

**Special Meeting
Stafford Board of Education
Pinney Administration Building
Tuesday, January 22, 2008**

Board Members Present: Mr. Mark Fontanella, Chairperson
Mrs. Sandy Fowler, Secretary
Mrs. Lisa Bradway
Mrs. Lisa Finch
Mrs. Tracy Rummel
Ms. Patricia Saunders

Absent: Ms. Julie Stafford

Also Present: Dr. Thérèse G. Fishman, Superintendent of Schools
Mr. David Bartlett, Assistant Principal, Stafford Elementary School
Mr. Michael Bednarz, Director of Curriculum and Instruction
Mr. Robert Campbell, Assistant Principal, Stafford High School
Dr. Marcia Elliott, Principal, West Stafford School
Mr. Damian Frassinelli, Director of Athletics and Recreation
Ms. Jill Gregori, Business Manager
Mr. Francis Kennedy, Principal, Stafford High School
Mrs. Paula Kuenzler, Principal, Staffordville School
Dr. Dan Lefebvre, Director of Pupil Services
Mr. Marco Pelliccia, Assistant Principal, Stafford Middle School
Mr. Hank Skala, Principal, Stafford Elementary School
Mr. Kenneth Valentine, Principal, Stafford Middle School
Miss Cassandra Weed, Student Representative

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. A quorum was established.

ITEM I. Secretary's Report – Approval of Minutes

Regular Meeting, December 10, 2007
Special Meeting, December 10, 2007

A consensus of the Board approved the Secretary's Report for the December 10, 2007, Board of Education regular meeting and the December 10, 2007, special meeting, as presented.

ITEM II. Treasurer's Report

A. Report on Bills

Board Bills

November 28, 2007	\$ 94,202.62
December 6, 2007	\$100,006.01
December 12, 2007	\$273,589.12
December 19, 2007	\$312,301.47
January 3, 2008	\$420,887.58
January 9, 2008	\$ 68,020.93

Grants

Federal Grants	December 5, 2007	\$ 436.54
State Grants	December 5, 2007	\$ 13,030.45
Local Grants	December 5, 2007	\$ 915.62
Local Grants	December 5, 2007	\$ 87.00
Federal Grants	December 31, 2007	\$ 5,543.81
State Grants	December 31, 2007	\$ 3,732.10

A consensus of the Board approved the Board Bills and Grants as presented.

ITEM III. Correspondence

Mr. Fontanella informed the Board that he received a flyer from The Stafford Middle School Drama Program inquiring whether the Board would be interested in placing an ad in the program for the upcoming musical *Bye Bye Birdie*, which will be held on February 21, 22, and 23, 2008 (snow dates: 2/25-2/27/08). The Board members agreed to place a full-page ad in the program. Board members asked Mrs. Marinelli to get information regarding ticket sales and prices for the next Board meeting on February 4.

Mrs. Rummel stated that David Heavener of Stafford High School was presented with a Good Citizen Award by the Captain Noah Grant Chapter, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution. She distributed a copy of the article and photo that was published in the *Journal Inquirer*.

ITEM IV. Board Reports

Miss Weed stated that mid-term exams were being administered at the high school this week, so there are fewer activities to report on. She stated that they cast *Peter Pan* last week and that rehearsals have begun in the music room. She noted that they would be changing the date of the musical to May 1 – 3, 2008, so that it would be done in time to allow the juniors to enjoy the prom. Mr. Fontanella remarked that Miss Weed earned a lead role in the play.

Miss Weed noted that the students are now able to use the art room, the technical education room, and the music room. She is hopeful that they will be allowed to use the library media room shortly.

Miss Weed reported that the drama boosters would be having an indoor tag sale on April 5, 2008, and that Bulldog blankets are still available.

Miss Weed stated that the student / faculty volleyball game would be held on Thursday, January 31, 2008, from 6 – 9 p.m., and the Valentine’s Day Dance would be held on Saturday, February 2, 2008, at Stafford High School.

