



## BOARD OF EDUCATION Columbia, Connecticut

*The Columbia School District is a community of learners providing rigorous programs to ensure that each student can excel as an individual.*

Michael Maziarz, Chair  
James Chakulski, Jr.  
Lauren Haberman  
Joseph Napolitano  
Leah Osborn  
Rachel Riendeau  
Christine Sposito, Vice Chair/Secretary  
Barbara Wilson, Interim Superintendent  
Scott Leslie, Interim Asst. Superintendent

### BOARD OF EDUCATION DRAFT MEETING MINUTES Monday, March 6, 2023

**Present:** Chairman Michael Maziarz, Christine Sposito, Rachel Riendeau, Leah Osborn, James Chakulski, Lauren Haberman

**Absent:** Joseph Napolitano

**Others Present:** Barbara Wilson - Interim Superintendent, Scott Leslie - Interim Assistant Superintendent, Beverly Ciurylo - Finance Director, Kara Levenduski - Principal, Jennifer Tew, Jessica Hall, Isaac Riendeau, Henri Riendeau, Kenna Ford, Laura Zurell, Stephania Dawiczkyk, Michele Barton, Ashley Stryker

#### I. **Call to Order**

Chairman Michael Maziarz called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

#### II. **Pledge of Allegiance**

#### III. **Comments from the Audience** *(Please identify yourself by providing your name and address)*

*Time allotted for public participation is twenty (20) minutes; time allotted for an individual speaker is three (3) minutes. Please identify yourself by providing your name and address. For public comments during the meeting, please stand and speak at the center. During this portion, it is the role of the board to listen, allow voice to members of the audience, and make notes. We will then use that information together with any additional gathered information to appropriately respond at a later time. We now open up for Audience of Citizens.*

Michele Barton of 14 Randazzo Road asked if Columbia had in the past “banked” snow days (i.e., put potential snow days on the calendar). She requested a discussion in regard to banking them in the future. She also mentioned that, due to the increase in enrollment next year, they could use another math and language arts teacher, which she hopes will be included in the budget. She also expressed interest in gym class for the middle school students whom she mentioned do not get outside at all as they do not have recess. She would like to have more gym teachers so the kids can have movement and action twice per week. She also requested a crossing guard to direct morning traffic, so as to prevent lateness due to waiting at the light to enter the parking lot.

#### IV. **Action Items (Consent)**

*A consent agenda is presented by the Chairperson at the beginning of a meeting. Items may be removed from the consent agenda on the request of any one member. Items not removed may be adopted by general consent without debate. Removed items may be taken up either immediately after the consent agenda or placed later on the agenda at the discretion of the assembly.*

A. Approval of Minutes of [2/6/2023](#), [2/13/2023](#), [2/22/2023](#)

Christine Sposito MOVED, and James Chakulski SECONDED, to move the 2/6/2023 and 2/13/2023 meeting minutes to Discussion and Action as item B. **MOTION CARRIES 6:0.**

James Chakulski MOVED, and Christine Sposito SECONDED, to move the 2/22/2023 meeting minutes to Discussion and Action as item C. **MOTION CARRIES 6:0.**

B. [Payment of Bills](#), [Expenditure Report](#)

James Chakulski MOVED, and Leah Osborn SECONDED, to approve the Payment of Bills and Expenditure Report. **MOTION CARRIES 6:0.**

## VI. Discussion and Action

- A. Discussion & Possible Action - Adoption of the [2023-2024 Budget](#) as of 3/2/2023 and [2023-2024 Grant Budget](#) as of 3/2/2023

Interim Superintendent Barbara Wilson stated that, after the last board meeting, they discussed the positions needed, items that were already eliminated from the budget, and potential additions to the budget. She stated a full-time middle school math teacher, part-time speech pathologist, and part-time gym teacher, who are included in the current budget, are required. She also mentioned that they reduced the ELA curriculum line to meet the state's new mandated ELA requirement. Instead of rolling out to the entire school, they would opt to roll out just in the elementary grades. Additionally, having on-site IT services five days per week was reduced to the current three days of on-site IT. She also stated that she was asked to include a listing of these items for the slide in the town presentation. She mentioned that the current budget is 4.63%, which includes the overall increase, and that the town's portion has increased by 5.67%. She expressed that the budget is strong in comparison with other towns and that they are confident it can provide what the Columbia students need. She stated the importance of disclosing the current reductions to FiPAC and mentioned that they have two new half-time positions and one full-time position. She also mentioned that they were able to remove a few students from their high school tuition line.

Rachel Riendeau inquired as to whether Interim Superintendent Barbara Wilson had included in her presentation for FiPAC the justification for the increase of the 2.0 FTE positions (two part time and one full time position), and Interim Superintendent Barbara Wilson mentioned that she has repeatedly emphasized the enrollment increase. She added that hiring a whole team of middle school teachers would have been beneficial in allowing them to offer another entire section of classes but that we can meet the needs of students with what we are currently proposing.

