



**TORRINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING  
Wednesday, October 28, 2020, 6:00 P.M.  
355 Migeon Ave – Remote Meeting**

**Minutes**

1. Call to Order: 6:07 P.M.
2. Roll Call: Ms. Cappabianca, Mr. Corey, Ms. Hoehne, Mr. Kissko, Mr. Eucalitto, Mr. Maniccia, Ms. Richardson, Ms. Todor, Ms. Fappiano, Ms. DePretis, Ms. Lubomski, Ms. Fergusson, Mr. Arum, Ms. Klimaszewski, Ms. Schulte, Mr. Barlow, Ms. Herold, Mr. Barlow
3. Approval of Agenda: Mr. Eucalitto made a motion to amend the agenda adding item 7K and 8I “Washington DC trip for Current 9<sup>th</sup> Graders,” second by Mr. Maniccia. All in favor.
4. School/Community Service/Public Participation:  
E-mailed in:  
Mary Ann Buchanan – Wrote about her gratitude for the proactive approach by the Board for the new tier of support at each site. Appreciative of Central Office admin support. “The pandemic is challenging for all of us, yet we are on the right course together.”  
Jason Lafreniere – Thanked everyone in the Torrington school system. Strongly encouraged the BOE to accept the MOU agreement on the union matter. He congratulated the special education department for their progress and welcomed the new board member.  
Durine Grant – I hope the community votes in favor to building the new high school. She shared her concerns about the reorganization of classes. She also asked for more concise information regarding COVID.
5. Possible Executive Session Regarding Union Negotiations:  
Mr. Eucalitto made a motion to enter in Executive Session regarding union negotiations inviting in Ms. Lubomski, Ms. Schulte, and Mr. Arum, second by Mr. Kissko. All in favor.  
The Board entered executive session at 6:20 P.M.  
The Board returned to open session at 6:40 P.M.
6. Information Sharing Session:
  - A. Superintendent’s Report: Ms. Lubomski started her report by announcing that the students were very happy to be back in school with the new in person transition with K-5. The statistics are still about 70% in person and 30% distant learning. At this point, the structure is the distance teachers with the distance students and the in-person teachers with the in-person students. The COVID positivity rate is up to 4.1 %, but there are only 2 cases in the hospitals in Torrington. The spread is not happening in schools, it is happening at community events. There has not been any

transmission within schools. We try to get substitutes when there is staff impacted regarding COVID. The challenge is those people who would sub, now have jobs. We have transitioned very well in K-5. We have lost 14 bus drivers since September. We had to transition to 2 bus options for students. Most buses are at 20-25 at the max. Ms. Lubomski shared the district totals of transferred in = 158 and transferred out = 90. The biggest hit was in K-5. Ms. Lubomski shared the focus areas in 2020-2021: 1) Attendance: Reduction of chronically disconnected/absentee students 2) Engaging, differentiated instruction; and 3) Targeted student needs: Tier I instruction and differentiation.

1. Office of Teaching and Learning Update:

Ms. Ferguson spoke about the 4 areas of focus: Professional Development, Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment, and Technology.

- Professional Development: Multi—year professional growth plan is ongoing.
- Technology training to support teaching in a virtual environment, social emotional learning, engaging online instruction, and prioritizing the standards.
- Learning/Assessment Platforms: Freckles, STAR, Screencastify, Lexia, Pear Deck, Discovery Education, Common Lit. Lesson development and refinement in a blended landscape.
- Curriculum & Instruction: on-going curriculum development in all core content areas.
- Assessment: DIBELS (K-3), STAR 360 (GRADES 2-12, reading and math) SBA, PSAT/SAT, SAT make up day October 27, PSAT Day 2 October 29, and Performance Matters (Data Management & Analytic Tool)
- Technology: now a one to one district, access for all, increase in technology support staff, added internet bandwidth, new helpdesk for students and staff, streamlined process for students to get their devices diagnosed and fixed, and Ally shared exciting news that we have closed every ticket at the high school.

