



**Special 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.*

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Monday, January 11, 2021, 7:00 pm

via Remote Meeting

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**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; Dr. Donna Nestler-Rusack, Assistant Superintendent of Schools; Susan Russo, Business Manager

- I. Call to Order  
*The meeting was called to order by Deb Chute, Board Chair, at 7:01 pm on January 11, 2021. A roll call of Board members and administrators was taken.*
- II. Pledge of Allegiance  
After the Pledge of Allegiance, Board Chair Chute read the District's Mission Statement.
- III. Communication from Public  
There was no communication from the public.
- IV. Discussion regarding Proposed 2021-222 Budget  
Superintendent Carnemolla opened the discussion by expressing her appreciation to the District administrators for their work and continued conversations in creating the budget being presented. Dr. Carnemolla also acknowledged the work of the District's new Business Manager, Susan Russo, for jumping right in with familiarizing herself with the budget and the development process, after only starting on Dec 20th. The Superintendent first reviewed the budget development process/timeline stating that the budget process began with two questions asked of administrators – What are our top priorities in this budget and how do the identified budget priorities support the Blueprint for Excellence. Discussions and subsequent discussions were had with each building principal or department head regarding each budget submission and recommendations for additions and

reductions. Discussions continued regarding potential reductions, reallocations and additions through January 7<sup>th</sup>. Dr. Carnemolla went on to review the priorities of Focus Areas and Goals for the 2021-2022 budget with Dr. Rusack adding information regarding the Teaching and Learning aspects:

- Focus Area 1 – Student Learning: To create multiple student learning pathways to challenge students to think critically, persist in solving challenging problems, work collaboratively, and communicate effectively
  - Curriculum Implementation – invest in 3 K-6 Curriculum Specialists
  - Business – invest in an additional 1.0 FTE Business Teacher
  - Wellness – invest in an additional 1.0 FTE Phys Ed/Health Teacher
  - Performing Arts – invest in an additional 1.0 Music Teacher
  - Computer Science & Robotics – create an intro computer science, coding & programming Unified Arts offering at AMS

The Superintendent and Dr. Rusack addressed questions from Board members including interaction between students and the curriculum specialists; overseeing Enrichment for All model; curriculum specialists at the three elementary schools and supported by the school administrators; upper grades have department coordinators for content and support within buildings; a consultant is coming in to train on Readers’/Writers’ Workshop; differentiated instruction; tracking and accountability; will report to Dr. Rusack, the District Program Director and building principals; and how curriculum specialists are common positions within other districts.

- Focus Area 2 – Personal Growth & Relationships: to foster a safe learning community that empowers students to be self-directed, self-regulated, and resilient as they strive to advance their own personal and academic goals.

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion – continued training for building-based and district wide teams; systematic rollout of professional development district wide for all staff.

The Superintendent explained how the District is developing a more systematic process in professional development for staff especially in the area of equity, diversity and inclusion. Dr. Rusack added that the District will use the trained trainer model and will continue to work with CREC as well. A Board member asked that this be a greater investment and commitment to build some supports back in for the entire District.

- Focus Area 3 – Communication & Partnerships: to continue to build internal and external partnerships in service to the district’s mission and beliefs for student learning through clear communication and transparent processes.

- Family Liaisons – designate a family liaison for each school & the district to provide families a point of contact if there are questions or issues; create resources and events that support families & build home/school partnerships; coordinate supports and services across buildings for families

Dr. Carnemolla clarified that this would be available to all Avon Public School families and will not be a new hire but appointing one of the social workers or school psychologists as the point of contact in each building. Adding the extra responsibility to staff was a concern of a Board member to which Dr. Carnemolla stated that it is all still being worked out.

- Focus Area 4 – Systems: to maximize efficiencies and optimize resources through the ongoing creation, refinement and alignment of processes, procedures, and systems.
  - Health Insurance – to increase the funding of the health/dental self-insurance fund over 5 years to a level that will sustain the fund moving forward
  - Pension & OPEB – due to actuarial changes resulted in decrease in projected fund growth and increased contribution requirements
  - Field Service Technician – to support & service the additional hardware and software acquisitions (approx. 5,400 devices) & address teacher/student needs

Susan Russo, informed the Board of the recent meetings she attended with the insurance broker, Lockton, to talk about health insurance. It was noted that the insurance funds were significantly underfunded. It is a priority to get these funds adequately funded. Ms. Russo confirmed that the District would like to increase the funds in a five-year period to address the gap with a CIGNA renewal of 7%; however, the District is currently out to bid for stop/loss and may be able to get a better package moving forward.

