



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.

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

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2024

7:00 P.M.

MINUTES

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

Absent: Mr. Seaman and Mr. Zbuska

Also Present: 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 & Moment of Silence**

Mrs. Kulesa Chair called the Regular Meeting of the Plymouth Board of Education of September 11, 2024, to order 7:01 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. Foote, second Mr. Showers, any discussion, all in favor, any opposed, any abstentions, motion carries.

3. **Approval of Minutes**

MOTION: To entertain a motion to approve:

(1) The minutes of the Special Meeting of the Plymouth Board of Education (Retreat) of August 21, 2024

and

(2) The minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Plymouth Board of Education of August 21, 2024.

Motion Mr. Perugino, second Mr. Foote, any discussion, all in favor, any opposed, any abstentions motion carries.

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TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
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RECORD

4. **Presentation – District Assessment**

1. Focus on academic achievement & District Historical Issues that have impacted our standardized assessment scores – Mrs. Mozak-Pezza, Director of Curriculum and Instruction
2. Individual school presentations by Building Administrators
 - 2024 school assessment data
 - 2024 – 2025 plans for improvement
3. Next Step – Mrs. Mozak-Pezza, Director of Curriculum & Instruction

NOTE: The District Assessment Presentation will be posted on-line on the District's Website. Also, the presentation will be emailed to all Board Members.

5. **Student Representatives**

Ava Gwidz

Introduction: A sophomore at Terryville High School, Ava is President of the Student Council, Member of the Pep Club, Leo Club and Unified Buddies; favorite subjects English and Math; and beyond high school, Ava hopes to go on to become an ultrasound technician.

Report – Terryville Fair – Great turnout; thirty plus student volunteers from Terryville High School who worked in the food both; children's games, home and garden building just to mention a few.

Loss of Free Breakfast – Students commented on the loss of free breakfast, and some felt it posed a negative impact on the school. Comments - Free breakfast helped and encouraged students to receive food which they feel helps with learning and attentiveness during the school day. Also, it provided students with an opportunity to socialize for a brief time, helping to break up the school day.

Fallon Roth-Perreault

Introduction: A junior at Terryville High School Fallon is Vice-President of the Student Council, participates in a variety of clubs, i.e., sports, Leo Club, Unified Buddies, Secretary of the Class of 2026, S.A.D.D., Pep Club, Fresh Start Mentors, and a three-season varsity athlete. Fallon's favorite subjects are English and History. After high school she plans to go to college. Fallon's goal as Student Council Vice President is to ensure and enhance communication for all students and to bring that communication to the Board of Education.

Report – Fall Sports – Amazing start to the fall sport season. Each team played three soccer games (boys and girls). There were two cross country meets and the first volleyball season was on Tuesday September 10, 2024.

The beginning of the school year went well, and everyone found their way to classes.

Drew's "Walk of Gold" – Drew Fowler, an eleventh-grade student at Terryville High School, will be hosting the first "Walk of Gold" on September 21st to raise money and awareness for childhood cancer. Proceeds from the event will go directly to the Connecticut Children's Hospital and the Jimmy Fund. The event is for all ages and there will be a variety of activities, i.e., food trucks and of course, a walk on the Terryville High School track. The event will take place from 12 noon until 4 p.m. Individuals may register online.

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

Virginia Kinane – 18 Adams Drive

Items of Concern: Parent Involvement; Communication; Before and After School Care; and Frustrating and disappointing experience with Plymouth Center School last year.

Rebecca Allen – 17 Meghan Boulevard

Comment as to the previous speaker: Understands the concern and frustrations she is experiencing on parents bringing in outside food to the classroom for children, i.e., cupcakes. However, if one has a child with a food allergy and is not able to partake in the festivities, she feels this only affects the child physically but also emotionally. Therefore, she is not in favor of changing the policy regarding bringing in outside food to the classroom.

Erica Lavoie – 2 Magnolia Lane

Some items of addressed: District Assessment – the separation of phonics at the elementary level; students who are already conditioned; individualized testing for elementary students and where is the added support financially or in school for students and instruction in and out of the classroom.

All students, whether regular or special education should be treated equally regardless of their differences.

Melanie Church – 328 Main Street

Comment: Absence of a School Resource Officer, what is being done for the protection of our children, how is this being dealt with and how was this person relieved of his duties? Regarding parents volunteering at the schools, they have always been encouraged to volunteer.

