

Please Notes: These minutes are pending Board approval.

**Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut**

Minutes of the Board of Education special meeting held on November 9, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. in the Council Chamber, 3 Primrose Street.

M. Ku, Chair
D. Delia, Vice Chair
D. Cruson, Secretary
D. Leidlein (absent)
J. Vouros
R. Harriman
D. Zukowski

L. Rodrigue
A. Uberti
20 Staff
6 Public
1 Press

Item 1 – Call to Order

Dr. Ku called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

Item 2 – Grievance Hearing

Dr. Ku stated we were here to consider the grievance brought by the paraeducator union. The evidentiary portion of the grievance meeting will be held in open session in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act. The attendees were asked to identify themselves.

Lucas Rocklin, Union Attorney
Marlene Bucci, Union President
Susan Burbank, Union Treasurer
Suzanne D'Eramo, HR Director
Dr. Lorrie Rodrigue, Superintendent
Richard Mills, Board Attorney
Dr. Michelle Ku, Board Chair
Dan Delia, Board Vice Chair
Dan Cruson, Board Secretary
Board members Rebekah Harriman, John Vouros and Deborra Zukowski

Dr. Ku outlined the process for the grievance hearing.

Attorney Rocklin noted the Union contract states the hearing will be informal and confidential as may be appropriate.

Attorney Mills noted that the Connecticut Supreme Court ruled that the evidentiary portion of a grievance hearing must be held in open session under the FOIA statute.

Attorney Rocklin presented the basis for the union's position. Attorney Rocklin stated this grievance had to do with Union member wage advancement levels. The Union believes the Board has been incorrectly interpreting the levels. Attorney Rocklin reviewed the provisions in Appendix A. The Union believes the district has not advanced employees correctly in accordance with the wage levels in Appendix A.

Dr. Rodrigue presented the basis for the Administration's position. Dr. Rodrigue cited her October 15, 2021 response to the grievance. Dr. Rodrigue explained that the union had waived the right to file the grievance. Employees were advanced since 2018, with no grievance being

filed until this year. Substantively, the union position runs contrary to the provisions of the contract and the application of the contract over the last several years. Advancement on the wage level occurs at the beginning of the year when an employee has an anniversary date during the year. During negotiations there were proposals by both parties and members have been placed in accordance with those proposals and their contract.

Board members asked questions about the wage level chart in the contract.

Ms. Zukowski asked for clarification regarding the chart in Appendix A. Attorney Rocklin and Dr. Rodrigue explained their positions regarding the chart in Appendix A.

Mr. Delia asked why this was brought up so late as they are years into this contract. Mrs. Bucci said it was brought to her attention over the summer by Suzanne D'Eramo because she found some should have leveled up last year. After their Union meeting at the start of this school year they reached out to Human Resources.

Dr. Ku asked for closing statements.

Attorney Rocklin thanked everyone for being there and the Union believes the contract is clear regarding advancement. The Board is advancing members one year late.

The hearing recessed into a non-meeting for the purposes of deliberations at 7:07 p.m. and returned to public session at 7:55 p.m.

Item 3 – Decision Regarding Grievance

MOTION: Mr. Delia moved, that the Board deny the grievance filed by the Newtown Paraeducators Association and heard by the Board on November 9, 2021, on the grounds set forth in the Superintendent's Level Two grievance response.

Mr. Cruson seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

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

Item 4 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Daniel J. Cruson, Jr.
Secretary