James Chakulski stated that almost all of the increase is related to fixed costs and is inevitable (snowplowing, garbage disposal, transportation, tuition, salaries, benefits etc.). He also expressed that he is open to discussing the lines of the budget with anyone who would like to do so.

Beverly Ciurylo mentioned that the proposed grant budget for next year is slightly over \$262,000.00, which is \$116,000.00 less than last year. She also stated that the American Relief Fund money is dissipating, along with \$60,000.00 to \$70,000.00 of assistance for the recovery of additional staff hired, and that Title I and Title II have decreased.

Christine Sposito inquired as to whether the American relief funds are no longer being provided for special education, and this was confirmed.

Rachel Riendeau MOVED, and Christine Sposito SECONDED, to adopt the 2023-2024 Budget and the 2023-2024 Grant Budget. **MOTION CARRIES 6:0.**

Chairman Michael Maziarz thanked Interim Superintendent Barbara Wilson, Beverly Ciurylo, and the budget committee for all their help.

B. Approval of Minutes of [2/6/2023](#) and, [2/13/2023](#)

Christine Sposito mentioned that there were some errors contained in the 2/6/2023 and 2/13/2023 meeting minutes, which are currently revised, and that they would like to ensure that they can approve the revised copy, as opposed to the drafted copy.

Christine Sposito MOVED, and James Chakulski SECONDED, to approve the already revised copy of the 2/6/2023 and 2/13/2023 meeting minutes. **MOTION CARRIES 6:0.**

C. Approval of Minutes of 2/22/2023

James Chakulski MOVED, and Rachel Riendeau SECONDED, to approve the 2/22/2023 meeting minutes. **MOTION CARRIES 6:0.**

James Chakulski stated that on the second page, in the second to last paragraph, there was a comment regarding stipends.

Christine Sposito informed James Chakulski that she is agreeable with what it says, and James Chakulski mentioned that he would like it to state that Christine Sposito stated that she *believed* the stipends for coaches are not much higher than those of other schools in the area.

Rachel Riendeau mentioned that a considerable amount of the edited minutes were removed, specifically the conversation about Project O. She stated that she is okay with the way it reads now.

James Chakulski MOVED, and Leah Osborn SECONDED, to approve, as amended, the 2/22/2023 meeting minutes. **MOTION CARRIES 6:0.**

**IX. Reports of Subcommittees (Schedule Subcommittee Meetings)**

- A. Communications
- B. Teaching and Learning
- C. Policy

Rachel Riendeau stated that they reviewed the Policy 5001 series because of the additional information on glucose monitoring in the school and the availability and use of Narcan. She mentioned that the Narcan addition required that two school personnel, in addition to the nurse, are trained in using Narcan. She stated that there was some language surrounding Narcan; however, there are no major changes for the next meeting. She also expressed that they would need to do the first reading of Policy 5001, which will need to be included on the agenda for the next meeting.

- D. Budget

Chairman Michael Maziarz stated that the town budget meeting is scheduled for next Wednesday.

**X. Correspondence/Communication**

- A. H.W. Porter [Enrollment Update](#)

Interim Superintendent Barbara Wilson mentioned that another 7th grader enrolled and that they currently have 475 students enrolled.

**XI. Board of Education Upcoming Meetings**

- A. Wednesday, March 15, 2023, 7:00 PM, BOE & BOS Budget Presentation to FiPAC
- B. Monday, April 3, 2023, 6:30 PM, BOE Budget Subcommittee Meeting

- C. Monday, April 3, 2023, 7:30 PM - BOE Regular Meeting H.W. Porter Cafetorium  
Rachel Riendeau asked whether the Teaching and Learning meeting will also occur in April, and Chairman Michael Maziarz stated that the Teaching and Learning meeting will be held at 6:30 p.m. and the Budget Subcommittee will be at 7:00 p.m.

Lauren Haberman inquired as to whether the March 16 meeting will be held at Yeomans Hall and Beverly Ciurylo confirmed that it is likely to occur at the town hall.

## **XII. Superintendent's Report**

### **A. Legislative Update**

Interim Superintendent Barbara Wilson stated that Bill 1093 is currently being discussed in regard to putting caps on class sizes for all grade levels; however, it is not an issue at this time. She mentioned that it also discusses using specific suicide assessments and developmental guidance for expulsion and suspension rates. She also expressed that Bill 5479, relative to running an HVAC system, puts caps and minimums and maximum temperatures, as gymnasiums cannot be lower than 65 degrees or higher than 85 degrees. If these temperatures cannot be maintained, the gym would need to be closed to students for the day.

