

Please Notes: These minutes are pending Board approval.
Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting held on July 12, 2022 at 6:15 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 3 Primrose Street.

D. Zukowski, Chair	C. Melillo
J. Vouros, Vice Chair	A. Uberti
D. Ramsey, Secretary	T. Vadas
D. Cruson	2 Staff
J. Kuzma	1 Public
J. Larkin	1 Press

Ms. Zukowski opened the meeting.

MOTION: Mr. Vouros moved that the Board of Education go into executive session to interview a Board of Education candidate and for the discussion on the Director of Facilities contract and invite Superintendent Melillo for the contract discussion. Mr. Cruson seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 1 – Executive Session

Executive session began at 6:19 p.m. and ended at 7:05 p.m.

Ms. Zukowski called the meeting to order at 7:22 p.m.

Item 2 – Action on Director of Facilities Contract

Mr. Melillo spoke about adding an annuity to Bob Gerbert's contract.

MOTION: Mr. Vouros moved that the Board of Education approve the Director of Facilities contract as recommended by the Superintendent. Mr. Ramsey seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Ms. Zukowski noted that Mr. Gerbert was a valuable member of our district and community.

Item 3 – Discussion and Possible Appointment of Director of Teaching and Learning

MOTION: Mr. Vouros moved that the Board of Education endorse both the process and the appointment of Kara DiBartolo as the Superintendent's recommended candidate for the position of Director of Teaching and Learning. Mr. Cruson seconded.

Mrs. Uberti reported on the search committee which interviewed seven candidates and moved two to interview with her and Mr. Melillo. She was our clear choice and is a high quality person. Mr. Ramsey was on the committee and feels she is a tremendous gift to our educators with her personality and level of expertise

Ms. Zukowski welcomed Mrs. DiBartolo and looked forward to working with her.

Motion passes unanimously.

Item 4 – Consent Agenda

MOTION: Mr. Vouros moved that the Board of Education approve the consent agenda which included the correspondence report. Mrs. Kuzma seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 5 – Public Participation

Item 6 – Reports

Superintendent's Report: Mr. Melillo thanked the Newtown community for welcoming him to this position. He has recognized that this community is strong and wants to hear from everyone to be sure our students get what they need. He spoke about energy conservation and was looking to bring in Cenergistics to help lower energy consumption. He will present this to the Board and also work with the Town's Energy Commission.

The Hawley project is on target, the turf field at the high school should be done on time and the Head O'Meadow gym floor is complete. He has been in contact with All-Star regarding hiring bus drivers and will ride with students on the first day of school. We hired Jim Ross as principal of the middle school and Kara DiBartolo as Director of Teaching and Learning. Kara comes to us from the Sherman public schools, holds four certifications, is an adjunct professor at Sacred Heart, and is a Bethel Board of Education member. She is a team player and will fit well with his administrative team. Mr. Melillo has open office hours every Wednesday from 7:30 to 9:00 a.m. and also has a twitter account - SuperNewtown.

Committee Meetings:

There were no committee meetings to report.

Mrs. Kuzma, as the Reed liaison, reported on the library book sale. The Hawley move is underway and she met with Mr. Moretti to go over the logistics.

Chair Report:

Ms. Zukowski reported on the great accomplishment of those involved in the NASA images taken by the James Webb Space Telescope. We are also celebrating our new Superintendent who has accomplished a great deal in filling two key administrative positions and meeting with many individuals and groups. A short reception followed.

Item 7 – Old Business

Item 8 – New Business

2022-2023 Budget Adjustments:

MOTION: Mr. Vouros moved that the Board of Education approve the 2022-2023 budget adjustments. Mr. Ramsey seconded.

Mrs. Vadas went over budget adjustments which total \$916,541 bringing the total budget amount to \$82,134,639 which is a 3.06% increase.

Motion passes unanimously.

BOE Vacancy:

MOTION: Mr. Vouros moved that the Board of Education appoint Alison Plante as the new member of the Board of Education. Mrs. Kuzma seconded.

Ms. Zukowski thanked all five candidates and welcomed Alison Plante to our Board of Education team.

Mrs. Larkin welcomed Mrs. Plante and said it was a very enjoyable process.

Mr. Vouros thanked the candidates who came forward to fill this position. It was rewarding to know there are a number of people who want to take this responsibility and looks forward to working with Mrs. Plante.

