

Ashford Board of Education
Special Meeting Minutes – June 14, 2022
6:00 pm

Meeting Held in Person and Electronically Via Zoom

Note: Per CGS 10-218, Board of Education Meeting Minutes are provided in a draft format within 48 hours of the date the meeting was held. With the exceptions of motions and votes recorded, the minutes are unofficial until they have been read and approved by a majority vote by the Board. Should edits be necessary, they will be made at a regularly scheduled meeting, noted in the meeting minutes, and so voted upon.

Call to Order

- Chair Jane Urban called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.
- Present were members Tess Grous, Kim Kouatly, Jennifer Leszczynski, Al Maccarone, and Marian Matthews. Jon Laughlin was absent. Ex-officio member Bill Falletti joined the meeting at 6:06 p.m.
- Also present were Superintendent Craig Creller, Director of Pupil Personnel Cindy Ford, Principal Troy Hopkins, Assistant Principal Polly Borysevich, Business Manager Deana Chrzan, and Zoom meeting host Scott Waddell. There were 2 members of the public present. There were approximately 57 members of the school staff and the public present via Zoom.

Pledge of Allegiance

Ex-officio member Bill Falletti joined the meeting at 6:06 p.m.

Opportunity for Public Comment

- Kim Kouatly read emails the board received from Carrie Pramuka (6/9), Sabrina and Dan Bowersett (6/9), Amanda Cantrell (6/9), Cortney and Brandon Gerlach (6/9), Jennifer Mozeiko (6/9), Corinne Zanetti (6/12), Susan Irvine (6/12), Crystal Carvalho (6/13), James Hendricks (6/13), Toni Gobin (6/14), Chantel Pelletier (6/14), Melissa Knight (6/14), and Katherine Duval (6/14) expressing support for the teachers and noncertified staff in their vote of no confidence in Superintendent Craig Creller. Emails attached.
- Kim Kouatly read an email received by the board from Traci Dutcher Hastings with The Chronicle (6/11). Email attached.
- John Kopec (North Rd.): When I bought property here in 2017, Ashford School was somewhere in the middle of rankings by U.S. News and World Report; now, they rank the top 420 out of 560 elementary schools in Connecticut, and we are unranked. SchoolDigger.com ranked us in the top 65% of schools in 2017; now, we are in the bottom 35%. Realtor.com (GreatSchools.org) ranked us a 7 in 2017; now, we are a 4. This slide predates the current superintendent. For people on the outside, test scores are the information they have access to. If I was looking at towns today, I would have written this town off right from the start. I hear people say that investing in Ashford School increases property value, but if we keep on our current trajectory, it will become a liability. Something is not working. We must improve. We must make changes. Demonizing the superintendent the way that I have seen...do you really think he is trying to hurt education? I have heard so much talk about how poorly he handled the budget, yet he got the largest increase in recent memory at least, if not ever. I have had several conversations with him. He wants to turn things around, and I am confident that he will. I think that you need to hear from some different perspectives. I have four kids in Ashford School. You may not like what I have to say, but surely you cannot think that I want anything but the best for my children's education. I am asking that each of you individually have a private conversation. Let's see if we can understand each other a little better. It would be very nice to have a conversation outside the stress of budget season.

Personnel Discussion – Exit Interview

MOTION made by Marian Matthews to enter executive session for the purpose of conducting an exit interview, inviting Troy Hopkins and Craig Creller. Motion seconded by Al Maccarone and carried unanimously.

The board, Troy Hopkins, and Craig Creller entered executive session at 6:27 p.m. At 6:57 p.m., the board, Troy Hopkins, and Craig Creller exited the executive session and took a brief recess.

Discussion Concerning Superintendent's Performance Evaluation and Superintendent's Contract

MOTION made by Marian Matthews to enter executive session for discussion concerning the superintendent's performance evaluation and superintendent's contract, inviting Craig Creller. Motion seconded by Kim Kouatly and carried unanimously.

The board and Craig Creller entered executive session at 7:03 p.m. Bill Falletti exited the executive session at 9:11 p.m. Craig Creller exited the executive session at 9:21 p.m. The board exited the executive session at 9:54 p.m. and took a recess until 10:00 p.m.

Discussion and Possible Action Concerning Adoption of Superintendent’s Performance Evaluation

- There will be no action taken on that tonight.

Discussion and Possible Action Concerning Superintendent’s Contract

MOTION made by Kim Kouatly to approve the contract request discussed in executive session related to the current 2021-2022 year. Motion seconded by Al Maccarone. Motion failed with 2 yes votes (A. Maccarone, T. Grous) and 4 no votes (J. Leszczynski, K. Kouatly, M. Matthews, J. Urban)

MOTION made by Kim Kouatly to approve the contract request discussed in executive session related to the 2022-2023 year. Motion seconded by Jennifer Leszczynski. Motion failed unanimously.

Opportunity for Public Comment - None

Adjournment

MOTION made by Marian Matthews to adjourn the meeting at 10:05 p.m. Motion seconded by Kim Kouatly and carried unanimously.

Sara Wilson
Recording Secretary