

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE TOWN OF FAIRFIELD
March 19, 2015**

A special meeting of the Town of Fairfield was held on Thursday, March 19, 2015 at 7 PM at Riverfield School, Mill Plain Road, Fairfield.

The meeting was called to order at 7 PM by Deputy Moderator Hank Ference.

PRESENT: 30 ABSENT: 20 VACANCY: 0

PRESENT: Donovan, Herley, Lipp, Meyer, Ambrose, Ference, Mackenzie, McCullough, Dean, Gerber, Palmer, Waldron, Garskof, Way, Marks, Wolk, Zezima, Hochberg, Hoffkins, Pires, Schwartz, Li, McCarthy, Melaragno, Jacob, McArde, Tymniak, Cafferelli, Farnen, Neuberger

ABSENT: Sundman, Burshtein, Schindler, Steele, Varian, Bateson, Cargill, DeMartino, O'Brien, Semmel, Sme, Gottlieb, Siebert, Newman, Braun, Durrell, Iacono, Pontrelli, Perugini, Ryan

ITEM NO. 1 ON CALL: PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE & MOMENT OF SILENCE

Deputy Moderator Ference asked the Body to remember the grandmother of Moderator Iacono who passed away today.

ITEM NO. 2 ON CALL: TO CONSIDER AND ACT UPON THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION AS RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD OF EDUCATION: “RESOLVED, THAT PURSUANT TO CONNECTICUT GENERAL STATUTES SECTION 10-153F(7), THE FAIRFIELD RTM REJECT THE ARBITRATION AWARD DATED FEBRUARY 19, 2015, RELATING TO THE FAIRFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION AND THE FAIRFIELD SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS ASSOCIATION.”

Michael Herley, District 1 moved this item as distributed with the Call, duly seconded.

Mr. Herley suggested we would be in a better place if the BOE had consulted more closely with the RTM majority in representing their views and renegotiated a more favorable contract during the arbitration hearing. There's no denying the need to reign in healthcare costs. He noted the importance of having a member of the BOE present at subcommittee and RTM meetings. The BOE chair had represented arbitration costs of approximately \$30k. He asked moving forward that the first selectman and BOE temper labor costs as much as they can.

John Donovan, District 1 said in reviewing the video from the December 2014 meeting the attorney noted that in arbitration all agreements would be off the table and all proposals would be back on the table at an estimated \$15k per issue. Only one issue was negotiated and \$95k was spent on it.

Hal Schwartz, District 7 explained the BOE and attorneys negotiate and the legislative body votes on the contract brought before it. The contract would have saved \$130k but that is gone. He likened the risk they took to bullying.

Chris Tymniak, District 9 said for the past two years the message has been that the contracts contain an HSA. He said HSAs are the way of the future for health care and noted that 88 municipalities offer HSAs and PPOs.

Jay Wolk, District 6 asked for a breakdown of the arbitration costs.

BOE Chair Phil Dwyer noted that the information was included with the Call, but it did not include Town and BOE staff time or the cost to the FSAA for their time and research.

David Mackenzie, District 3 said this body should be reflective and representative and not a rubber stamp.

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Bill Gerber, District 4 said there seems to be a pervasive outlook toward the administrators. He said an HSA is not a cure all as was noted in negotiations that it would not save money. The negotiators said these were the highest contribution levels they had seen. Health care costs are a problem, but let's not jeopardize it going forward.

Kevin Hoffkins, District 7 said no one is saying the RTM should be a rubber stamp, but were advised by the attorneys that arbitration could cost up to \$100,000 so no one should act surprised.

Joe Palmer, District 4 said he disagreed with the futility of the situation. There was no disrespect to the school administrators at the December meeting. There is a big concern about the health care costs particularly the \$1.7 million "Cadillac" tax in the third year of the teachers' contract that will have a big impact.

Tom McCarthy, District 8 said the majority felt the contract was too rich. We certainly respect the administrators. The contracts are reviewed by people that we trust, but the RTM should uphold its responsibility and review them.

David Ebling, FSAA president noted from the Association's perspective no one won since this is the same contract that was brought forward in December. The FSAA also exhausted its negotiations budget.

Heather Dean, District 4 asked that the focus be on what the administrators have done and not a so-called rich or bloated contract. We are here to take care of a contract that was presented in December that was a no brainer.

Peter Ambrose, District 2 explained that he could not attend the December meeting because of a personal conflict, but felt there was a genuine effort to reign in costs as well as a genuine respect for teachers and administrators in this town. He felt the term bullying was out of character when we all try to do the best we can for the town.

VOTE: The resolution to reject the arbitration award dated February 19, 2015 relating to the Board of Education and the School Administrators failed with a vote of 7 in favor and 23 opposed.

IN FAVOR: Meyer, Mackenzie, McCullough, McCarthy, Melaragno, Jacob, Cafferelli

OPPOSED: Donovan, Herley, Lipp, Ambrose, Ference, Dean, Gerber, Palmer, Waldron, Garskof, Way, Marks, Wolk, Zezima, Hochberg, Hoffkins, Pires, Schwartz, Li, McArdle, Tymniak, Farnen, Neuberger

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth P. Browne, CMC, MCTC
Town Clerk