

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

SPECIAL  
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING  
TERRYVILLE HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY  
33 NORTH HARWINTON AVENUE  
TERRYVILLE, CT 06786  
MASKS ARE REQUIRED

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2022

6:30 P.M.

MINUTES

*Erin C. Higgins*

22 FEB 10 AM 9:51

PLYMOUTH, CT  
OFFICE OF THE CLERK  
2022 FEB 10 AM 9:51

Present: Mr. Seaman, Mrs. Kulesa, Mr. Showers, Mrs. Fusco, Mr. Foote,  
Mrs. Andrea-Florenciani, Mr. Perugino and Mr. Zbuska

Absent: Mrs. Lucian

Others Present: Mr. Falcone, Acting Superintendent, Mr. Tencza, Business Manager, Mrs. Melillo, Director of Pupil Personnel & Special Education Services, Mr. Mozak-Pezza, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, Mr. Trudeau, Director of Technology, Mrs. Loveland, Principal Harry S. Fisher Elementary School, Mrs. Worhunsky, Interim Principal Plymouth Center School, Ms. Suffridge, Principal Eli Terry Jr. Middle School, Mr. Hults, Principal Terryville High School and Mr. Vigliotti, Assistant Principal Terryville High School

1. Call to Order

Mr. Seaman called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and the group joined in the Pledge to the Flag.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

MOTION: To entertain a motion to move Item #4, Public Comment to Item#3 on the Agenda. Motion Mr. Showers, Second Mr. Foote, any discussion, all in favor, any opposed, motion carries.

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

Amy Battisto – Teacher – spoke in support of the Dean of Students position at Harry S. Fisher Elementary School.

Denise Seamour – Teacher – continuation of Amy Battisto’s public comment.

4. Budget Workshop #2 for 2022 - 2023 Budget

At this time, Mr. Seaman turned the meeting over to Mr. Falcone to address questions from the Board.

Some of the items discussed were:

- Reduction of one Music Teach in the District

One Music Teacher will be stationed at every school in the district. The reduction will be a part-time Music Teacher at Harry S. Fisher Elementary School and Eli Terry Jr. Middle School. Students will be offered electives or unified arts and every child will receive music and band along with chorus.

- Eli Terry Jr. Middle School Reduction in Language Arts, Mathematics and Guidance and pending graduation: Redistribution

All Coaches and Interventionists will now be listed under District-Wide Services rather than under Curriculum & Instruction. The number of English and Math teachers remain the same. The account where they were placed has been changed.

Guidance Counselors in the middle and high schools are District-Wide Services and are now listed with Pupil Personnel and Special Education Services and not specific to a school.

Graduation – Over stock from last year. No problem with reduction.

Language Arts at Terryville High School – The part-time Coach at the high school and middle school this has been shifted to a coordinator for curriculum & instruction.

- Facilities – Custodial increase of between \$825,000 - \$826,000.

All custodians were moved from every school into the Facilities Account. District-Wide custodians may be moved as needed to any school.

NOTE: Some District-Wide Services were brought together and placed under the appropriate budget areas.

- \$50,000 in Legal Fees

The District’s insurance company covers legal ramifications. No additional fee. Not handled by Shipman & Goodman. The \$50,000 in the legal account should be sufficient. Hopefully, towards the end of the year, the district will be able to encumber some of the funds into Shipman & Goodman should their services be needed.

- Consortium for Oil

The district is still involved in a consortium with Thomaston and Wolcott. Asked if this expires or if it on going the response was this went out to bid last fall and Dime, who is the provider, was the lowest bidder.

- Solar and Electric Bills – Electric use while using Solar has decreased 29%. Energy costs from 2008 to present is \$407,000 less base per year.

- Staff Changes, Eliminations, Potential Issues that may arise from Staff Changes and Eliminations.

Exploring – Configuring how schools are run. How positions are prioritized. How to provide better services for our children with the staff we currently have.

Library Media Specialist At Plymouth Center School – This position will provide common planning time for teachers. They will be able to meet together during prep period, every day. The purpose is to create common planning time.

Stem Teacher at Harry S. Fisher Elementary School – This position accomplished the same as the Library Media Specialist at Plymouth Center School.

Reconfiguring positions with the possibility of non-renewals this year, possible retirements. There is a possibility of non-renewing one or two teachers. However, the district will be hiring three teachers, Library Media Specialist for the elementary schools, STEM Teacher and a Family and Consumer Science Teacher. But may have to still eliminate one to two additional positions.

- Monitoring Gas and Oil

The district does monitor oil and gas. Currently, the district will stay with gas. However, it is realized that natural gas costs will be increasing. Therefore, we will be monitoring which one the district will proceed with. Also, the tanks are monitored. The prices are monitored. When the price of oil is low, the tanks are topped. They are currently topped.