Mrs. Kuzma thanked everyone who applied and are invested in the town. She welcomed Mrs. Plante and looks forward to working with her.

Mr. Ramsey also welcomed Mrs. Plante and thanked the candidates and was grateful to have her on the Board.

Ms. Zukowski said Mrs. Plante has skills and experience that will serve our district well and has demonstrated honesty, integrity, critical thinking, team spirit and a willingness to engage in hard conversations.

Motion passes unanimously,

Standing Committee Assignments:

MOTION: Mr. Vouros moved that the Board of Education approve the revised 2022 Standing Committee Assignments. Mrs. Larkin seconded.

Ms. Zukowski recommended the following committee assignments.

CFF Committee will include Mrs. Larkin as Chair, Mrs. Plante and Ms. Zukowski
Communications stays as is with Mr. Ramsey as Chair, Mr. Cruson and Mrs. Kuzma
Curriculum and Instruction stays as is with Mr. Vouros as Chair, Mrs. Larkin and Mr. Ramsey
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion with Mrs. Plante as Chair, Mr. Cruson and Ms. Zukowski
Policy as is with Mr. Cruson as Chair, Mrs. Kuzma and Ms. Zukowski
Social Emotional Health and Wellness as is with Mrs. Kuzma as Chair, Mrs. Larkin and Mr. Ramsey

Mr. Cruson didn't feel we could do this tonight because our policy states standing committees are made up of Board members and Mrs. Plante hasn't been sworn in.

After some discussion regarding Policy 9130 and the suggested suspension of that policy, Mr. Ramsey suggested the possibility of approving the committees pending Mrs. Plante being sworn in.

MOTION: Mr. Ramsey moved to amend the motion to add "pending the swearing in of Ms. Plante with the Town Clerk." Mrs. Larkin seconded.

Motion for amendment passes unanimously.

Motion as amended passes unanimously.

Authorized Signatures Change for the ED-099:

MOTION: Move that the Board of Education approve Superintendent Christopher Melillo and Director of Business Tanja Vadas as the Authorized Signatures for the ED-099 Agreement for Child Nutrition Programs. Mrs. Larkin seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Authorization of Signatures:

MOTION: Mr. Vouros moved that the Board of Education authorize Superintendent Christopher Melillo and Director of Business Tanja Vadas to execute agreements, to apply for grants or to sign other documents as may be necessary in the normal course of the school system's business, including documents that support the adopted budget or that implement the Board's established policies or programs. Mrs. Kuzma seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Minutes of June 21, 2022:

MOTION: Mr. Vouros moved that the Board of Education approve the minutes of June 21, 2022. Mr. Cruson seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Minutes of June 24, 2022:

MOTION: Mr. Vouros moved that the Board of Education approve the minutes of June 24, 2022. Mr. Cruson seconded. Vote: 5 ayes, 1 abstained (Ms. Zukowski)

Item 9 – Public Participation

MOTION: Mr. Cruson moved to adjourn. Mr. Vouros seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 10 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Donald Ramsey
Secretary

Correspondence Report
06/21/2022 – 07/11/2022

Date	Name	Subject
06/21/2022	Gouveia, Tanja	Fwd: All-Star Transportation Contract Exhibits
06/22/2022	Laura Main	Resume for consideration for open BOE position
06/22/2022	Zukowski, Deborra	June 19 Week in Preview
06/22/2022	Gouveia, Tanja	Tuition for nonresidents
06/22/2022	Jenn Padilla	Open Democratic Board Seat
06/23/2022	Carrie Grummons' via Newtown	Drawing attention to concerning behavior
06/23/2022	June, Kathy	Special BOE Meeting
06/23/2022	Gouveia, Tanja	Fwd: Recruiting Update
06/23/2022	June, Kathy	Sad News
06/28/2022	David Stott	Support for Jennifer Padilla
06/28/2022	Alison Plante	Requesting consideration for vacant BOE seat
06/30/2022	Kate McGirk	More Specific FOIA Request
07/01/2022	Melillo, Christopher	Introduction
07/03/2022	Zukowski, Deborra	July 3, 2022 Week in Preview
07/05/2022	Zukowski, Deborra	Special meeting to interview candidates
07/05/2022	Meghan Fremont	Endorsement of Alison Plante - BOE
07/06/2022	Zukowski, Deborra	Question about our interviews
07/07/2022	Zukowski, Deborra	Candidates
07/08/2022	June, Kathy	July 11 Agenda
07/08/2022	June, Kathy	BOE Mailing – July 12, 2022
07/09/2022	Zukowski, Deborra	Prepping for the interviews
07/10/2022	Zukowski, Deborra	July 10, 2022 Week in Preview
7/12/2022	Wendy Leon-Gambetta	See something, say something