7. **Superintendent's Update**

Summary: Great opening to the school year. Various orientations, meet and greets were held in the elementary schools and in grades six and nine were help through the transition from moving forward from the elementary school to the middle school and from the middle school to the high school. On the first day of school, teachers had various activities for the children to make them comfortable transitioning back to school from summer break.

Buildings both inside and out look great; there were minimal delays and issues with the buses; faculty and staff were energized, and the children were excited to be back.

Concerns over the School Resource Officer - A letter was sent to the entire Board and the entire school community regarding safety after what occurred in Georgia. To address concern regarding the School Resource Officer, just as a reminder to the Board and the public, the Board has no control over the School Resource Officer. This position is paid for by the police department, budgeted through the police department, assigned by the police department and the Police Chief. Tad Johnson remains the District's School Resource Officer. Mr. Falcone confirmed this with the Police Chief because the district needs to complete a Safety Crisis Plan every year. The question remains, is the police department looking to transitioning Tad to a different position within the force and provide the district with a different School Resource Officer? Yes, however until there is a replacement, Tad remains the district School Resource Officer. Once there is a replacement, Mr. Falcone will communicate this information to the school community.

Four Bus Configuration for Out-of-District Placement which is new for our school district – Not many concerns. The Board was reminded this was not our decision. Region 20 changed the beginning and ending times of WAMGO High School, and this impacted transportation for our students. The bus company advised and informed us if the district did not go to a different configuration for our bus stops, and this was their configuration, we would have to add another bus to our fleet of buses in the morning to our routes to cover the out-of-district transportation. Making exceptions and adding additional spots based on parent concerns that came across the four-bus configuration would lead us to add another bus. But, as we discussed, many towns and even in surrounding areas, have a limited number of stops for out of district transportation. Thomaston has one and Plymouth has four. This change does not limit any child from

attending any other school if they felt it necessary to go to a different school other than the Plymouth Public Schools. The extra cost of another bus would be \$65,160 for the year. This amounts to the cost of having a teacher in a classroom. Therefore, the Board chose to make the decision to go to that configuration of those four stops in order not to impact our budget and we would still be able to provide the same experience for the children if they do decide to leave our district to attend other educational institutions.

Drew Fowler – “Walk of Gold” - To repeat Ava, this is a walk for Pediatric Cancer Awareness. It is a goal Drew cares so much about. Proceeds from the event will go to the Jimmy Fund and the Connecticut Children’s Medical Center. The event takes place on Saturday, September 21, 2024, from 12 noon to 4 p.m. at Terryville High School. As part of this charity event, there will be entertainment for the children, food trucks, a band, and various drawings.

At this time, Mr. Falcone thanked Ava and Fallon for their reports to the Board. The Board at the end of the year requested reports not only to include sports and entertainment but also how students feel, their concerns and to share this information with the Board at monthly meetings. This is our goal with student representatives this year.

8. **Unfinished Business**

(1) **Board of Education Meeting Dates for the Calendar Year 2025**

MOTION: To entertain a motion to approve the Board of Education Meeting Dates for the Calendar Year 2025 as discussed. Motion Mr. Showers, second Mrs. Tilton, any further discussion, all in favor, any opposed, any abstentions, motion carries.

9. **New Business**

(1) **Out-of-State Field Trip**

MOTION: To entertain a motion to approve an out-of-state field trip on September 27, 2024, to the Eastern States Exposition in West Springfield, Massachusetts for band students in grades 9 through 12 at Terryville High School and participating 8th grade band students from Eli Terry Jr. Middle School. Motion Mr. Foote, second Mrs. Lucian any discussion, all in favor, any opposed, any abstentions, motion carries.

10. **Business Manager’s Report and Personnel Report**

(1) **Business Manager’s Report** – Mr. Tencza, Business Manager

- Included in the packet are the following - Accounts by Facilities Report for August 2024 and 6 different submissions.

- (1) Business Office Activity Report & Negative Balance Explanations
- (2) Food Service Financial Performance Year-to-Date (July 1, 2024 – August 30, 2024)
- (3) Board of Education Summary thru August 30, 2024
- (4) Monthly Budget Report, August 30, 2024
- (5) Cumulative Board of Education Budget Expenditures % by Month, August 2024 - 2025
- (6) Capital Improvement Plan 2024 – 2033 Plymouth Public Schools (updated September 3, 2024)

Mr. Tencza – Business Manager Reported as follows:

- (1) Food Service – An administrative review has been scheduled by the State for February 25, 26, 27, and 28, 2025. The district has multiple training sessions and meetings to prepare for this review. This is the first review Ms. Peterson, Director of Food Services and I will be participating in.
- (2) Education Financial System Reporting – The state required EFS report has been completed and submitted to the State Department of Education prior to the required deadline of September 3rd. We are now awaiting state review and approval.