Ms. Russo went on to explain the pension and OPEB (post-employment) benefits with Milliman. The District was asked to relook at the interest rate, due to economic conditions, and mortality table. The District will go to the 6.25% recommendations to ensure adequate resources; effectively increasing contributions by 15% to bring to a proper operating level. The pension (Town of Avon pension that was offered in the past to certain staff categories) is healthy and funded at over 79% and we are in line with what the Town is doing.

The field technician position is to add or increase 1 FTE to support and service the increased device acquisitions in the District. Two technicians were requested last year to have one field technician at each school, which was cut; currently only asking for one technician. The increase is approximately \$56,000.

Dr. Carnemolla reviewed the following budget summaries:

The Superintendent stated the 2021/2022 Preliminary Budget Summary as:

2020/2021 Adopted Gross Budget	\$61,015,224.61
Principals/Department Head Proposed Budget	<u>\$63,136,693.22</u>
Difference in Dollars 2021 to 2022	\$ 2,121,468.61
Difference in Percent 2021 to 2022	3.47%

The Superintendent gave the 2021/2022 Initial Budget Reductions Summary:

2020/2021 Principal/Dept. Head Proposed Budget	\$63,136,693.22
Requested Additions Reductions	(\$407,314.08)
Other Reductions	(\$95,076.11)
FY 2021/2022 Working Preliminary Budget	\$62,634,303.03
Difference in Dollars 2021 to 2022	\$1,619,078.42
Difference in Percent 2021 to 2022	2.65%

In conclusion, Dr. Carnemolla explained the preliminary budget drivers as:

Salaries	\$496,957.72
Benefits	\$504,911.55
Utilities	(\$14,780.02)

Contracted Services	(\$35,411.21)
Transportation	\$58,063.45
Tuition	\$176,349.84
Supplies & Equipment	\$412,962.00
All Other	<u>\$20,025.09</u>
Total Preliminary Gross Budget Increase	\$1,619,078.42

Dr. Carnemolla clarified for Board members that 5 FTEs (Business, Wellness, Music and Field Tech) were being requested; the curriculum specialists as well as other needs are reallocations of positions. A floating nurse is needed that was discussed last year and will be added. Ms. Russo reviewed the salaries projected for the positions.

Ms. Russo also reviewed the technology leases, which made up a large portion of the supplies & equipment expense which include a \$74,000 increase for Chromebook leases; \$150,000 increase for technology equipment district wide (desktops; projector replacements; wifi access points; new staff tablet/laptops). Dr. Carnemolla explained the DLL (Distant Learning Lab) is used for students to listen and speak, which the computers need to be updated to allow current software to work. Ms. Russo added that software licenses and new software were also included in this line. Some of the lines are additions due to replacing cuts last year.

Ms. Russo gave detailed explanation to the salaries line with reallocation of some positions to different buildings. Dr. Carnemolla added the reduction of an administrative support position due to the resignation of a staff person that will not be replaced but reassignment of duties at the high school.

The impact of COVID funding, including the CARES Act, including freezing the budget was discussed by the Superintendent. Dr. Carnemolla added that this created a budget different and unique from any other budget ever seen in the District. Custodian and cleaning supply costs have increased due to COVID. But not anticipating any additional relief funds, the Superintendent wanted to be sure enough funds were set aside in the custodial/maintenance lines. Supplies were also increased due to the guidelines that students do not share. The District has made the assumption that athletics will continue in some fashion and hopefully back to normal in the coming school year. Substitute teaching line needed to be kept at a larger number to ensure adequate staffing.

Magnet school tuition was addressed by Ms. Russo. Currently there are 38 students attending CREC magnet schools and enrollment is steadily decreasing with more and more families coming back to Avon Public Schools.

Enrollment projections are currently being reviewed and kindergarten enrollment has not begun, but numbers will be provided during the Wednesday meeting.

Projections for the Open Choice program was reviewed by Ms. Russo. Ms. Russo also reviewed the budget drivers. Dr. Carnemolla stated that documents will be forwarded to Board members and is due to the Town necessitating the Board needing to take action at the next Board meeting. The Superintendent once again thanked all District administrators for their work on the budget.

V. Adjournment

***The Board adjourned by unanimous consent at 8:55 pm.***

Minutes prepared by Shirley Moy, Board Recording Secretary

Minutes respectfully submitted by Jeffrey S. Fleischman, Board Secretary

*Jeffrey S. Fleischman, January 19, 2021*

*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.*