3.35%.

Last year's budget	\$26,150,292
This year's proposed budget	<u>\$27,026,933</u>
Increase over last year's budget	\$ 876,641 or 3.35%

For the complete Budget Presentation for 2024 – 2025, please visit our website at <http://plymouth.k12.ct.us>

10. **Business Manager's Report & Personnel Report**

(a.) **Business Manager's Report** – Mr. Tencza, Business Manager

- Included in the packet are the following; Accounts by Facilities Report for December 2023 and 6 different submissions;
 - (1) Business Office Activity Report; December 2023;
 - (2) Board of Education Budget Summary Report through December 2023;
 - (3) Cumulative Board of Education Budget % by Month;
 - (4) Food Service Report December 2023;
 - (5) Monthly Budget Report for December 2023; and
 - (6) Capital Improvement Plan 2023-2033

Mr. Tencza – Budget expenditures continue to be on par. No anticipation for a Budget freeze at this time. Possible in April. Food Service lost money in December. Revenues down. Two items being looked at are food costs and paper supplies.

Questions & Responses – Custodial Salaries; Capital Improvement Roof Repairs at Eli Terry Jr. Middle School, Harry S. Fisher Elementary School and Plymouth Center School; General Supplies – Central Office and Legal Fees.

Custodial Salaries: Budget error. Short fall from last year. There will be funds to cover this account. Head Custodian – District had a head custodian retire. This was not expected. Individual was entitled to some funding which was not in the budget.

Roofs – Quotes are probably low. We have been doing repairs but at some point these roofs will need to be replaced. Waiting for some information. Mr. Falcone indicated we will need to sit down with the town.

General Supplies/Central Office – Needs to be reclassified. Teachers welcome back/luncheon/picnic/breakfast at each school.

Legal Fees – This figure is year to date. When it comes towards the end of the year, Mr. Tencza will ask the Board for permission to transfer from the surplus account to the legal account.

(b.) **Personnel Report** – Mr. Falcone, Superintendent

No questions

11. **Public Comment** (limited to 3-minutes per speaker)

Marty Sandshaw – 7 Richmond Drive, Plymouth

Regarding the irrigation of the fields. He suggested someone contact Bill Allread who was chair of the building committee because Mr. Sandshaw believes when the high school was built there were provisions to irrigate the fields. He believes there is a line that runs from the reservoir down to the pump house on Harwinton Avenue.

Erica Lavoie – 2 Magnolia Lane, Terryville

Urges the Board to reach out to the community for any help. She thanked Mr. Falcone for including the public in the budget process. She also touched on the following: Budget pre-K – grade 5 reading program; Utilizing purchases and Children with Learning Disabilities.

Rachel Pineda – 23 Fall Mountain Terrace, Terryville

Comments on: Daycare, Diversity, and Cameras in the schools.

Jessie Burns – 7 Timothy Road, Terryville

Thank you for coming in below the cost of living. Questioned if there were any programs that are underutilized that should be looked into? Mentioned if he could be of any assistance to the Board to please contact him as he would be willing to help in whatever way he could.

12. **Board of Education Liaisons to Schools–**

Mr. Perugino/Ms. Tilton -- Harry S. Fisher Elementary School

Mr. Zbuska -- Plymouth Center School

Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani -- Eli Terry Jr. Middle School
and
Booster Club (on hold)

Mrs. Kulesa/Ms. Tilton -- Terryville High School

Mrs. Kulesa -- EdAdvance

13. **Board Comments** (as a whole)

Great presentation by the students at Eli Terry Jr. Middle School. Looking for other schools to follow suit. Wonderful how the students came out to share the love for their school. Showed a lot of school spirit. The video that was shared was not only for the meeting but Mr. Vigliotti does this all the time. Pleased with the budget presentation and increase was under 4% which is below the cost of living. Most important we need to remember, we are here for the children. The retreat was very informative. Congratulations to Mr. Fowler on the 300th win.

Mrs. Kulesa – dittoed all of the above comments. She also thanked those individuals who came out and spoke at the meeting. Their participation and comments were appreciated. Just to remind individuals, the Board needs to hear not only the positive but also the negative. Please feel comfortable to approach the microphone.

14. **Next Board Meeting** –The next regular meeting of the Plymouth Board of Education will be on Wednesday, February 14, 2024 at 7 p.m. in the cafeteria at Terryville High School.

15. **Executive Session** – Discussion and Possible Action Regarding Pending Litigation in the Matter of Rebecca Holleran vs. the Plymouth Board of Education.

MOTION: The Plymouth Board of Education hereby moves into executive session at 9:32 p.m. to discuss pending litigation in the matter of Rebecca Holleran versus the Plymouth Board of Education pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes Section 1-200(6)(B). The Board further invites into executive session Superintendent of Schools Brian Falcone, Assistant Superintendent of Schools Beth Melillo and Attorney Stephen Sedor. Motion Mr. Perugino, second Mr. Showers all in favor, motion carries.

16. **Resume Regular Session**

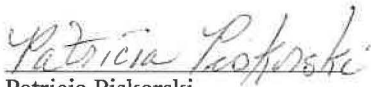
Mrs. Kulesa, Chair resumed regular session at 9:49 p.m.

17. **Possible Action From Executive Session (if any)**

Mrs. Kulesa, Chair – Coming out of executive session, the Board has decided to reject the offer for settlement in the case of Rebecca Holleran versus the Board of Education and we will be proceeding as normal.

18. **Adjournment**

MOTION: To entertain a motion to adjourn at 9:49 p.m. Motion Mr. Showers, second Mr. Perugino, motion carries



Patricia Piskorski
Recording Secretary
Plymouth Board of Education