

In consideration of public health and open meeting requirements, this meeting will include an option for the public to live-stream or phone in to listen to the audio of the meeting. Please note that public comment will be received by phone at the beginning and end of this meeting. Alternatively, the Board encourages the public to email any comments for Board consideration to NewtownBOE@newtown.k12.ct.us

To view this meeting, the livestream link is: <https://vimeo.com/event/729428>

***To make a public comment the call in number is 1-413-251-2334
The PIN is 656 500 216#***

Board of Education Meeting
January 4, 2022

Council Chamber
7:00 p.m.

As citizens of our community, we will conduct ourselves in accordance with Newtown's Core Character Attributes as displayed in our character tree. We will be responsible for our actions and show respect for each other. We will interact peacefully, productively, and politely. We will be trustworthy and honest and show compassion toward others. Newtown's continued success is contingent upon our ability to persevere, to follow through with our commitments, and to stay focused on the greater good.

A G E N D A

- Item 1 PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
- Item 2 CONSENT AGENDA
 - Correspondence Report
- Item 3 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
- Item 4 REPORTS
 - Chair Report
 - Superintendent's Report
 - Committee Reports
 - Student Representatives Report
- Item 5 OLD BUSINESS
 - Discussion and Possible Action on Social Emotional Health and Wellness Committee
 - Discussion and Possible Action on Coordinator of Health and Wellness
- Item 6 NEW BUSINESS
 - Update on Facilities Planning for Hawley HVAC Project
 - Discussion and Possible Action on the Process for the Upcoming Superintendent Search
 - Action on Minutes of December 21, 2021
- Item 7 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
- Item 8 ADJOURNMENT

*****During the first Public Participation, the Board welcomes commentary regarding items on the agenda. After being recognized, please state your name and address for the record. We request that speakers be respectful and limit comments to not more than three minutes. The Board of Education does not discuss personnel items or student matters in public. During the second Public Participation, commentary may address the agenda or may introduce issues for the Board to consider in the future. The Board does not engage in dialogue during either public comment period. If you desire more information or answers to specific questions, please email the BOE: NewtownBOE@newtown.k12.ct.us***

**Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut**

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting held on December 21, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chamber in the Municipal Office Building at 3 Primrose Street.

D. Zukowski, Chair	L. Rodrigue
J. Vouros, Chair	A. Uberti
D. Ramsey, Secretary	T. Vadas
D. Cruson	2 Staff
R. Harriman	50 Public
J. Kuzma	
J. Larkin	
C. Savo	
M. Irvine (absent)	

Ms. Zukowski called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Item 1 – Pledge of Allegiance

Item 2 – Consent Agenda

MOTION: Mr. Ramsey moved that the Board of Education approve the consent which includes the donation to Newtown High School and the correspondence report. Dan Cruson seconded. Motion passes

Item 3 – Public Participation

Rachel Torres, 13 Saw Mill Ridge, is a parent, social studies teacher at Newtown High School, SAID Club advisor and also on PEAC. She commended the efforts to create a more inclusive environment for students. Mr. Johnson will be instrumental in providing training for staff and his work will help guide policies. She welcomed the new Board members but was disheartened by the proposal to remove the words from the policy as they are not political. Removing this language would be detrimental to the progress we hope to make with the town. She would push forward the freedom policy with Mr. Johnson's addition. She was also in favor of forming a DEI committee.

Most supported the statement.

Jennifer Padilla, 32 Glen Road, welcomed the new Board members. She spoke about the words diversity, equity and inclusion. These concepts keep our children safe in schools and provides a clear path to improve the environment. She urged the Board to consider the DEI subcommittee.

Most agreed.

Pia Ledina, 33 Old Bethel Road, was a former teacher and is a parent of children who went to Newtown schools. Educating is the job of the entire community. We must listen to those asking for help. Improvement requires the courage to change.

Most agreed.

Saahil Ray, 46 Bradley Lane, is a member of SAID and works closely with Mrs. Torres. Posters about diversity have been placed in school and donations have been given to the Black Lives Matter chapter of New Haven. DEI are words that symbolize what we represent. He was on the panel for the DEI Coordinator and he is a valuable resource.