2. Special Education Update: Ms. Klimaszewski shared the special education numbers. Our CT SDE annual performance report prevalence rate dropped to

15.23% with a 6.43% reduction and the state average is 16%. Our SDE rate dropped to 13.74% with a 4.68% reduction and the state average is 13.5%. She highlighted the new and continued department areas of focus for 2020-2021:

- Documented Efficiency of Instruction/Providing Quality Instruction,
- Time with on-Disabled Peers
- Compliance with State and Federal Regulations and Timeline
- Communication and Transparency

Total referral process grades K-12 in 2020-2021: 31 students were referred, 6 are in the process of being tested, 11 students are deemed eligible for special ed, and 3 students are deemed ineligible for special ed. Mr. Eucalitto asked what is a realistic goal? She answered – “The best placement to meet the student’s needs within the least restrictive environment. I am happy with the improvements we made this year.”

- B. Monthly Financials: Mr. Arum reported that special education savings are creating a savings in the budget. The projected budget for this year for out of district tuition count is about \$10.3 million. This month we were able to save about \$6,000 on transportation. We also received All Star transportation savings from credits from last year (\$264,827) and reduction of 4-day service (\$71,839). We are in a surplus of 1.2 million because of special education. We are moving in the right direction. We have given money back to the City the past few years. Ideally, we would like to create the 2% fund for our surplus. The Chair stated that investing in the special education department has shown significant savings and positive outcomes.
- C. COVID-19 Expenses: We are still waiting for the State to send us the money because we had to make a change in our expenses by asking to switch the funds from bus monitors to sanitizers. So far, we have paid or encumbered \$1,152,036. We project to need \$1,557,976. We received 9,000 masks from the State.
- D. Alliance Construction Grant: The State will not fund the TMS Main Entry Vestibule Project. Therefore, we have decided to add the following project to the list:
1. Vogel-Wetmore School – remove and replace the stair treads, including landings on all stairs. \$82,760.00
  2. Middle School – refinish the gym and auxiliary gym floors. \$20,900.00
  3. Vogel-Wetmore – refinish the gym floor. \$17,600.00

4. Vogel-Wetmore – furnish and install new software for automated building system controls. \$30,000.00  
Additional information from the State: All funds are available from the 2020 fiscal year; however, all funds are to be spent by August 31, 2021. Mr. Eucalitto and Ms. Richardson advocated that they want to find funds to still TMS main entry vestibule project. Ms. Lubomski and Mr. Barlow said they were looking into security grant funding.

- E. Survey Results, 7-12 – Ms. Lubomski shared the results in her report. Right now, 65% in-person, 35% distance. However, many parents and students, especially at the high school level, were concerned about a switch from hybrid to in-person. Many parents said they'd change their students to distance learning if secondary used the in-person model rather than the hybrid. Ms. Lubomski would be looking into the matter further.
- F. Education Specifications for the TMS Window Replacement Project: Mr. Arum shared the ed specs. Mr. Arum presented a new design that the Kaestle Boos drafted which is a commercial window design with an awning window. It would probably be a steel clad or aluminum clad. This is a common design that they put in 99.9% of school buildings. No other questions or comments.
- G. Board Goals Update: Mr. Kissko shared that Board Goals would be on the agenda at School Improvement next week. If you have any board goals, send them to him and come to the meeting.
- H. School Calendar: Ms. Lubomski stated that the State is allowing us to use distance learning for snow days if we choose to do so. In our current calendar, we have 5 snow days already allocated. We can keep the 5 day and after we used those 5 days, we can do distance learning (unless there is a power outage.) Mr. Eucalitto wants to have the snow days even after the 5<sup>th</sup> snow day and not have kids participate in distance learning on snow days. Ms. Corey asked how the Superintendent will know the status of the power outages and if it will be a snow day or if the kids will be able to log on to distance learning that day? Ms. Lubomski shared her snow day protocols and process and said that she gets the “inside scoop.” Mr. Kissko stated that it would be hard for teachers to teach when their kids are home as well; therefore, there are practical reasons to keep snow days as snow days. Ms. Richardson asked if we have a distance learning day on snow day, how are we going to

feed the students? Ms. Lubomski stated that she would have to look into that since we are now districtwide free lunch district.