ITEM V. Superintendent’s Reports

A. Update on Wellness Policy

Dr. Fishman stated that as part of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, each public school district in the country had to put in place a student wellness policy. Stafford’s policy includes a provision for a periodic status report by the local Wellness Committee to the Board of Education.

She stated that in the fall of 2007, the Stafford Public Schools’ Wellness Committee and selected sub-committees met to review the district’s wellness policy and regulation, to gather data and offer input regarding the possible revision of the existing policy and regulation. She reviewed the findings of the committee with the Board.

Areas being fully met or almost fully met by the district are:

- **Food items served during school hours and on school premises, with the exception of “events”, as defined by the State Department of Education (SDE), must come from a list approved by the SDE.** She noted that students at secondary level sometimes bring in a dessert to share with friends. The enforcement of no home-baked goods being shared, as well as availability of the approved SDE list to students, should address this issue.
- **There will be a variety of foods offered at school or classroom celebrations.** She noted that some parents are having a difficult time coming up with healthy alternatives. To remedy this, a copy of the SDE approved list will be made available in each school office and a notice sent home to parents informing them about this list and its location in the school office or on the SDE website.
- **Students will be encouraged to develop knowledge and skills to be applied in specific moderate to vigorous physical activities, to maintain physical fitness, and to regularly participate in physical activities.** She noted that students need to be provided with more activity choices.
- **Students will understand the short and long term benefits of a physically active lifestyle.** She noted that more variety should be offered, and there should be more performance-based activities and data collection.

Areas that need addressing are:

- **In addition to physical education classes, there will be a range of accessible and safe opportunities to be active, which meet the needs, interests, and abilities of students.** She noted that student surveys will be given as a next step to determine student interest and that teachers need ideas for “during class time activities”. She also mentioned that the \$150,000 grant that the district received for after-school programs in grades 2 – 5 would be used, in part, for programs that include physical activities to help address this issue.
- **Participation in before and after school staff physical fitness activities, such as yoga, volleyball, etc., will be encouraged. Notice of such events will be distributed on a regular basis.** Dr. Fishman noted that this area needs improvement, especially at the elementary level.
- **During Common Curriculum Days healthy snacks and lunches, as well as brief periods of physical exercise, will be encouraged.** She noted that while healthy snacks are always available, planning for physical activities has not been done.

Dr. Fishman noted that effort will be made in the following areas in 2008:

- ❖ Principals at the secondary level will ensure that students do not bring in baked items from home (especially with so many students with food allergies) to celebrate events.
- ❖ Physical Education teachers, especially at the elementary level, will help organize and encourage staff to participate in after school physical fitness activities.
- ❖ The superintendent will make available to each school the latest update of the State Department of Education’s Healthy/Acceptable Foods/Snacks List. Each school office will make a copy of this list available in the school office and faculty lunch room, as well as provide a copy to PTO leaders.
- ❖ Information on healthy eating will be provided by school nurses as a regular feature of school newsletters / web sites. Information on family fitness ideas will be provided by physical education teachers as a regular feature of school newsletters / web sites.
- ❖ Information on ways to incorporate more physical activity into the daily routine of students will be shared with all teachers. This will also be the topic of a professional development activity at all grade levels in the 2008 - 2009 school year.
- ❖ Additional posters encouraging healthy eating / physical exercise will be purchased at each school.
- ❖ The superintendent will coordinate efforts with Anthem to increase staff awareness of and participation in the Anthem Rewards program.

- ❖ A portion of each school's professional library moneys will be used to purchase materials on health and fitness topics.
- ❖ Dr. Fishman stated that all members of the Wellness Committee agreed and highly recommended that birthday celebrations at all grade levels not involve food. She stated that the schools should look for other ways to celebrate birthdays. For example, pencils could be distributed rather than cupcakes. Additionally, students could be made line leaders or allowed to make daily announcements on their birthday.

