



Monthly Meeting
Avon Board of Education
34 Simsbury Road, Avon, Connecticut

Mission Statement

Our mission is to inspire in each student a joy and passion for learning and a commitment to excellence, personal integrity, and social responsibility.

Tuesday, January 16, 2024, 7:00 pm

Avon High School, Library

Avon High School
510 West Avon Road
Avon, CT 06001

Minutes

Attendance

Board Members Present:; Christopher Campbell; Debra Chute, Board Chair; Jeffrey S. Fleischman, Board Secretary; Ramesh Kandipilli; Lynn Katz; Nicole Russo; Thej Singh, Board Vice-Chair; Suzanne Szekeres; Sarah Thompson

Board Members Absent: None

Administration Present: Dr. Bridget Heston Carnemolla, Superintendent of Schools; Jess Giannini, Assistant Superintendent; Roberto Medic, Assistant Superintendent; Susan Russo, Business Manager

I. Call to Order

Dr. Carnemolla called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

A. Roll Call

By way of all Board members present on screen, roll call was waived.

II. Election of Board Officers:

Dr. Carnemolla began the meeting with a call for nominations for Board Chair. Lynn Katz nominated Deb Chute to be Board of Education Chair and Jeffrey Fleischman seconded the nomination. ***The vote was unanimous for Deb Chute for Board Chair.***

At this point Dr. Carnemolla handed over the meeting to the Board Chair, Deb Chute.

Ms. Chute went on to ask for nominations for Board Vice Chair; Sarah Thompson nominated Thej Singh for Vice Chair, Nicole Russo seconded the nomination. ***The vote was unanimous for Thej Singh for Vice Chair.*** Finally Ms. Chute called for nominations for Board Secretary; Nicole Russo nominated Jeffrey Fleischman, Deb Chute seconded the nomination. ***The vote was unanimous for Jeffrey Fleischman for Board Secretary.***

III. Pledge of Allegiance

IV. Mission Statement

Ms. Chute read the Board's Mission Statement.

V. Recognition/Presentations:

- A. Middle School Student Amulya Cheemarapati: Amulya’s poem about ‘how local government is cool’ won the 2023 #LoCoolGov scholarship given by the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities.

At this time, Ms. Chute recognized she had skipped over a portion of the elections, and spoke about the Board Committees. There are 4 committees; Policy, CPP, Finance and Negotiations and there will need to be 4 committee members on each committee. All members were asked to email their preferences to Ms. Chute and she would get back to the Board on her decision on the committees and the chairs of those committees.

Ms.Chute also mentioned that we are in need of a CREC liaison, to which Mr. Campbell mentioned he might be interested, but to please mention that in your email if another Board member was interested in that as well.

VI. Approval of Minutes

- A. Board of Education Special Budget Workshop Meeting minutes of December 19, 2023
*Ms. Thompson made a motion to approve the Budget Workshop minutes of December 19, 2023, Mr. Fleischman seconded.
Motion passed 9-0-0*
- B. Board of Education Regular Monthly Meeting minutes of December 19, 2023
*Ms. Katz made a motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Monthly Meeting of December 19, 2023, with the edits discussed, Ms. Thompson seconded.
Motion passed 9-0-0*
- C. Board of Education Special Budget Workshop minutes of January 10, 2024
*Ms. Singh made a motion to approve the minutes of the Special Budget Workshop of January 10, 2024, Ms. Nicole Russo seconded the motion.
Motion passed 9-0-0*

VII. Communication from Public

No communication from the public

VIII. Items of Information and Proposals

- A. Student Representatives Report - Lillian Peng and Nikolai Meltser, AHS Student Representatives. Nikolai was not present and Lillian had laryngitis, so Ms. Christine Sardinkas, Board Clerk, read the update:

AHS: Midterms start Wednesday, January 17, 2024; There are new couches in the lobby being used; Intramural basketball had their first game with a great turnout; Literary Arts Club is hosting an open mic night on January 26th.

AMS: Student Council PJ day was a huge success raising over \$630 for the CT Children's Foundation; Chapter of Steel City Codes has been established at AMS promoting inclusivity in Computer Science for grades 7-8.

TBS: Successful Pajama day; Winter Concerts coming up.

- B. Financial Report – Susan Russo, Business Manager

There is no financial report this evening, except the presentation of the budget.

IX. Committees & Liaison Reports

C. Committee Reports- There were no committee reports as the second half of the year committee meeting dates will be voted on further on in this meeting.

1. Curriculum & Professional Practices –
2. Finance –
3. Negotiations –
4. Policy –

D. Liaison Report

1. Capital Region Education Council –

X. Chair's Report – Debra Chute, Board Chair

E. Board Chair Update

Ms. Chute welcomed the new Board members, congratulating them for winning and welcomed back Nicole Russo. Ms. Chute wanted to also express how impressed she is on how well the budget information is presented. It is known how hard the Administrators work on the budget and the effort put into the budget, and wanted to express her thanks to everyone.