Proposed Operational Plan for 2022-23

	2021-22 Approved Budget	Cumulative Adjustment	Percent of Decrease or Increase	Balance	Percent Change	Final \$ Increase
Board of Education's Request 2/2/2022	79,697,698	3,353,481				
	83,051,179				4.21%	
<u>Adjustments to Board of Education's Plan</u>						
<u>Board of Finance Adjustments 2/24/2022</u>						
Town's Capital Non-Recurring (Technology)*	(144,540)	(144,540)	-0.18%	82,906,639	4.03%	3,208,941
Town's Capital Non-Recurring (Building & Site Projects)*	(472,000)	(616,540)	-0.77%	82,434,639	3.43%	2,736,941
<u>Legislative Council Adjustments 4/6/2022</u>						
Certified Salaries	(169,361)	(785,901)	-0.99%	82,265,278	3.22%	2,567,580
Non-Certified Salaries	(55,980)	(841,881)	-1.06%	82,209,298	3.15%	2,511,600
Contracted Services	(34,459)	(876,340)	-1.10%	82,174,839	3.11%	2,477,141
Building Repairs	(25,000)	(901,340)	-1.13%	82,149,839	3.08%	2,452,141
Staff Training - Curriculum	(8,000)	(909,340)	-1.14%	82,141,839	3.07%	2,444,141
Textbooks - Curriculum	(7,200)	(916,540)	-1.15%	82,134,639	3.06%	2,436,941
2022-23 BOARD OF EDUCATION'S PROPOSED BUDGET	(916,540)			82,134,639	3.06%	2,436,941
Total Adjustments		(916,540)				
Percent Adjustment			-1.15%			
Proposed BOE Budget				82,134,639		
Proposed Budget % Increase					3.06%	
Proposed Budget \$ Increase						2,436,941

*The Board of Finance has identified reductions to be funded through the Town's Capital Non-Recurring fund.

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Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting held on June 21, 2022 at 6:45 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 3 Primrose Street.

D. Zukowski, Chair	L. Rodrigue
J. Vouros, Vice Chair	A. Uberti
D. Ramsey, Secretary	T. Vadas
R. Harriman	1 Staff
D. Cruson (absent)	30 Public
J. Kuzma	1 Press
J. Larkin	

Ms. Zukowski called the meeting to order at 6:45 p.m.

MOTION: Mr. Ramsey moved that the Board of Education to into executive session to discuss the Assistant Superintendent's contract and invite Dr. Rodrigue. Mrs. Harriman seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 1 – Executive Session

Executive session ended at 7:05 p.m.

Item 2 – Pledge of Allegiance

Item 3 – Vote on Executive Session Item

MOTION Mr. Ramsey moved that the Board of Education approve the one-year contract extension for the Assistant Superintendent and contract changes per the Superintendent's recommendation. Mr. Vouros seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 4 – Consent Agenda

MOTION: Mr. Ramsey moved that the Board of Education approve the consent agenda which includes the donations to Newtown High School and Central Office and the correspondence report. Mrs. Larkin seconded.

Mrs. Harriman had a question on the correspondence report because in the June 15 entry the last name of the person was not given.

MOTION: Mrs. Harriman moved to amend the motion to add the full name to the June 15 entry in the correspondence report which is Kate McGrady.

Mr. Ramsey seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Vote on the consent agenda passes unanimously.

Item 5 – Public Participation

Item 6 – Reports

Mrs. Zukowski asked to start with the Superintendent's report.

Dr. Rodrigue said she did not have a report and just wanted to thank the Board for their support over the years and her wonderful staff including secretary Kathy June who has been my right hand, Tanja Vadas, Director of Business, who has done a phenomenal job, and Anne Uberti, her outstanding Assistant Superintendent, who has been amazing. This is an outstanding community and she has been blessed and is thankful for so many years in Newtown. She will miss you all.

Committee Reports: The DEI Subcommittee met last week and discussed professional development for the subcommittee, the equity and sustainability plan, and Mr. Johnson updated us on the equity leaders in each building.