Most agreed

Cyrena Arokium, 38 Bradley Lane, is in 11th grade at Newtown High School. She was disappointed in wanting to remove Mr. Johnson's words from the policy. It is important to

incorporate culturally responsible instruction. DEI continues to grow in and out of the classroom. You are never too old to learn, unlearn, or re-learn.
Most agreed.

Naiya Amin, 11 Whitewood Road, spoke about diversity, equity and inclusion which are not political words. Treat others the way you would be treated. Teaching us to be kind was not political. Taking these words from the policy would be changing values. Do not make this political.
Most agreed.

Giselle Martinez, 101 Walnut Tree Hill Road, is a junior and in the SAID group. This group shows we care about our differences. A movement toward unity is not political. We are not political and just want a more inclusive school for everyone.
Most agreed.

Tony Keating, 7 Oak Ridge Drive, encouraged the Board of Education to push back and refuse to endorse political indoctrination. DEI proponents say they are strong political words.
A few agreed.

Leah Crebbin, 20 Valley View Road is a junior and has been a member of SAID for two years. She disagreed with the remarks at the last meeting. DEI are essential and it is important for the Board to support policies that support DEI and Mr. Johnson.
Most agreed.

Item 4 – Reports

Chair Report: Ms. Zukowski spoke about Dr. Rodrigue's resignation. She leads from a place of joy and truly loves her students, staff and community. During the height of the pandemic she was poised and intent ensuring children would learn when schools were closed. She created an environment where students and staff can flourish. She thanked her for all she has done and wished her the best.

The Town will receive approximately \$7.5M of American Rescue Plan funding. Of that amount, \$2.5M will be allocated to the Hawley HVAC project. Mr. Vouros, along with Dr. Rodrigue, will organize school and classroom visits for Board members.

Ms. Zukowski thanked Michelle Ku for her leadership on the Board and Dan Delia and Debbie Leidlein who have been dedicated public servants. She also thanked returning member Dan Cruson and new members Janet Kuzma, Jennifer Larkin and Don Ramsey.

Superintendent's Report: Dr. Rodrigue said this was bittersweet for her. She started her career in Newtown and will end it here. She has been truly blessed with the students and community. Covid is at a 5% increase in Newtown but there is still low transmission. St. Rose went remote but at this time there is no impact on our staffing. Contact tracing by our nursing staff and administration is extremely challenging. She recognized the amazing work of our nurses. There is new guidance from the CIAC regarding athletics. We will address this at the January 4 meeting. She wished everyone in the community a safe and peaceful holiday.

Committee Reports:

Mr. Cruson reported a school health update webinar January 4 with the Department of Education is available for all Board members. He also distributed a CAFE and CAPSS statement on civility on the volatile environment at Board meetings. He is working on the annual CAFE Legislative Breakfast for Area 5. This will be in early January and open to Board members and legislative leaders in Area 5.

Student Report: Ms. Savo congratulated the new members of the National Computer Society. Various clubs have met with pictures being taken for the yearbook. The hockey team won in overtime last week. The Chess Club won first, second and third place in their competition.

MOTION: Mr. Ramsey moved that the Board of Education approve the financial report for the month ending November 30, 2021. Mr. Cruson seconded.

Mrs. Vadas presented the financial report.

Mr. Vouros asked why it has been difficult to fill the three behavior therapist positions.

Dr. Rodrigue said schools are experiencing this across the nation but we have filled some very important positions recently.

Mrs. Vadas noted that we had to hire an outside group for the behavior therapist positions.

Motion passes unanimously.

Item 5 – Old Business

Update on DEI Work:

Dr. Rodrigue has been meeting with Mr. Johnson regarding general timelines and commitments including reviewing the mechanism to share sensitive and confidential information on bullying which would include the Anonymous Alert App. We want to be sure there is clarity around Mr. Johnson's role for the success of these commitments.

Mr. Johnson gave his presentation regarding diversity, equity and inclusion and his timeline of work as coordinator.

Mr. Cruson asked him to elaborate on professional development.

Mr. Johnson said for the high school he wants to introduce the terms again. A major part of his presentation was about participating in conversations which are often fearful. Some who are predominantly white fear saying something offensive. He addressed how we create safe spaces among staff and students. He used best practices and also had discussions in break out rooms.

Mr. Ramsey was moved by Mr. Johnson's comments and appreciated the tone of the feedback we received. He asked how he saw unity and patriotism in his work.