- Clarification Regarding the Budget

This budget is the Superintendent's proposed budget to the Board. It was a budget created by all of the administrators and principals. There were arguments, discussions and individuals fought for certain positions. Sacrifices needed to be made based on what was thought to be the correct thing to include. A reasonable budget was put out. At the February 9 Board Meeting, if this budget is voted on and approved, it then becomes the Board of Education's Budget.

- Capital Improvement Plan

The driveway and sidewalks at the high school are falling apart. This is a safety issue. Where is the Capital Improvement Plan addressed in the Budget?

Response: This issue has been addressed and has been also addressed through the court system. The settlement made between the attorney and the contractor was to put down a coating and was accepted by the previous superintendent and the Board. The building responsibility for the maintenance on Capital Projects are the town's responsibility. Talks have been taking place with both the town and

the Capital Improvement Committee. Mr. Perugino was invited by Mr. Seaman to attend a meeting of the Capital Improvement Committee with him when the committee begins to meet. Mr. Perugino accepted the invitation. Discussions with the town have been on going. The sidewalks are on the radar as are the conditions of the fields which are being looked at as well.

Another point that was made by Mr. Falcone was that the District needs to lay out a plan, i.e. this was done on such and such a date, the life expectancy is so many years. This way everyone can see the cycle.

- Reduction of the Dean of Students

We are looking at the roles and responsibilities of this position at the middle school to see if they align to what the district truly needs, review the job description. Re-evaluate the position, what the needs of the school are, make certain the job description aligns to every single component that is needed. There may be a shift to a different title, a different name and different job responsibilities. For example, at the middle school, if the district has a Dean of Students that is certified or has experience as a Math Coach, since that is a position that is being eliminated; if this aligns, a Math Coach may be a requirement for the new position. But, in looking at literacy concerns of the district, The Dean of Students, we would want to help coach or intervene with literacy. This position will be tweaked to be appropriate with the needs of the district. However, the recommendation at Harry S. Fisher Elementary School would remain the same, elimination of the Dean of Students. There is data available as to why this decision was made.

- Hiring of an Assistant Principal at Eli Terry Jr. Middle School rather than a Dean of Students

This may be a better course of action, expressed by Mrs. Fusco, as an assistant principal would be able to attend PPT's, do evaluations, rather than just discipline (which is still important). It would lighten the load a little for the principal and the duties would be spread out and it would be a little more equitable. This individual would be a resource in more than once capacity. In support of her theory were Mr. Zbuska commented a vice principal would have a better effect and would hold students a little bit more accountable; (comparison of assistant principal and Dean of Students when he taught at the middle school) and Mr. Showers who felt there would be a little more authority and the ability to get more accomplished if there were a vice principal as opposed to a Dean of Students.

Just to clarify, a Dean of Students cannot evaluate teachers. If there is discipline towards a staff member, the Dean of Students would not be involved. A principal and/or an assistant principal is able to suspend, not a Dean of Students. The position of Dean of Students is not an administrative position. It is recommended and encourage a 092 certification be required. But, we cannot require this of a Dean of Students as this position would then fall under administrative.

The district went from the position of assistant principal to that of Dean of Students because of the fact the State was not going to come through with the federal funds. Because of this, Dr. Semmel began to eliminate positions and quite a few staff were lost.

At this time, Mr. Falcone was asked to look at which option was the best. He is to contact the Board prior to the next meeting with the cost and responsibility and difference, if the Board choose to move in the direction of an assistant principal. Mr. Falcone indicated he would do his best.

- Dean of Students at Harry S. Fisher Elementary School – This position is not on the table.

However, as a Board, this can be a point of discussion. It is their decision as to how to move forward. But remember, every decision that is made to keep a position takes one position that we are putting in or out, if the Board is going to stay with the 2.35% increase figure. If the Board makes a decision on the position of Dean of Students remaining at Harry S. Fisher, something would need to be removed to stay at the 2.35%.

It could possibly be more than one position being eliminated, for example: it could be the middle school secretary. This would not equate to the Dean of Students at Harry S. Fisher. If asked where a Dean of Students is needed, Mr. Falcone would recommend Plymouth Center School. This school has an extra grade level, pre-school, there are 346 students, 60 staff members which is almost the same amount at the middle and high schools.

- Mr. Seaman, Board Chair – The Board is trying to do the responsible thing by everyone. What's the best for kids and teachers. The Board wants a happy environment. There is no guarantee of the proposed 2.35% if the Board approves the increase. This figure needs to go before the Board of Finance and the Town Council.

Looking at our scores, they really have not increased. Students are attending other schools because our District cannot offer what other schools do. Our educational system is what is going to bring individuals to Plymouth. Individuals do not like the way things are nor do they accept change.

