

Ashford Board of Education
Regular Meeting Minutes – March 16, 2023

7:00 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 7:05 pm. Present were members Meghan Smith, Jennifer Leszczynski, Kim Kouatly, Marian Matthews, Tess Grous and Al Maccarone. Also present was Superintendent Cynthia Ford, Principal Polly Borysevicz, Asst. Principal David Eichorn and teachers Elissa Turcotte and Brittany Brown. There were 7 members of the school or community present via Zoom.

Pledge of Allegiance

All present recited the pledge.

Motion made by Jane Urban to add two items to the agenda under New Business, item 8b “Request for Leave of Absence” and item 8c “Discussion of Transfer of Funds to the Non-Lapsing Account”. Motion seconded by Tess Grous and carried unanimously.

Curricular Presentation/Board Field Trip

Ms. Brown and Mrs. Turcotte presented a comprehensive overview of the social studies curriculum and standards at Ashford School. Ashford follows the CT Social Studies Frameworks, the frameworks are currently broad and open-ended, but are being revised by the state at this time. In addition to presenting what students in grades PK-8 are learning in social studies, Mrs. Turcotte shared that she and Mr. Caldwell share a mutual love of teaching about the U.S. Constitution, so each Wednesday via the morning announcements, they share facts and information about the Constitution and government. She also spoke of the schoolwide Veteran’s Day event as a part of the social studies curriculum Ms. Brown stated that she is new to Ashford School, and she found it was very well planned and emotional experience. Ms. Brown noted that students in grades 5-8 are meeting weekly via Zoom with a school in Uganda which aligns with our status as a HOT (Higher Order Thinking) School and offers many diverse conversations from the arts, music and culture.

Before moving to public comment, Jane Urban thanked the students, teachers and administrators for providing the board with food, refreshments and hand written cards in recognition of Board Member Appreciation month. She also stated her appreciation for all of the members of board and that she enjoys the time she spends with them at meetings.

Opportunity for Public Comment

Jennifer Leszczynski spoke as a community member and parent giving a shout out to Mrs. Burnham and Dr. Levine for making Cardboard Night and Invention Convention such wonderful events. She attended prior to the board meeting and noting all of the energy in the room!

FY 24 Budget Worksession (if necessary)

Mrs. Ford spoke of a condensed timeline for final budgets to the Board of Finance. She noted that while a savings had been noted in a prior meeting with respect to cybersecurity, we have recently outplaced a student that could affect the FY 24 budget, however, she is unsure if any adjustments are needed at this time. She will work with the business manager and share any changes that may be necessary with the Board of Finance. The Public Hearing date is April 4th.

Consent Agenda

- a. Approval of January 2023 and February 2023 Budget and Expense Reports**
- b. First Reading of Policy Updated provided by Counsel**
- c. Second Reading of Policies (Series 5000 Chemical Health for Student Athletes; Drug and Alcohol Use by Students)**
- d. Approval of Minutes: 02/16/2023**

Motion made by Kim Kouatly to approve the consent agenda as listed. Motion seconded by Meghan Smith.

Discussion followed concerning edits to the minutes of 02/16/2023, the edits are:

- Under “Committee Breakout Sessions”, item a Cafeteria; insert the word “concern” after “They expressed” at the beginning of the second sentence;
- Add Tess Grous to the roll call of members present.

Marian Matthews inquired about the policy summary included in the packet, *Series 6000: Equitable Identification of Gifted and Talented Students*. She asked how students are identified. Mrs. Urban, Mr. Eichorn and Mrs. Borysevicz addressed how students are referred and assessed for gifted and talented education. Our students would be eligible to participate in STRIVE upon confirmation of such identification, however, they can opt out.

Jane Urban closed discussion and called for a vote. The motion to approve the consent agenda with the stated edits to the 02/16/2023 minutes carried unanimously.

Old Business

a. Bicknell Scholarship Committee Appointments

There was a brief period of discussion about the charge of the committee and number of awards presented.

Motion made by Kim Kouatly to appoint Meghan Smith, Al Maccarone and Jennifer Leszczynski to the Bicknell Scholarship Committee. Motion seconded by Jane Urban and carried unanimously.

b. Facility Update

Mrs. Ford updated the board on the status of the roof project. She has all of the documents necessary to begin the application to the state. The Town is working on an RFP for architectural design. Town building official and chair of the building committee Jim Rupert will reach out to Mansfield for assistance in reviewing timeline and process. There are plans to engage a “clerk of the works” for the roof project. Ms. Matthews asked Mrs. Ford if she had seen an email from MHR solar, and Mrs. Ford stated she had, but did not have an opportunity to address it.

c. Capital Improvements Update

We have received confirmation that the generator failure is covered by insurance. This was shared at a Capital Improvement Committee meeting as the generator replacement is on the BOE’s capital improvement list. There was discussion at the CIC meeting about increasing the generator wattage from 180kW to 200kW with auto start capability. The failed unit was 180KW and a manual start. The insurance company is only liable to pay for a like replacement and installation. Expenses for anything above this would be borne in the BOE capital request.

New Business

a. School Meals Survey

The idea of soliciting a survey to parents with regard to school meals was shared. The board wishes to invite food service manager Karen Samperi to a future Cafeteria Committee meeting so they may converse about school meals.

b. Request for Leave of Absence

A request for maternity leave was received via email.

Motion made by Meghan Smith to approve the leave request of Tiffany Mararra. Motion seconded by Kim Kouatly and carried unanimously.

c. Discussion of Transfer of Funds to Non-Lapsing Account

The board discussed the request that was made to transfer the remaining FY 22 budget ending balance of \$85,000 to the Board of Education non-lapsing fund. The board wishes to allocate \$60,000 from the non-lapsing fund toward capital improvement of the previously mentioned generator upgrades and a new fire alarm panel. The current panel is very outdated and needs replacement. Currently, the non-lapsing fund does not have enough money in it to cover the \$60,000 the board wishes to allocate to these two improvements.

Motion made by Jennifer Leszczynski to authorize the Superintendent to request on behalf of the Ashford Board of Education, a transfer of \$60,000 from the non-lapsing fund for the purpose of completion of upgrades to the Ashford School generator and fire alarm panel. Motion seconded by Meghan Smith and carried unanimously.

Opportunity for Public Comment

None

Next Meeting Date/Agenda Items

The next regular meeting date is April 6th. The board may call a special meeting, if necessary, on 3/31. Regular agenda items: Committee meetings, facility update.

Adjournment

Motion made by Marian Matthews to adjourn the meeting at 8:37 p.m. Motion seconded by Meghan Smith and carried unanimously.

Recorded by: Jennifer Truax

Zoom Recording Link:

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/ljhd3uihu6JoV7IxUNM93S2Vk8y_k7JFH3LPW8-0f1q2QMRIFWSU69-Cdqaq0wj9.fasK1Ofij7B-rXF9

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