Mrs. Kuzma reported that the Policy Committee discussed the two policies for approval. Mrs. Larkin reported the CFF committee met yesterday and had a good end-of-year meeting. They discussed the CIP and Mr. Gerbert provided a positive update on the Hawley move. We also went through the financial report.

Chair Report: Ms. Zukowski thanked Dr. Rodrigue for all she has done for students and staff and read a statement from Dan Cruson who could not be at the meeting.

Financial Report:

MOTION: Mr. Ramsey moved that the Board of Education approve financial report and transfers for the month ending May 31, 2022. Mr. Vouros seconded.

Mrs. Vadas presented the financial report and transfers.

Mrs. Larkin reported this was presented to the CFF subcommittee and was recommended to move forward.

Motion passes unanimously.

Item 7 – Presentations

Anne Dalton presented the WellSAT Triennial Assessment of School Wellness.

Mr. Vouros referred to the section regarding our support of the local farm products and felt that local farmer Jim Shortt would be happy to talk to students along with his son who is a sophomore at Shepaug. He addressed the need for teachers who are dual certified in physical education and health.

Mrs. Uberti stated that we have three teachers who are dual certified and moving forward we will hire dual certified teachers.

Mrs. Dalton spoke about the Health and Wellness Committee and regarding the Social Emotional Health and Wellness subcommittee we are trying to list all of the current social emotional supports in the district.

Mrs. Kuzma thanked Mrs. Dalton for this phenomenal job.

Item 8 – Old Business

Policies:

MOTION: Mr. Ramsey moved that the Board of Education approve Policy 6141.51/6141.52 Enrollment in an Advanced Course or Program and Challenging Curriculum. Mr. Vouros seconded.

Mrs. Kuzma said there were no further questions on this policy. They discussed the question about the change made under “Guiding Principles and Implementation” regarding adding the words “marginalized groups may be” as suggested by legal and the change in the first paragraph.

Motion passes unanimously.

MOTION: Mr. Ramsey moved that the Board of Education approve Policy 6172 Gifted and Talented Students Program. Mr. Vouros seconded.

Mrs. Kuzma said there were no questions but the committee decided a regulation should be developed.

Motion passes unanimously.

Item 9 – New Business

Discussion on Mentor for the New Superintendent:

Ms. Zukowski noted that at the last discussion we were asked to check with CAGE and CAPSS regarding their mentor services. Mr. Cruson called CAGE and they don't provide mentor services. She spoke to Fran Rabinowitz at CAPSS and they have a mentoring service free of charge. The mentor is a highly qualified retired superintendent and they provide a monthly facilitated discussion for all new superintendents. EdAdvance also offers regional meetings and they would provide a coach for Mr. Melillo. She spoke to Mr. Melillo and he said he has professional relationships with many superintendents and can call on them informally. During the search process he forged a strong relationship with Dr. Collins. Ms. Zukowski said the decision is to either with NESDEC at the added cost of up to \$6,000 or go with CAPSS with no charge.

Mr. Ramsey was in favor of going with Dr. Collins and NESDEC for the reasons just stated. Mrs. Harriman appreciates Mr. Melillo's opinion on this but doesn't feel like we are being appropriate stewards of the public funds if we already pay CAPSS membership fees and this is part of their service that that we are choosing to pay NESDEC. She would not be in support of this motion but understands why some would be.

Ms. Zukowski said the more diverse perspectives a new superintendent can be exposed to will be learning more robustly and more quickly and she liked that he will be interacting with CAPSS and EdAdvance. This would give us a third perspective that will be useful. She would be in support of Dr. Collins.

Mrs. Kuzma also supports Dr. Collins who has spent a considerable amount of time here and learned a lot about our community.

MOTION: Mr. Ramsey moved that the Board of Education approve using NESDEC with Dr. Randall Collins as its consultant to mentor the new Superintendent. Mr. Vouros seconded. Vote: 5 ayes, 1 nay (Mrs. Harriman) Motion passes.

Paraeducators Association Contract:

MOTION: Mr. Ramsey moved that the Board approve the ratified Newtown Paraeducators Association Contract from July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2025
Don moved contract. Mrs. Harriman seconded.

Mrs. Harriman was proud to have been part of this contract negotiation. Everyone worked collaboratively and it was a fair and equitable contract.

Mr. Ramsey concurred with Mrs. Harriman.

Dr. Rodrigue thanked Marlene Bucci, President, who worked behind the scenes for a really good negotiation.

Motion passes unanimously.