- I. Committee Assignments: The Chair stated that we had to move around the committees since there was a resignation and a new board member. This is effective immediately.
  - J. November 3<sup>rd</sup> – Election Day High School Referendum: The Chair has been working on this for 3 years and wanted to make a statement tonight. [Please click here to read it.](#)
  - K. Washington DC Trip: The Chair wants to move this to a subcommittee to investigate this. Mr. Lafreniere can get more information on what this trip would look like. The Board would like Policy committee to look at this.
7. Committee Reports:
- A. Budget Committee: The committee reviewed monthly financials, COVID-19 expenses, and TMS windows. We are in the black right now and doing ok.
  - B. School Improvement Committee: Mr. Kissko presented on the SIC meeting: We had a report on the pathways program, state testing requirements, and board goals. Topics for next month's meeting: Teacher evaluation and course proposals. In December, the effectiveness of distance learning.
  - C. Facilities & Technology Committee: The committee looked at the Alliance Grant funded projects, TMS windows, and repairs.
  - D. Building Committee: If the referendum passes, we would start that Thursday getting the specs out.
8. Action Items:
- A. Monthly Financials: Mr. Maniccia made a motion to approve the monthly financials, second by Mr. Corey. All in favor.
  - B. To Accept and Approve the Educational Specifications dated October 19, 2020 for the TMS Window Replacement Project: Mr. Kissko made a motion to accept and approve the Educational Specifications dated October 19, 2020 for the TMS Window Replacement Project, second by Mr. Eucalitto. All in favor.
  - C. School Calendar – Removed.
  - D. Alliance Construction Grant Proposal – Mr. Kissko made a motion to approve the revised Alliance Construction Grant proposal, second by Mr. Eucalitto. All in favor.
  - E. BOE Regular Meeting Minutes – August 21, 2020 – Mr. Kissko made a motion to approve the minutes, second by Mr. Corey. Ms. DePretis abstained. Everyone else in favor. Minutes approved.
  - F. BOE Special Meeting Minutes – Mr. Kissko made a motion to approve the minutes, second by Mr. Corey. Ms. DePretis abstained. Everyone else in favor. Minutes approved.

1. October 5, 2020
2. October 21, 2020
- G. Committee Meeting Minutes – Mr. Eucalitto made a motion to approve the minutes, second by Ms. Todor. Ms. DePretis abstained. Everyone else in favor. Minutes approved.
  1. Budget Committee – September 21, 2020
  2. School Improvement Committee – August 5, 2020
  3. Building Committee – September 3, 2020
  4. Building Committee – September 24, 2020
  5. Building Committee – October 8, 2020
- H. Consent Agenda: Appointments, Retirements & Resignations – Mr. Kissko made a motion to approve the consent agenda, second by Ms. Richardson. All in favor.
- I. Washington DC Trip – No Action.
9. Comments for the Good of the Order: (The following comments are paraphrased)

Ellen – “This was a great meeting with a lot of information. Kudos to everyone for all and go vote for the new school.”

Gary – “The administration is doing a great job and we are in a better position than I thought we would be in. Everyone vote!”

John – “I am looking forward to next Wednesday.”

Ed – “I would like to invite everyone to come down on Sunday, November 1<sup>st</sup> at 2:00 P.M. to Co-Park in support of the new THS. Final push of support!”

Armand – “The new high school is educationally sound and fiscally responsible and there is no other way to do it cheaper or better.”

Jessica – “There was an article in the paper in regional 12 and their concerns on their distance learning. I think we should consider having screens be on and if parents want screens off then send a note.”
10. Items for Upcoming Agenda
  - A. Capital plan
  - B. Monthly Financials
  - C. COVID-19 Expenses
  - D. Washington DC Trip
  - E. Budget Timeline
11. Future Meetings:

November 3 <sup>rd</sup> – Election Day High School Referendum
Wednesday, November 4, 2020 (at Migeon Ave.) 6:00 p.m. – School Improvement and Community Relations Committee 7:00 p.m. – Policy Committee
Wednesday, November 11, 2020 (at Migeon Ave.) 6:00 p.m. – Facilities/Technology Committee 7:00 p.m. – Budget Committee
Wednesday, November 18, 2020 (at Migeon Ave.) 6:00 p.m. – Regular Board of Education Meeting
12. Adjournment: Mr. Kissko made a motion to adjourn the meeting, second by Mr. Corey. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:44 P.M.