Mrs. Bradway asked about the rationale behind changing the physical education classes at Stafford High School from two days per week all year, to four days per week for a half year. Mr. Kennedy explained that in looking at current research, which states that children should exercise most days of the week, it was decided that the model of a half-year elective with physical education classes four times per week, would allow students to have physical education more often over the course of a school year, should they choose to take PE as an elective both halves of the school year.

Dr. Fishman stated that according to the State guidelines, every student should exercise vigorously every day. She stated that this would be too difficult to work into the school day schedule, and even if it were possible, there isn't enough space for every child to have physical education class every day. She said that the ownership is on the individual.

Mrs. Rummel stated that it is very important that a copy of the list of approved foods is distributed to parent groups. Mrs. Bradway stated that if the district published the link to the approved foods list on the district web site, people would look at it.

B. Financial Report through December 2007

Dr. Fishman presented the financial report through December 2007, as prepared by Ms. Jill Gregori, Business Manager. Dr. Fishman stated that the report shows that the 2007 – 2008 budget is being expended at a somewhat higher rate than in the previous two years.

Dr. Fishman noted in her written report that the following were some points of interest in the quarterly financial report:

- Workers' Compensation is over-expended. We have increased the amount requested in the 2008- 2009 budget.
- Custodial/Fire/Constable is over-expended. This is due to a new procedure recommended by the auditor that the Board of Education pays for all services provided by the custodial staff, and then bills athletics programs, parks and recreation, PTO's, etc. We have not yet billed these services.
- Lease/Rental is slightly over-expended, but all leases have been encumbered, so there will be no further expense.
- Property and Liability Insurance have been paid for the year. Because these insurance bills came in higher than expected, we have adjusted the amount requested in the 2008- 2009 budget.

- Tuition Public and Private in large part is for special education outplacements or for in-house special education programs where the cost exceeds our per pupil expenditure by 4.5 times. Twice yearly, we get reimbursed by the State for a large portion of these costs. We have not received our reimbursement yet.
- Heat energy costs are covered by a contract. Thus, all the costs are known, and this line will not be over-expended.
- Electricity costs are not covered by a contract and continue to grow.

Dr. Fishman asked if the Board members had any questions. Mrs. Rummel asked when the outside agencies would be billed for the custodial services. Ms. Gregori stated that the agencies have been billed and that the money has been coming in, but it has to go to the town and then gets credited back to our budget, which has not happened yet. Mrs. Bradway inquired about several accounts in the report, such as pupil transportation, communications, and heat energy, which are nearly 100% expended as of 12/31/07. Ms. Gregori explained that pupil transportation is billed twice per year in order to allow the district to take advantage of a discounted rate. The second payment has already been encumbered. She also stated that heating oil has also already been paid for the year and that most expenses in communications have been paid or encumbered. Since the IRS has increased the reimbursement amount for mileage recently, the travel- personnel account may be over-expended this year. Ms. Gregori noted that electricity is another account that may exceed the amount budgeted.

C. Presentation of the Proposed 2008 – 2009 School Budget- Dr. Thérèse G. Fishman, Superintendent of Schools and Ms. Jill Gregori, Business Manager

Mr. Fontanella stated that Dr. Fishman would be giving an overview of the entire budget, with the exception of technology and athletics, to the Board of Education this evening, with an opportunity for Board members to ask questions at the end of the presentation. Then, Dr. Fishman will get back to the Board at the next meeting with the answers to their questions. He also stated that details on the technology and athletics budgets would be presented at the Board meeting on Monday, January 28. Lastly, he noted that the budget is usually due to the Board of Finance in the beginning of March.

Dr. Fishman began her budget presentation by stating that our focus this year uses targeted redeployment as a way to aid in cost containment and to meet the needs of students.