Rachel Riendeau mentioned an air quality flag requirement and that the Board pays for them to have an Environmental Protection Agency's air quality flag. And Chairman Michael Maziarz stated that he is uncertain as to whether they would need one up at every building and that he will explore the possibility before June 2023.

Interim Superintendent Barbara Wilson mentioned that they answered questions regarding an SRO and that Interim Assistant Superintendent Scott Leslie obtained statistics for them. She stated that someone had requested crime report data relative to Columbia and school safety. She stated there really is not a correlation; an armed school safety officer on campus would be there in the event of a need for it. She mentioned that someone else had inquired about the frequency of Columbia resident trooper getting called to out-of-town police calls. She stated that Trooper DeCarli rarely is called out of town. She also expressed that Interim Assistant Superintendent Scott Leslie provided information regarding the hiring and consideration of hiring an SRO in surrounding towns and mentioned that many towns already employ SRO and those who do not are seeking public input to possibly hire a SRO. In addition, she stated that someone inquired about the safety trainings that teachers receive each year and mentioned that they review safety plans with all staff members and practice drills. She also expressed that Officer DeCarli has shared procedures regarding what to do during a lockdown. She stated that the Town of Columbia has approved funds to move forward with an HVAC system, pending the grant, and she thanked Mike Sylvester for his extensive knowledge of Porter school.

### **B. Superintendent's Update**

Interim Superintendent Barbara Wilson mentioned that Porter's Invention Convention was held on February 22 and that she was impressed with the 4th graders. She also stated that Principal Kara Levenduski hopes that it will become a mainstay of the fourth-grade STEM activities, and she expressed gratitude to Jen Andrews for all the STEM activities. She mentioned that the student council created candy grams, provided a coffee cart for staff members, and is currently conducting a pet drive. She stated that the preschool lottery is open, with 44 students currently enrolled for the approximate 25 slots. She mentioned that intramural sports have begun and that the Matilda production will be performed on March 30, at 3:30 p.m., and March 31, at 7:00 p.m. She also expressed that she had fun during Read Across America Day, visiting preschool and fourth grade and reading *School of Rock*, which the students enjoyed.

## **XIII. Comments for the Audience (Please identify yourself by providing your name and address)**

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There were no comments from the audience.

#### **XIV. Columbia Board of Education Member Remarks**

Leah Osborn expressed gratitude to the students for their beautiful cards and to the budget committee for their hard work.

Lauren Haberman stated that the Board Appreciation Event made her day, and she thanked everyone for the cake, etc. She also mentioned that, although she was not in attendance for the meeting regarding the SRO, she would like to express her support of having an SRO and her appreciation of the research it involved. She also expressed her hope in maintaining the Invention Convention, as she will soon have a fourth grader who would enjoy participating in it.

Rachel Riendeau thanked the budget committee and everyone else for their hard work on the budget and expressed appreciation for their efforts. She mentioned that she is happy to see activities occurring in the building. She also mentioned that she has a student who appreciates the candy grams and that it is nice to see all those events happening again.

James Chakulski thanked the budget committee and stated that the budget is one of the biggest things to endure, as it seems to never end and involves an extensive amount of work and stress. He also expressed gratitude to Rachel Riendeau and Leah Osborn regarding their policy efforts.

Christine Sposito stated that she is proud of the approved budget and that it is a step in the right direction with our growing population. She expressed gratitude to Mike Sylvester for his work with the HVAC committee and stated that she hopes the Invention Convention is here to stay. She also thanked everyone involved with the Board of Education celebration and expressed her support for an ASSO.

Chairman Michael Maziarz expressed gratitude to Mike Sylvester, Beverly Ciurylo, Christine Sposito, and the Board of Selectman committee. He thanked the community for voting in favor of the HVAC grant. He also thanked everyone on the budget committee and stated that a lot of nonstop work is involved in it and that the process endures for half of the school year. He expressed gratitude to Interim Assistant Superintendent Scott Leslie for the SRO information. He mentioned the need to discuss what to do in regard to moving forward with safety. He stated that this month is Board Appreciation Month and that he has great Board members. He thanked the Board members for all that they accomplish. He expressed gratitude to his daughter for the card and mentioned that the Invention Convention was outstanding. He stated that he spoke with every single student involved in the Invention Convention and that the kids were very excited. He also mentioned that Ms. Andrews did an excellent job, that Porter is an amazing place to send kids to school, and he expressed gratitude to Kara Levenduski and the staff members.

#### **XV. Adjournment**

Lauren Haberman MOVED, and Rachel Riendeau SECONDED, to adjourn the meeting at 8:14 p.m.

**MOTION CARRIES 6:0.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Michele Cooke, BOE Clerk