## The Chair – Fiona Cappabianca’s Statement Regarding Line Item 6J November 3<sup>rd</sup> – Election Day High School Referendum

“On November 3<sup>rd</sup>, the voters of Torrington will Vote whether to approve a new High School/Middle School/Central Office facility. As chair of the board, I have been involved extensively in the process since its inception. What started out as a need to address the failing mechanicals in the High School has turned into something better for the future of Torrington and cheaper for our taxpayers. I feel strongly that the board, faculty members, community members and local business owners that have worked on the project have brought to referendum the most educationally and fiscally sound plan for our community. The pencils have already been sharpened. While the referendum question is whether or-not to approve a \$159 million-dollar project, after State grants, the actual taxpayer cost is \$74M, In the total project cost is \$29,329,152 dollars in various contingency line items as required by the state and \$1.2 million dollars in permit fees to the City of Torrington. As a board we felt very strongly that this was a community decision to be made. We have laid out all the data to provide the information on why something needs to be done, provided multiple scenarios, and cost analysis and provided a plan to present to our community. We have worked with two very reputable Construction and Architectural firms that have extensive experience and expertise in these projects. The THS building was constructed beginning in 1961, and not much has changed since then. The mechanical, electrical, plumbing and fire protection are at the end of their useful life. The windows wall panels do not have insulation and are far beyond their useful shelf life. There are leaks throughout the building, falling ceiling panels and structural issues throughout the building. The temperatures range from low 50's in the winter to low 90's in the spring, and many windows cannot open, limiting the flow of air. The gym is in such poor condition the state has discussed the possibility of condemning it. Without these repairs, the school will have problems with our next NEASC visit. These are not maintenance issues these are issues of a building that has served the town well for almost 60 years, but it is time to move forward. Our facility director and custodial staff have done an amazing job of trying to keep in front of this and repairing things as they break and trying to develop plans for repair and replacement that will be palatable, however, the needs are too great. They can continue to try to patch the 3 feet of plumbing in the ceiling responsible for the latest leak because the pipe has disintegrated in the ceiling causing holes to form, they can then fix the ceiling tiles and wall and floor damage, however it doesn't fix the real problem that when done with that repair there is still another 283,000 feet of pipe to be replaced. The State will not reimburse the cost of most repairs, so the cost of these mandatory fixes without a single classroom improvement is \$78 million on the low end. If these projects get spread out over time or are split in pieces to work around students that cost greatly increases. If the town decides this is the best route for Torrington than all repairs would be done inside the existing building, disrupting learning for several grades of children for several years. A new school will bring enhancements to the direct career pathways already being implemented at THS Existing teachers will have the space and equipment to fully execute programs with the following focuses: business and entrepreneur, healthcare, public safety and criminal justice, health and wellness, education, STEM/High Tech Manufacturing, and applied arts. We can build a safe, state of the art building for all of Torrington's seventh through twelfth graders at the lowest per pupil cost of all recent statewide school building projects. In addition, move our central office staff to the same site. As a continuation of this project, our existing middle school

will be used for all fourth through sixth graders, and this has educational and financial benefits of its own. Advanced middle school students will only need to walk through a corridor to take high school courses. Economically speaking, having the seventh and eighth graders together means many of them will then choose to stay at THS for high school. We currently lose 30% of our city's eighth graders to area schools, which costs our district over two million a year in outplacement tuition costs. If even a third of those students remained in district, we could save over \$700,000 a year. Our district's director of facilities; together with the Board of Education's facilities committee is actively creating long term maintenance plans for all of the city's school buildings. Combining our schools and our administration building will allow us to save over half a million dollars every year in energy and maintenance expenses. I am asking our community to consider all the information when determining if a new school is right for Torrington.”