If this Budget gets adopted at the February 9<sup>th</sup> Board of Education Meeting, next it will be brought to the Town for the Board of Finance to review and possibly make cuts they feel are needed. There is a meeting with the Town Council, the Board of Finance and Board of Education. The Town Council will give its input as to cuts, if any. The Mayor will review the budget with the Board of Finance and the budget gets voted on. Just as a reminder, this is not solely a Board decision.

- Revenue and the Budget  
Revenue for the rental of the schools? (Mr. Perugino)

As explained by Mr. Falcone and Mr. Seaman, the Board Policy was adjusted in the beginning of the year, allowing local organizations in town to utilize our buildings without paying a fee. Example: The Lions Club needs to use our buildings for an event. The building is free of cost. However, the district does charge for any overtime or time and a half for our custodians in the building. The exception to this is Parks & Recreation, the funds they are saving by not paying rental, they are able to do something for the town's kids, i.e. purchasing basketball hoops for the middle school to support the Jr. Pro Basketball League.

As Mr. Perugino recalls, in the past, if a group comes in to rent facilities, at least 50% (a certain %) of kids needed to be from Plymouth. This group would get a reduction in rental but they would not receive the rental for free. They would still need to pay for the custodian, etc. Are there any outside groups that come to Plymouth who are not affiliated?

Mr. Falcone explained that he believed the policy states something to the effect that if you're for example a dance studio and you are performing a dance in one of our auditoriums and you are making money on this performance, you would pay for the rental of the auditorium. There were three various

groups, students within the schools; organizations within the town and organizations outside groups. Now, it is just two groups, students within the schools and organizations in town and outside of town. The revenue from rentals is not what it used to be in past years.

- Additional Comments from Board Members

Mrs. Kulesa – Having done this for a very long time now, I think it's great when people make suggestions. I have no problem with that. But one also must understand the ramifications of those suggestions and how possibly be fit into the budget. What are we going to take away? One needs to also be thinking that way, too.

Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani – Many kids have lost out the past two years. We are now going to need a lot more services to stay within the schools. Especially, helping the children. She likes that there are some new opportunities coming forward but she just wants to make certain to always keep enough money for teachers, Math coaches, the positions that are really going to matter the most in the schools.

Mr. Perugino – He does not feel this budget is enough. The work that has gone into the Budget, some of the questions he asked. He explained, I ask the questions, I got the answers and am happy with them. Like Mrs. Kulesa said, if you're going to take something out of the budget, put something else in, one needs to know where do you do it. He feels the worst job in this Town is the Board of Finance. The second is the Board of Education trying to figure out how to take care of the kids, the staff, etc. He approves of the 2.35%.

Mr. Falcone – Some quick figures put together by Mr. Hults. Approximately \$25,000 - \$30,000 between the Dean of Students and an Assistant Principal. The number of days would obviously need to be negotiated.

Mr. Seaman – Asked Mr. Falcone to work on where he would find the funds and what we would lose if the Board went with an Assistant Principal vs the way the budget is now.

Mr. Falcone – Echoed, he wanted the Board to see the difference between the positions, Dean of Students and Assistant Principal, and what the Board would acquire for the difference in the dollar amount. He thinks this is important to the decision of the Board.

Mr. Seaman – Whether the Board decides on an Assistant Principal or a Dean of Students, he would like the position to come from within. He does not want an outside posting as long as the district has qualified candidates, for which he feels it does. He then if anyone was in disagreement with this.

Mr. Perugino – Why would you only want to go from within?

Mrs. Kulesa – It's not just cut and dry. It's just not so easy to say that. People would need to want the position. Going back and forth have the position of Assistant Principal one year, not the next year and so forth is not necessarily a stable position. She is not so sure that this position would be as desirable as Mr. Seaman thinks.

Mr. Seaman – To rephrase: He would like that individuals currently in the District to have first choice.

Mrs. Kulesa – She feels that was always the case.

Mr. Seaman – Indicated that he just wanted to be clear about that.

Mr. Falcone – We can do an Internal Posting, if we find the right candidate internally, we're good. If we don't, then we will go outside and post.

Mrs. Kulesa – Correct

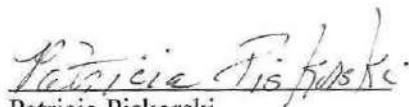
Mr. Seaman – The Board will wait until they hear what Mr. Falcone has put together for them.

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

5. Adjournment

MOTION: To entertain a motion to adjourn at 7:28 p.m. Motion Mr. Foote, second, Mr. Showers, all in favor, motion passes.

Respectfully Submitted,



Patricia Piskorski  
Recording Secretary to the  
Plymouth Board of Education