Dr. Fishman reviewed the district's accomplishments and goals met in 2006 – 2007 and to date in 2007 – 2008. She highlighted the following areas:

- The addition of a math consultant at Stafford Elementary School.
- The district has received hundreds of thousands of dollars in competitive grant monies. Dr. Fishman thanked Dr. Elliott and Mr. Bednarz for their efforts in securing these funds.
- The successful reorganization of grades pre-kindergarten through 5.
- Summer school was reinstated for grades 9 -12. Except for one student, all students that attended summer school gained credit.
- Continued growth in the CMT and CAPT scores, especially in reading and writing.

- The district was a bronze award winner in the *US News and World Report's* December 2007 recognition of outstanding high schools.
- Fifth grade teacher, Mrs. Maureen Festi, won the National History Teacher of the Year award.

Dr. Fishman stated that she is presenting a 2008 – 2009 proposed budget in the amount of \$24,981,932, which is an 8.06% increase over last year's budget. She stated that salaries comprise 60% of the budget, while benefits comprise 16%, fixed costs comprise 17% and soft costs, such as professional development, technology, supplies and textbooks, comprise just 7%. She noted that while salaries seem to comprise a very large portion of the budget, in an article published in the Hartford Courant that morning, Stafford ranked 33rd from the bottom out of 175 districts, when teacher salaries were compared with the state average. She said that Stafford gets a large bang for the buck with regard to teacher salaries.

Dr. Fishman provided details in the following areas:

Certified Salaries

One special education position would be eliminated at the high school level, and a reading teacher would be added to meet the literacy needs of special education students and of regular education students that are struggling.

A middle school special education position would be eliminated, and a new in-school suspension teaching position would be created at the high school level. This position is needed to meet new State mandates regarding out-of-school suspensions, which will necessitate that students will be in in-school suspension for longer periods of time. Therefore, a certified teacher, rather than a paraprofessional, will be needed in that room to provide instruction and help meet the IEPs of students in that room.

A middle school Title I teacher will be reassigned to the high school for .50 FTE, due to increased math requirements at that level. This teacher will continue to provide Title I services at St. Edward School .50 FTE.

With the recommended reassignments, Stafford Middle School will be down 1.5 FTE. At the middle school level, a new math teacher has been added to mimic the model at Stafford Elementary School.

At Stafford Elementary School, an instructional support teacher's assignment will be extended from .75 FTE to 1.0 FTE. Additionally, a school library media specialist would be added at this level, as there are over 500 students in the school.

A district level autism teaching position would be added. Savings would be realized in the 500 account by decreasing the in-district tuition line.

Non-Certified Salaries

At Stafford Elementary School, a 10-month secretary would be added. The addition of this staff member would bring SES in-line with the staffing at the middle school and high school, as they have the same number of students.

A .50 FTE technology specialist would be added to aid in the repair and maintenance of the district's whiteboards.

Dr. Fishman reported that the proposed budget includes a 13.8% increase in health insurance. She stated that she is hopeful that this may go down a percent or two, but she and Ms. Gregori are still working on those numbers.

Dr. Fishman reported that the pupil services numbers have been kept the same as last year. However, Dr. Lefebvre is still looking into whether we can reduce them. Dr. Fishman said that she would keep the Board updated.

Dr. Fishman noted that the professional development account shows a relatively large increase in the in-district training line of \$6,000. She stated that because this line has either been cut or allowed no increase in the past, she is adding a reasonable amount to bring it in-line this year. Additionally, these funds may be needed to meet the recommendations for training made by the NEAS&C visiting committee. Dr. Fishman also reported that \$15,000 was added to the budget for a literacy consultant at the middle school level. She stated that this person would help teachers to work with students that need help reading textbooks.

Dr. Fishman stated that the increases in the high school, middle school, and elementary school repairs and maintenance lines reflect the maintenance contract for the new telephone systems in each of the schools. She noted that the district repairs and maintenance budget includes roof repairs anticipated at West Stafford School, Staffordville School and Stafford Middle School. Additionally, this account includes monies to complete the painting projects at the middle school and at the Pinney Administration Building, which were both started last year.