XI. Superintendent's Report – Dr. Bridget Heston Carnemolla

A. Hiring Report

Mr. Medic spoke to the hiring of staff members:

Continue to fill non certified vacancies, as well as two long term substitutes were hired to fill vacancies for two staff members out on medical leave.

B. Enrollment Report

Dr. Carnemolla stated we are up 8 students from this time last year, with no issues as a result of the net additional students in the district.

C. Strategic Plan Update

D. Updates

Kindergarten Entry Age presentation by Mr. Jess Giannini, and the work Avon has done to respond to the new legislation.

Mr. Giannini began by reiterating the new state legislation that kindergarten students must be age 5 by September 1st of the year they enter Kindergarten. Previously it had been a student who had to turn 5 by January 1st of the year they had started Kindergarten (starting in September at age 4, turning 5 by January 1st). The legislation also states that a parent can submit a written request for early entry into Kindergarten for their child if they were born between 9/2 and 12/31. At that point Avon will conduct an assessment of the student to determine if they are academically and socially ready for Kindergarten.

Mr. Giannini went on to explain the reason the state has made the change, which is the academic rigors of Kindergarten as well as the developmental differences between a 4 and 5 year old.

Board member inquired about a student attending PreK, would they be able to start if their birthday was later than September 1st and Mr. Giannini answered that regardless of the student attending PreK, they have to be 5 by September 1st to start kindergarten.

There was also a question regarding what a parent could do if they don't agree with the assessment given to their child? Mr. Giannini responded that there will be meetings with those parents to figure out the best next steps for their child.

One member inquired about the PreK in Avon now is a 2 year program, would the child get to stay for a 3rd year if they are deemed not ready for kindergarten. Mr. Gianinni answered they are leaning towards that, but that will be ‘phased’ out in the next few years as the acceptance of the student will be based upon their birthday so the amount of time they will be in preschool will only be 2 years.

Mr. Giannini went on to say they conducted a survey of families with a potential kindergarten age student and received 145 responses. There are families looking for early entry into Kindergarten for their child.

The Assessment to determine if a child is ready for Kindergarten , will include the continuation of what we have done in the past which is ‘storytime’(students looking to enter Kindergarten come to the school for ‘Storytime’ and are observed for educational and emotional readiness to start Kindergarten. With the new legislation, the assessments will now also include family questionnaires as well as some standardized assessments for these early entry candidates. The three standardized assessments are:

1. DIAL- Developmental Indicator for Assessment in Learning
2. ESI- Early Screening Intervention
3. Ages and Stages

Board member asked if we have used these screening assessments before and who will be doing the screening? Mr. Giannini answered that ESI and Ages and Stages is something the staff is familiar with, but DIAL is new. Assessing the students will be a combination of certified teachers, psychologists and social workers.

It was also asked if this was going to be the plan every year for assessing students and Mr. Giannini answered that it is the plan going forward but they will also look at the process after this first year and edit the process where they feel it is needed.

Mr. Giannini continued that there will be information sessions at the end of January (1/24, 1/25, and 1/26) as well as information letters to families and an updated website on all of this information.

A few more questions regarding Open Choice students and assessments were asked, and Mr. Giannini answered that they will find an opportune time to assess the Open Choice students including possibly going to Hartford to assess the student for early entry into Kindergarten.

A Board member asked if this new legislation would have an impact on the PreK and Mr. Giannini answered that according to the data our 4 year olds are quite ready for PreK, as well as the fact that we can control the seats that open up in PreK, so that we avoid a large impact on the PreK program.

XII. Consent Calendar

There was nothing in the consent calendar for this meeting

XIII. Old Business- There was no Old Business for this meeting

XIV. New Business

A. 23-24/27 Approval of 2nd half of year BOE Committee Meeting Dates

Ms. Szekeres made a motion to accept the 2nd half of the 23-24 BOE Committee Meeting Dates, Ms. Katz seconded the motion.

Motion passed 9-0-0

B. 23-24/28 Approve 2024-2025 APS School Year Calendar

Ms. Singh made a motion to approve the 2024-2025 school year calendar, Mr. Fleischman seconded the motion

Motion passed 9-0-0

C. 23-24/29 Approval of the 2024-2025 APS Budget

Dr. Carnemolla started by saying that the budget is revamped after each time the Board meets, to take into consideration the conversations and requests by the Board.

The Mission Statement is where our budget always starts, and each line of the budget is measured against our Blueprint for Excellence.