Mr. John was not sure how that is connected to DEI in public schools but would hope patriotism can reflect all people.

Mrs. Harriman extended her appreciation for Mr. Johnson being at the meeting and the way he delivered his presentation.

Mrs. Kuzma questioned the Anonymous Alert App.

Mr. Johnson wanted to expand options for reporting conversations and also be able to report discrimination and racial bullying.

Mr. Ramsey asked if there was a way to quantify where we are now with the number of incidents.

Mr. Johnson noted that collecting data is what we want.

Dr. Rodrigue said the app goes to the administration and can be used by parents, students and staff members. She is also still part of it. We also get information in other ways and report all incidents to the state.

Mr. Johnson stated that we want to make sure students are safe so assessing this tool allows us to do that.

Item 6 – Old Business

Standing Committees:

MOTION: Mr. Ramsey moved that the Board of Education approve the preexisting Standing Committees from the 2022 Board of Education Standing Committee list. Mr. Cruson seconded.

Mrs. Harriman agreed with the list of standing committees but has to oppose the committee assignments proposed by the Chair. It was not in the best interest of the Board for the Chair to put herself on the Policy Committee and move her after being on the committee for six years. She believes the Chair received feedback from multiple stakeholders and she has to oppose the motion.

MOTION: Mrs. Harriman moved to modify the motion to reassign the Policy Committee to myself and remove Deborra Zukowski from the Policy Committee. Mr. Cruson seconded.
Vote: 3 ayes, 4 nays (Ms. Zukowski, Mr. Ramsey, Mrs. Kuzma, Mrs. Larkin) Motion fails.

Vote on main motion: 6 ayes, 1 nay (Mrs. Harriman) Motion passes.

Mr. Vouros asked why Ms. Zukowski removed Mrs. Harriman who has been serving on the Policy Committee for six years.

Ms. Zukowski said it was her intent to have Mrs. Harriman chair the committee. Unfortunately, she did not see how it would work with another member on the committee. After a discussion with her, Ms. Zukowski made the recommendation.

Mrs. Harriman said that as a leader it was important to put our needs, wants and ego aside and put what is best for the district. I know the chair has longed to be on the Policy Committee. This committee is a working committee that has to move forward with efficiency and she feels it would not be in the best interest of the Board as evidenced in past Board meetings.

Vote: 3 ayes, 4 nays (Ms. Zukowski, Mr. Ramsey, Mrs. Kuzma, Mrs. Larkin) Motion fails.

Vote on main motion: 6 ayes, 1 nay (Mrs. Harriman) Motion passes.

MOTION: Mr. Ramsey moved that the Board of Education approve the new Diversity, Equity and Inclusion standing committee to be added to the list. Mr. Cruson seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Ms. Zukowski said the membership for this committee would be Mrs. Harriman as chair, Mr. Cruson and Mr. Ramsey.
Motion passes unanimously.

Mrs. Kuzma proposed forming a committee to address the health and wellness needs for the schools because of the rising mental health concerns. The committee will work with the Superintendent and Health and Wellness Coordinator to prioritize social-emotional programs and practices, establish a culture that supports mental health services for all staff, students and families, assess district and community resources to ensure mental health services are accessible, monitor and evaluate the implementation and impact of district health and wellness policies and protocols, and provide regular feedback to the Board of Education, and recommend changes or modifications to the health and wellness program for Board approval.

Ms. Zukowski said this committee and membership will be approved at the next meeting. She reported that Policy 9130 on committees stated the committees will be staffed 30 days after the first regular meeting in December. She assigned three members of the Board to each committee. She asked all Board members to provide questions to the subcommittee chair prior to meeting. She will reach out to the FOIA Commission to see if other Board members could speak at these meetings as members of the public.

Item 7 – New Business

Health and Wellness Coordinator:

Dr. Rodrigue spoke about this position which was cut and parceled to various school staff such as our grant writer and nursing supervisor. This would be opened internally in our district and fits under ESSER so there would be no cost. This is a very critical juncture for our students so we need to address their needs. We have had conversations with SEL and DEI and are looking for them to work together. If funding would need to be in our budget in the future it would need Board approval.