Dr. Fishman stated that a large decrease occurred in the other services line due to the fact that those monies will not be needed next year for NEAS&C, as the process should be over by next year.

Dr. Fishman reported that the transportation figures represent the current number of buses and monitors in use. Dr. Fishman stated that \$7,100 was added to this account for elementary summer school transportation, which can also serve the high school students, as needed. A decrease in the Vo-Tech line represents the fact that the last two students attending Ellis Tech. will graduate this year, so transportation will no longer be needed.

Dr. Fishman stated that she may be able to further reduce the tuition account if Dr. Lefebvre is successful in bringing one or two special education students back in to the district from out-of-district placements.

In the supply account, Dr. Fishman noted that \$3.00 per gallon has been budgeted for heating oil and that the electricity account is still under review, due to an open issue at the high school.

Dr. Fishman stated that \$16,274 is included in the equipment line for the age-appropriate playscape at Staffordville School, and \$19,900 is included to replace the 1995 F250 maintenance vehicle.

Dr. Fishman stated that the technology and athletics budgets would be presented to the Board in detail at the next meeting.

In summary, Dr. Fishman presented the goals for the district for the next school year. They were:

- Develop a Strategic Plan for the next five years.
- Have whiteboards in every classroom, grades 1-12.
- Reinstate summer school in grades 2 – 8.
- Targeted literacy and math help.
- Expansion and improvement of the district's website.

Dr. Fishman mentioned that Stafford would be receiving an increase of \$413,424 from the State of Connecticut in the education budget for 2008 – 2009.

Mr. Fontanella asked if there were questions from the Board.

Mrs. Fowler had a question about the competitive grant that West Stafford School received and whether they were CHEFA funds. Dr. Elliott stated that they were not.

Mrs. Rummel asked if the Board could be provided with a copy of the job description for the proposed 10-month secretary at Stafford Elementary School. She also asked if the Superintendent could confirm with St. Edward School that they would be open next school year. Mrs. Rummel asked when the district would have more information regarding the health insurance increase. Ms. Gregori stated that the next meeting was scheduled in early February. Mrs. Rummel asked how close the district was to having the pension plan fully funded. Ms. Gregori stated that we are currently 65 – 70% funded. Mrs. Rummel asked why such a large increase was proposed in the 08-09 budget for the 330 line-professional development, when only 26.29% of it has been expended thus far in 07-08. She also asked for information regarding legal services for the Board, as that line was increased a couple of years ago. She asked if that was still necessary. Mrs. Rummel asked if the Board could be provided with more detail regarding the equipment account in the pupil services budget.

Mrs. Rummel asked when the heating oil contract expired. Ms. Gregori stated that it expires in August. Mrs. Rummel asked why none of the money in this year's budget has been expended for propane. Ms. Gregori stated that we have been using up a credit balance on the account, but that expenses would begin to show on the next report.

Mrs. Bradway asked for more details regarding summer school, the literacy consultant and the technology consultant. With regard to the technology consultant, she would like to know how this person will fit in with the existing staff in that department. Additionally, she would like to have more details regarding what is included in the \$10,000 under supplies for the physical education curriculum, the \$31,250 for curriculum under textbooks, and the amounts listed for tutors, BEST mentors, peer advisors, Saturday school, and CMT academies.

Mrs. Bradway asked if the district has had a recent assessment of the condition of the school buildings.

Mrs. Bradway asked if there was money set aside for the website upgrade. Dr. Fishman stated that there was and that detailed information would be provided during the technology budget presentation at the next meeting.

Mrs. Bradway asked about the high school guidance intern, which was not mentioned during the presentation. Dr. Fishman stated that she is looking for a guidance intern at the high school level and that she would give the Board more details at the next meeting.

Dr. Fishman thanked the administrators for their hard work on this proposed budget.

Mr. Fontanella asked the administrators to get the word out to the public about the budget process.

ITEM VI. Public Forum

There were no questions or comments.