The ‘Big Picture’ is as follows:

2023/2024 Gross Budget - \$66,743,809

less non-tax revenue- \$ 4,267,161

2023/2024 Net Budget - \$62,476,648

Proposed 2024/2025 Gross Budget - \$70,122,089

Gross % Increase - 5.06%

less non-tax revenue - \$4,439,019

less 2022/2023 funds - \$ 100,588

Net Budget = \$65,582,482 or 4.97%

Dr. Carnemolla went on to say that many hours were spent going line by line to make sure they were being as efficient as possible.

Fixed costs including Health Insurance, transportation, and software and Special Education are drivers of the budget that alone amount to a 2.74% increase for the budget.

Focus Area I: Student Learning General Budget Funded-Salaries

- 1.0 FTE Pre School Teacher
- 2.0 FTE Paraeducators- to maintain additional section of PreK
- 5.0 FTE Paraeducators- maintain support of IEP requirements
- 7.0 FTE Teaching Assistants
(accounting for 0.73% of the budget)

Focus Area I: Student Learning General Budget Funded

- Special Education Tuition
- Special Education Contracted Services
(accounting for 0.26% of the budget)

Focus Area I: Student Learning IDEA Grant Funded

- 1.0 FTE PreK Teacher
- 2.0 FTE PreK Para Educators
(no impact on general fund)

Question was posed by a Board member regarding what other things can be paid for by this grant and Dr. Carnemolla, with the help of Ms. Susan Russo answered that it could be for something we needed to add that is new this year, whether it be equipment, a position, contracted services, professional development and it can also pay for a portion of the SPED salaries

Focus Area I: Student Learning - Enhancements

- Library Books, Music Equipment, Reading Materials, Math Program Materials, Tech Ed Programs
(no impact on general fund)

Focus Area II: Personal Growth and Relationships General Budget Funded

- 1.0 FTE PGS & RBS Social Worker (0.14 % of budget)

Focus Area II: Personal Growth and Relationships General Budget Funded (from Esser Grant)

- 1.0 FTE AHS Social Worker (0.14% of budget)

Focus Area III: Communications and Partnerships

- Unified Sports program extension (Track and Field)(0.01% of budget)

Focus Area IV: Systems

- Utilities
- 1.0 FTE Custodian
(Net decrease of 0.10% to budget)

Focus Area IV: Systems

- Health Insurance/Pension and OPEB and other Benefits (Net increase of 1.56%)
- Transportation (Net increase of 0.55%)

Budget Distribution - Total Gross Budget \$70,122,089

- Salaries & Benefits - \$59,193,166 or 80.14%
- Tuition - \$4,002,333 or 5.71%
- Transportation - \$3,807,301 or 5.43%
- Contracted Services - \$2,177,809 or 3.11%
- Supplies and Equipment - \$2,063,737 or 2.94%
- Utilities - \$1,406,222 or 2.01%
- All other - 471,520 or 0.67%

2024-2025 Budget Drivers - Total Gross Budget Increase \$3,378,280 or 5.06%

- Salaries & Benefits 86.93%
- Utilities (3.79%)
- Transportation 10.82%
- Tuition 2.87%
- Supplies (1.15%)
- Contracted Services 3.55%
- All other 0.77%

Lynn Katz made a motion to approve the Superintendent's Proposed 2024-2025 Budget in the amount of \$70,122,089 which is a gross increase of 5.06% over the prior fiscal year,

Jeffrey S. Fleischman seconded.

The motion passed 9-0-0

D. 23-24/30 Appointment of PACTAC Advisory Council Member

Motion was made by Ms. Chute to table the appointment of the PACTAC Advisory Council Member, Mr. Fleischman seconded the motion

Motion Passed 9-0-0

XV. Communication from Public

There was no communication from the public.

XVI. Communication from Avon Board of Education Members

Ms. Deb Chute neglected to mention that she wanted to congratulate Sarah Thompson on winning her seat on the Board; being able to continue the great work she has been doing for Avon Students. Everyone on the Board is a part of the team and it is how they move forward. Ms. Katz wanted to welcome the new Board members, who she can tell are fully engaged and she is looking forward to working with you.

Ms. Nicole Russo went to the AMS chorus concert in December and was amazed at the talent there, and can't wait for the spring performances. She also thanked the Administrators for all the hard work on the budget. Ms. Russo would like to see the addition of an SRO and hopes we can get more state funding going forward.

Ms. Szekeres was very impressed with all the hard work and process with the budget, she felt that the budget reflects our values and vision.

XVII. Adjournment

At 8:43 p.m. Mr. Campbell made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Ms. Thompson seconded. Motion passed 9-0-0

Minutes prepared by Christine Sardinkas, Board Recording Secretary

Minutes respectfully submitted by Jeffrey S. Fleischman, Board Secretary