MOTION: Mr. Ramsey moved that the Board of Education approve the minutes of December 7, 2021. Mr. Cruson seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

MOTION: Mr. Ramsey moved that the Board of Education approve the minutes of December 16, 2021. Mr. Cruson seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 8 – Public Participation

Tony Keating, 7 Oakridge Drive, was impressed with Mr. Johnson's presentation. Not everyone is in agreement with the core problems in the country regarding race and minorities.

Linda O'Sullivan, 10 Farmery Lane, referred to the December 7 minutes and on page 6 said she did not say children were experience bullying and was quoted incorrectly. She also spoke about academic preparation.

One-quarter agreed.

Kristi Parille O'Connor is not a resident but is a Spanish teacher at the high school and co-advisor of SAID. Don't stand in the way of DEI work. Students are brave and fearless and are fierce in their fight for DEI. She is leaving her position at the end of the year not because of the students but because of what is going on in this room. She thanked those who continue to fight for progress and thanked her students past and present.

Most agreed.

Don Lacoco, 27 Hi Barlow Road, stated the Board has been working on making sure policies are addressing the need for equity and inclusion for years. The Connecticut Board of Education states that each school district should have teachers from other ethnic and economic backgrounds.

Most agreed

David Deschenes, 9 Saw Mill Ridge Road, thanked Mr. Johnson for his presentation. He is a Newtown parent of two daughters and living here has contributed to their character. DEI is so important. Listen to the young, wise Newtowners who addressed you tonight. They offered excellent advice.

Most agreed.

Ajene Arokium, class of 2017, always looked down in class when certain topics were mentioned. We went to school to learn and become critical thinkers. Newtown doesn't prepare us for the world we live in. DEI is inclusive of all histories. Be better and do better for the students.

Most agreed.

Jessica Velasco, 103 Brushy Hill Road, thanked Anne Uberti for the email regarding the curriculum audit and social studies curriculum that is being written. She wanted certain lessons to be halted immediately in grade 7 from a specific textbook. History should not be one sided.

Most agreed.

Brian Atherton, 30 Charter Ridge Drive, said that equity is very subjective. Parents should take a role as the family unit in the interpretation of equity because it's a very sensitive subject. His ten-year-old shouldn't be coming home talking about equity.

Kate McGrady, 126 Philo Curtis Road, is a teacher and doesn't want a white washed education. The schools should be teaching historical events. Many parents don't know about specific historical events. Why do we continue to hide the true history?

Most agreed

MOTION: Mr. Ramsey moved to adjourn. Mr. Cruson seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 9 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Donald Ramsey
Secretary

Hawley HVAC Relocation: BoE Update

January, 4, 2022

Enrollment Projections

- **Plan: K-1 (SH), Gr. 2-4 (RIS)**
 - *K-1: 8 sections, 132 students- Sandy Hook*
 - *Grades 2-4: 9-10 sections, 182 students- Reed*

Principals Work To Date

- Principals (RIS, SH, HAW) have met and toured the buildings
- Principals have generated a list of items to be researched
 - Space, staffing, furniture, supplies, schedules, lunch/recess, drop off/pick up, phone lines, communication, etc
- Principals have met with Lead Teachers (SH, HAW) and Assistant Principal (RIS) to review list, explain work to be done and answer any questions
- Have created Question Forms for teachers (specials, special education, classroom)
- Lead Teachers and Assistant Principal have completed preliminary work but much depends on finalized enrollment
- Everyone will be welcomed by home schools and thought of as part of the building
- Communication with parents to begin when more information is available

Lead Teachers and Assistant Principal Work To Date

- Will review their meetings, research, questions and suggestions

Questions

TO: Lorrie Rodrigue, Superintendent
FROM: Suzanne D'Eramo, Director of Human Resources
RE: Superintendent's Report – Certified Staffing Update for DECEMBER 2021
DATE: December 30, 2021

DECEMBER 2021

CERTIFIED RETIREMENTS:

Randi Kiely (eff. June 30, 2022)

CERTIFIED RESIGNATIONS:

None

CERTIFIED NEW HIRES:

Veronica Egas – NHS Spanish (start date 1/21/22)

Jenna Skelton – NMS SPED (start date 1/10/22)

CERTIFIED OPEN POSITIONS:

None

ADDITIONAL DISTRICT HIRING NOTES:

Here is a recap of all certified/non-certified who began working in December:

