

Ashford Board of Education
Regular Meeting Minutes – February 21, 2019
7:00 pm
Ashford School District Office Conference Room

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

Vice-Chair Marian Matthews called the meeting to order at 7:10 pm. Present were members John Calarese, Shannon Gamache and Lisa Donegan. Also in attendance were Superintendent James Longo, Business Manager Lisa Dyer, Director of Pupil Personnel Cindy Ford, Principal Troy Hopkins, Asst. Principal Garrett Dukette and recording secretary Jen Barsaleau. Unable to attend were board members Kay Warren, Jane Urban and chair John Lippert. Present in the audience were residents Rebecca Haeger, Jennifer Leszczynski, Christina Siggins, Brian Specyalski and Maureen Caye. Also present were teachers Jennifer Lindsay, Carly Imhoff, Kelly Knotts, Amy Capozziello and Krysta Parisen.

Communications

Member Lisa Donegan read a letter from Jesse Burnham concerning the number of 5th grade classrooms for the 2019-2020 school year.

Approval of Minutes: 02/07/19

The minutes were tabled until the next regular meeting.

Opportunity for Public Comment

Vice-Chair Marian Matthews opened the floor for public comment, limiting each speaker to a maximum of two minutes per the bylaws of the board.

- Maureen Caye noted that it is difficult for residents to comment and provide feedback on the proposed budget if the drafts are not posted at least a few days before the meeting. She will be interested in hearing the plans for grades 5 and 6 tonight, inquired about the strategy of explaining the library media position and what are the fall back options if the Board of Finance cuts the budget?
- Brian Specyalski introduced himself as a long time resident, former student, and business owner. He questioned the direction of the school under Dr. Longo and Mr. Hopkins, as test scores are low. He stated that something has to be done toward moving in a different direction. He was also concerned about not being able to reach anyone in the school office after dismissal time when he tried to call to find out where his child was as she not on the bus. He also noted that security measures were not followed when he sent someone here to the school to look for his child.
- Rebecca Haeger spoke to the importance of having a math interventionist for the middle school. She thanked the teachers for their part in creating children who will be amazing people. She feels that test scores do not reflect the whole child.

Dr. Longo noted that he had received an email communication stating that new test score data would be available to the public on the CT State Department of Education website tomorrow.

Old Business

a. Distribution of District/Administrative Reports

- Dr. Longo distributed his Superintendent's report and next Ashford Citizen article. He recommended that the board schedule a transportation committee meeting. Some of the drivers wish to be able to speak with the committee. Dr. Longo believes that next year's proposed budget with the ½ time math interventionist has been reduced as far as it can be without impacting our teacher's ability to teach.
- Mrs. Ford reviewed her report and wished to note that there had been some public comment at previous meetings that people are moving into Ashford because we have a very good special education program. In actuality, Ashford's percentage of students identified as special education is the same as the state average, 14%. Ashford has a great staff and we are educating with a whole child approach.

- Mr. Dukette shared a comprehensive power point presentation on iReady Assessment Screening and Intervention software. iReady has been used since the fall of 2018 and has replaced the Star testing software that had been used for some time. After doing some research, it became evident that Star did not align to the new Smarter Balanced assessment testing or the common core. After 6 months of use, Mr. Dukette reports that staff are finding that iReady results are revealing more specifics in terms of identifying content areas where a student might be having difficulty or those where they may be doing exceptionally well.
- Mr. Hopkins shared a power point demonstrating how grade 5 and 6 student schedules can work with a total of five teachers in those grades. He thanked the teachers and administrators for their input on this task, noting that this is a quick draft and may not be 100% final as we are still investigating more options.

Dr. Longo suggested that the intervention team be invited to a future meeting to further discuss iReady, and how it is used in determining intervention.

Dr. Longo distributed proposed administrative regulations for the existing Home-School Communication policy. He will meet formally with teachers to discuss this proposal before the March 21st regular meeting.

FY 20 Budget Worksession

Draft “D” of the Superintendent’s FY 20 Ashford School budget was handed out at the start of the meeting. Dr. Longo explained that the budget is not very different from the current year’s budget and reflects the addition of the ½ time math interventionist, increase in healthcare premium costs, negotiated or mediated wage increases for union staff, and general increases in the costs of fuel, utilities, repairs, etc. Several non-union staff members have waived wage increases for FY 20, and there really are not many lines within the budget that could be reduced. Discussion followed.

Motion made by John Calarese to approve the 2019-2020 budget of \$7,831,892, which represents a 4.3% increase over the current budget. Motion seconded by Lisa Donegan and carried unanimously.

Second Opportunity for Public Comment

- Jennifer Leszczynski wished to those employees who waived a wage increase, and commended the administration for thinking “out of the box” with regard to grade 5/6 and she really hopes it can work. As a professor, she understands testing and what it means, but what matters is that we go beyond.
- Maureen Caye shared her appreciation of the iReady presentation and the grade 5 and 6 schedule information and wondered if students would travel together throughout the day? What will the board do should the BOF cut the proposed budget?
- Rebecca Haeger expressed thanks to all of the staff and administrators who will not receive wage increases for “walking the walk and not talking the talk.” She also thanked the BOE members for all of their hard work.
- Brian Specyalski revisited test scores and accountability. He asked the board at what point does the board decide to make a change?

Ms. Matthews stated that scores are important to the board, but there is so much more to what we do here. We believe scores will show improvement, if not, it will be addressed. Test scores alone are not the “be all and end all.” The administration is and has been very responsive to the board and to parent concerns. Mrs. Donegan encouraged the community to come to the board of finance meetings, to come out and speak as you do at our meetings.

Ms. Matthews wishes to have the Building & Grounds and Cafeteria committees meet soon.

Motion made by John Calarese to adjourn the meeting at 8:58 pm. Motion seconded by Shannon Gamache and carried unanimously.

Recorded by:

Jennifer Barsaleau
Recording Secretary