All-Star Transportation Contract:

MOTION: Mr. Ramsey moved that the Board of Education approve the five-year All-Star Contract effective July 1, 2022. Mr. Vouros seconded.

Mrs. Vadas spoke about the contract.

Mrs. Larkin stated there was a lot of work with this contract. They took a situation that wasn't ideal but put things in the contract that the vendor would take seriously.

Mrs. Vadas added that All-Star is working tirelessly to hire drivers.

Ms. Zukowski asked if the First Selectman knew he will have access to emergency buses and if there was a price structure for the town.

Mrs. Vadas said the cost wasn't discussed and she was not sure if he knows.

Motion passes unanimously.

Tuition:

MOTION: Mr. Ramsey moved that the Board of Education approve the out-of-district tuition rate of \$20,900 for the 2022-2023 school year. Mr. Vouros seconded.

Mr. Ramsey felt we should reduce it further for the employees.

Mrs. Vadas noted that we have a policy in place on tuition.

Motion passes unanimously.

MOTION: Mr. Ramsey moved that the Board of Education approve the minutes of June 7, 2022. Mr. Vouros seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 10 – Public Participation

Nerlande Foote, 14 Bear Hills, said her children participated in Kids Core which was a great benefit to them. She thanked Dr. Rodrigue for all she has done for the students and wished her rest and relaxation.

Tony Keating, Oak Ridge Drive, stated that at a board meeting last month there was a commentary about Newtown's education system not getting students ready for graduate school. His sons were well educated in Newtown. He also spoke about DEI.

Eric Paradis, 85 Riverside Road, thanked Dr. Rodrigue for his daughters receiving a quality education. The pushback against DEI is absurd. It is basically being kind to each other.

Mrs. Harriman stated that effective immediately she was resigning from the Board of Education. She has been on the Board for nearly seven years and spoke about the policies that were developed and positions added like out Grant Writer, Director of Teaching and Learning and the DEI Coordinator. We were a team. She is leaving because she has seen a shift the last six months with the overstepping of boundaries and disrespect to our staff. This shift is coming close to damaging ground breaking work in particular in DEI. We have lost sight of our one job to serve all of our students every day. It's about showing up and making decisions in the best interest of our students. She wished the Board the best and to keep an open mind and always make decisions for all of our students.

MOTION: Mr. Ramsey moved to adjourn. Mr. Vouros seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 11 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Donald Ramsey
Secretary

Please Notes: These minutes are pending Board approval.
Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting held on June 24, 2022 at 10:30 a.m. in the Council Chambers, 3 Primrose Street.

D. Zukowski, Chair (absent)
J. Vouros, Vice Chair
D. Ramsey, Secretary
D. Cruson
J. Kuzma
J. Larkin

L. Rodrigue
A. Uberti
7 Staff
6 Public

Item 1 – Call to Order

Mr. Vouros called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. and asked for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Item 2 – Appointment of Newtown Middle School Principal

MOTION: Mr. Ramsey moved that the Board of Education appoint James Ross as Principal of Newtown Middle School effective September 1, 2022 with salary per the administrators' contract.

Mr. Ramsey said Mr. Ross was a superb teacher, a team player and analytical problem solver. He loves children and most important to me is he will help to restore the joy of learning and teaching affected by the pandemic.

Mrs. Larkin was excited to have been part of this process. Mr. Ross is extremely warm and gracious and she has heard wonderful things about him.

Mrs. Kuzma was excited for her daughter to start at the middle school under his leadership

Mr. Vouros noted that he was on the committee. Mr. Ross entered this position with a tremendous amount of support from staff and the committee about his potential leadership at the middle school. It's important for students and staff to have his kind of leadership to take over. Mr. Vouros will help in any way and will be sure he has an assistant principal for support to transform the middle school into what it was. We wish him well.

Dr. Rodrigue said her best final decision was to hire Mr. Ross. He has the support of the ATeam and middle school staff who have all been very complimentary.

Mr. Ross thanked the hiring committee, Dr. Rodrigue and the Board of Education. He loves Newtown's excellence in academic achievement and is always moving forward with incredible leadership. He is honored to be part of this and make a difference at the middle school and looks forward to shaping the learning there. He has always felt supported by Dr. Rodrigue, Mrs. Uberti, and the teachers and parents.

Motion passes unanimously.

Motion: Mr. Ramsey moved to adjourn. Mrs. Larkin seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 3 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:38 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Donald Ramsey
Secretary