Building subs/LT subs = 3

Custodian = 1

Paraeducators = 4

BT/Job Coach = 2

Athletic Trainer (interim) = 1

Of the 11 newly hired employees, 1 indicated a diverse ethnicity or race other than white. This equates to a total of 9% broken down as follows:

Hispanic or Latino = 1

NEWTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Newtown, Connecticut

ENROLLMENT REPORT AS OF December 23, 2021

Current Monthly Enrollment

Cumulative Year-to-Date

Grade	Nov(e)			Dec			Sept 8th			Dec		
	2021	Added	Left	2021	Added	Left	2021	Added	Left	2021	Added	Left
K	287	1	1	287	284	6	3	287	284	6	3	287
1	272	0	2	270	275	2	7	270	275	2	7	270
2	263	1	0	264	265	3	4	264	265	3	4	264
3	284	2	0	286	282	9	5	286	282	9	5	286
4	277	0	0	277	271	7	1	277	271	7	1	277
Total Elementary	1,383	4	3	1,384	1,377	27	20	1,384	1,377	27	20	1,384
5	275	1	1	275	278	2	5	275	278	2	5	275
6	301	1	0	302	301	1	0	302	301	1	0	302
Total Intermediate	576	2	1	577	579	3	5	577	579	3	5	577
7	293	0	0	293	294	3	4	293	294	3	4	293
8	287	1	0	288	288	2	2	288	288	2	2	288
Total Middle	580	1	0	581	582	5	6	581	582	5	6	581
9	346	1	0	347	346	4	3	347	346	4	3	347
10	329	3	1	331	336	3	8	331	336	3	8	331
11	358	3	2	359	359	4	4	359	359	4	4	359
12	356	0	0	356	359	1	4	356	359	1	4	356
Total High	1,389	7	3	1,393	1,400	12	19	1,393	1,400	12	19	1,393

Special Education

Pre-Kdg	67	4	0	71	64	11	4	71	64	11	4	71
NCP, RISE, PAL	30	0	0	30	33	0	3	30	33	0	3	30
Out-of-Town	38	0	1	37	39	0	2	37	39	0	2	37
Total Enrollment	4,063	18	8	4,073	4,074	58	59	4,073	4,074	58	59	4,073
	=====	===	===	=====	=====	===	===	=====	=====	===	===	=====

ENROLLMENT BY SCHOOL

Hawley	304	2	2	304	301	8	5	304	301	8	5	304
Sandy Hook	379	1	0	380	372	10	2	380	372	10	2	380
Middle Gate	389	0	1	388	391	2	5	388	391	2	5	388
Head O' Meadow	311	1	0	312	313	7	8	312	313	7	8	312
Total	1,383	4	3	1,384	1,377	27	20	1,384	1,377	27	20	1,384
Reed Intermediate	576	2	1	577	579	3	5	577	579	3	5	577
Middle School	580	1	0	581	582	5	6	581	582	5	6	581
High School	1,389	7	3	1,393	1,400	12	19	1,393	1,400	12	19	1,393

Special Education

Pre-Kdg	67	4	0	71	64	11	4	71	64	11	4	71
NCP, RISE, PAL	30	0	0	30	33	0	3	30	33	0	3	30
Out-of-Town	38	0	1	37	39	0	2	37	39	0	2	37
Total Enrollment	4,063	18	8	4,073	4,074	58	59	4,073	4,074	58	59	4,073
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(e) = End Of Month

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NEWTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Newtown, Connecticut

ELEMENTARY CLASS SIZES AS OF December 23, 2021

Grade	Hawley	Sandy Hook	Middle Gate	Head O' Meadow	Reed	TOTAL
Pre K		71				71
K	16	18	18	17		
	17	18	16	17		
	16	18	18	18		
	16	18	14			
		15	17			
Total K	65	87	83	52		287
1	19	14	16	16		
	19	18	18	18		
	18	16	15	17		
		15	17	17		
			17			
Total 1	56	63	83	68		270
2	20	17	19	19		
	20	20	19	18		
	19	19	19	17		
		19	19			
Total 2	59	75	76	54		264
3	21	18	18	20		
	21	19	17	20		
	20	19	18	19		
		19	19	18		
Total 3	62	75	72	77		286
4	21	21	17	20		
	20	20	19	20		
	21	19	19	21		
		20	19			
Total 4	62	80	74	61		277
Total K-4	304	380	388	312		1,384

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