- (3) 2023 – 2024 Annual Fiscal Audit – Information from the Business Office has been presented to the audit firm as requested. The deadline for submission is September 30, 2024. Mr. Tencza anticipates submitting all requested documentation prior to that date.
- (4) School Walk-throughs – Mr. Tencza began school walk-throughs for the 2024 – 2025 school year on September 6, 2024 with the first taking place at Eli Terry Jr. Middle School. This Friday, September 13th there will be a walk-through at Harry S. Fisher Elementary School.

Mrs. Lucian – Question as to the number of security cameras in the district.

Mr. Tencza – Response – unsure but will get back to her with an answer.

Mr. Falcone – For security reasons, only certain information can be shared with the community with respect to security in the district.

- The Accounts by Facilities Report will be forwarded to the Town of Plymouth Board of Finance

(2) Personnel Report – Mr. Falcone, Superintendent – Mr. Falcone, Superintendent

Since receiving the Personnel Report in their packets, there have been some changes:

The district is seeking a Grade 5 Teacher at Harry S. Fisher Elementary School and a Mathematics Teacher at Terryville High School. Teachers are leaving to go to other districts because they are paying more. There is a tentative agreement with the teachers' union. A negotiations meeting took place on September 10, 2024. Hopefully, if the agreement goes through, the district will avoid this issue in the future.

11. Committee Report

- Policy Committee – Mrs. Kulesa, Board Chair

There was a Special Meeting of the Policy Committee prior to the Regular Board Meeting. The following policies were discussed: Mr. Falcone - Superintendent

- Policy-5003 Students – Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy (review)
Mr. Falcone addressed Mr. Zbuska's questions regarding Policy – 5003
What is the difference between bullying and mean spirited?
Bullying Policy – “definition” ever changing which comes from the law firm of Shipman & Goodwin and the State. This, however, will be changing before the end or prior to the end of this school year. Current definition: For purposes of this policy, Bullying means “an act that is direct or indirect and severe, persistent, or pervasive, which:
 - (1) Causes physical or emotional harm to an individual;
 - (2) Places an individual in reasonable fear of physical or emotional harm;
or
 - (3) Infringes on the rights or opportunities of an individual at school.”

These events can occur any time, over the summer, on a Saturday night. We are responsible if anything that happens with the child that makes the child feel uncomfortable in any way, shape, or form. Bullying is not only physical but can be cyberbullying as well as in person bullying. When any one of these thresholds occur, the incident will be looked at as bullying and bullying protocols and procedures will be followed.

Mean Spirited – Definition: Tendency to be: Unkind and Intentionally Rude. There is a difference in significance between the two.

If you are interested in reading the Bullying Policy, it is available on-line on our website.

- Policy-5023 Students – Student Dress (Review) – This refers to footwear, sunglasses, shirts, showing undergarments, see through clothing, jewelry which could be a safety hazard, clothing with offensive items on it, and/or anything that deals with drugs, alcohol, or tobacco products. Ultimately, it comes down to administrative discretion on what is and what is not appropriate to wear in school. Also, this policy speaks about what we do as administration if there is a child that is not dressed appropriately, as an example, the parent may be called to have appropriate clothing brought to the school for the student to change into or if it a clothing item such as a t-shirt, to turn the item inside out or you may wear the item, however, it is not to be worn to school in the future. Although there may be a disagreement with a parent, the administration is in charge of making that decision. These decisions are not addressed by the teacher(s). The situation will be dealt with in a discrete manner. The key is to respect the child.

- Policy-5031 Students - Use of Private Technology Devices by Students
(Possible Revision)

With respect to the governor's decision to remove cell phones from classrooms because of the distraction, this policy already mirrors what the governor is asking. In elementary school, this is not really an issue as cell phones are not allowed; in middle school cell phone are left in lockers during the school day and are able to go to their lockers at the end of the day to pick up their phone; and at the high school, students are allowed to use them in the hallways, at study hall and in the lunchroom. If this is not adhered to and the student observed using their cell phone in the classroom, it will be taken away. This is board policy and the one we have in writing.

The governor is asking, and the models district have been provided with is for this to be broken up by age level whereas we have it broken up by elementary, middle, and high school. The governor's request is just to be a bit more specific than what is in our policy.