ITEM VII. Old Business

There was no old business.

Mrs. Bradway mentioned that the notes from the CAFE workshops were distributed to Board members at the beginning of the meeting.

ITEM VIII. New Business

A. Review and Possible Approval of Request for Surety Bond

Ms. Gregori stated that in a program offered through CL&P, the district has entered into an agreement with the Department of Public Utilities Control (DPUC) to generate power using existing generators at Stafford Elementary School and Stafford High School when notified to do so through an Independent System Operator (ISO) request. In return for responding to this request to go on generator power for a stated period, usually 1-4 hours, the DPUC has awarded a grant of \$24,820 for Stafford High School and \$16,000 for Stafford Elementary School, totaling \$40,820. The grant is to the town, and the money will go into the general fund. The bond serves as collateral for the grant funds.

Mrs. Fowler asked if this would interfere with summer school. Ms. Gregori said that it is possible, but usually most of the requests for us to go on generator power would occur in August when the energy demands are the highest, and summer school is over by then.

Mrs. Rummel made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Finch, that the Board of Education approve a request that the Board of Finance appropriate \$2,000 to open a surety bond in the amount of \$20,410 with the DPUC as the owner and pay the interest over the five-year life of the bond. Mrs. Bradway, Mrs. Finch, Mrs. Fowler, Mrs. Rummel and Ms. Saunders voted for the motion, which carried.

ITEM IX. Personnel Matters

A. Resignation- Certified Staff Member

Mrs. Finch made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Fowler, that the Board of Education accept the resignation of the following staff member:

Name	Position	School	Effective Date	Reason
Donna Norige	School Library Media Specialist	Stafford High School	1/28/08	To take a position in another district in CT.

Mrs. Bradway, Mrs. Finch, Mrs. Fowler, Mrs. Rummel and Ms. Saunders voted for the motion, which carried.

Mrs. Rummel made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Finch, to place **Item X.A.- Consideration of Superintendent of Schools' Recommendation for Early Readmission of Student A to Stafford High School (Executive Session Anticipated)** into executive session. Mrs. Bradway, Mrs. Finch, Mrs. Fowler, Mrs. Rummel and Ms. Saunders voted for the motion, which carried.

The Board took a brief recess at 8:56 p.m.

ITEM X. Student Matters

A. Consideration of Superintendent of Schools' Recommendation for Early Readmission of Student A to Stafford High School (Executive Session Anticipated)

Mrs. Bradway made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Rummel, to enter executive session. Mrs. Bradway, Mrs. Finch, Mrs. Fowler, Mrs. Rummel and Ms. Saunders voted for the motion, which carried. The Board entered executive session at 9:08 p.m.

The Board invited Dr. Fishman, Mr. Kennedy, Student A, Student A's mother and father and Mrs. Marinelli into executive session.

The Board took a brief recess at 9:22 p.m. All of the invited guests left the boardroom so that the Board could deliberate.

The invited guests returned to the boardroom.

Mrs. Finch made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Bradway, to return to regular session. Mrs. Bradway, Mrs. Finch, Mrs. Fowler, Mrs. Rummel and Ms. Saunders voted for the motion, which carried. The Board returned to regular session at 9:30 p.m.

Mrs. Fowler made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Finch, that the Board of Education reinstate Student A to Stafford High School, effective January 28, 2008, with the understanding that Student A can report to the high school effective January 23, 2008, for support on mid-terms. Mrs. Bradway, Mrs. Finch, Mrs. Fowler, Mrs. Rummel and Ms. Saunders voted for the motion, which carried.

ITEM XI. Adjournment

Mrs. Fowler made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Rummel, to adjourn the meeting. Mrs. Bradway, Mrs. Finch, Mrs. Fowler, Mrs. Rummel and Ms. Saunders voted for the motion, which carried. The meeting adjourned at 9:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine C. Marinelli, Recording Secretary

Mark Fontanella, Chairperson

Sandra Fowler, Secretary