Mr. Perugino – Question regarding Policy P5003 – Is the School Safety Climate a stipend position?

Mr. Falcone – Response – No. It is the principal of each school. Although, this is changing due to new legislation as of July 1, 2025, with respect to the Safety Climate Committee and the individual in charge. The district is working with EdAdvance, and we are aligned with other districts in trying to make certain the district is meeting that legislation. Professional Development will be provided to our principals and Mrs. Melillo, Title IX Coordinator.

After discussion, the Policy Committee moved to forward the possible revision of

- Policy – 5031 Students – Use of Private Technology Devices by Students

to the full Board for a first read.

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

Rebecca Allen – 17 Meghan Boulevard, Plymouth

Question regarding the school entry policy. There is a different procedure between Plymouth Center School and Harry S. Fisher Elementary School. Is this correct or should procedures regarding entry to the schools be the same?

Since the Board does not respond to public comment, Mr. Falcone indicated he would phone Ms. Allen tomorrow as he does monthly for questions requiring a response.

Virginia Kinane – 18 Adams Drive

Comment – Continuation of her first public comment regarding Parent Involvement.

Erica Lavoie – 2 Magnolia Lane

Comment: Three years at Plymouth Center School and she has not been invited to an awards ceremony, assembly, concert, or community occurrence.

Dan Gentile – 269 Mt. Tobe Road, Plymouth

Comment: Cell Phone use in schools, the message from the governor and enforcement of the Board Policy.

Mrs. Kulesa – Clarification – This is a revision to the policy that currently stands. The Board currently has a cell phone policy which was done back in 2022. This revision is classifying the grade levels that the governor wants. The Board Policy is similar if not better than what the governor is asking for. Mr. Falcone previously explained how the policy was being enforced in each of the schools.

13.

Board Liaison Reports

Mr. Perugino/Mrs. Tilton

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Harry S. Fisher Elementary School

Next Meeting – September 17

Open House was very well attended.

School looks fabulous, bright, inviting and refreshing.

The presentation was a positive outlook on life.

Yo-yo sale.

Please try to attend PTA Meetings and get involved.

Mr. Zbuska

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Plymouth Center School

Absent – No Report

Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani

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Eli Terry Jr. Middle School

First Meeting will be held on

September 25

Wizard Game is being planned.

Again, this year there will be a school store.

Looking for members for all the PTA's. Even if you are not able to attend all meetings, please consider participating on the various committees, i.e., fundraising, staff appreciation week, the eighth-grade committee.

Mr. Foote

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Terryville High School

No meeting yet.

Mrs. Tilton

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EdAdvance

Revising budget to be voted on in October and the next meeting will be in person and addresses Early Childhood and will take place in Torrington on Grove Street.
(portion of report inaudible)

14.

Board Comments

Mrs. Tilton – Apologized for her late arrival which was due to open house at her school. Happy the new school year is off to a great start and to hear about the concerns of the students from our student representatives.

Mr. Perugino – Received a phone call from the Chair of the Capitol Improvement Committee. A meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 12 at 5:30p.m. at Plymouth Town Hall. Just a note, a different school is toured every Friday with the principal of that school, the head custodian and Jim Mazon, Director of Facilities, and members of the Board of Education Facilities Committee. At the meeting, a list will be presented with items that cannot be included in the Board's budget which amounts to millions of dollars. Also, the committee will be shown what the Board has accomplished with the funds they have through their budget. Hopefully, there will be a report on this in October.

Mr. Perugino indicated he liked the presentation. Everything takes time. Things do not happen overnight. He thanked the teachers for negotiations and finally reaching a settlement on Tuesday. He is very proud of our teachers and the negotiations committee.

Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani – During a walk through, the middle school building looked beautiful, much work was done at Fisher Elementary School.

Mrs. Lucian – Thanked all the parents and public for attending tonight's meeting. Thanked those who spoke at public comment and for supporting the community and students even if you just came to the meeting and listened.

Mrs. Kulesa – Whether comments during public comment are positive or negative, they are all appreciated. The Board does take your comments into consideration and thanks you for them and encourages the public to continue to participate.

15. **Next Board Meeting** –The next Regular Meeting of the Plymouth Board of Education is on Wednesday, October 9, 2024, at 7 p.m. in the cafeteria at Terryville High School.

19. **Adjournment**

MOTION: To entertain a motion to adjourn at 8:27 p.m. Motion Mr. Showers, second, Mr. Perugino, all in favor, motion carries.



Patricia Piskorski
Recording Secretary
Plymouth Board of Education