



**REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES
AVON BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**AVON HIGH SCHOOL
Avon Community Room
Tuesday, February 27, 2018—7:00 p.m.**

Attendance

Members Present: Jackie Blea, David Cavanaugh, Debra Chute, Jeffrey S. Fleischman, Jason Indomenico, Houston Putnam Lowry, Bogdan Oprica, Jay Spivak, Laura Young

Member(s) Absent: None

Administration Present: Dr. JeanAnn C. Paddyfote, Interim Superintendent; Myles Altimus, Director of Operations; Heather Michaud, Director of Fiscal Affairs; Dr. Kimberly Mearman, Director of Pupil Services; Dr. Donna Nestler-Rusack, Assistant Superintendent; David Peling, Avon High School Principal

I. **Call to order**

The meeting was called to order by Debra Chute, Board Chair at 7:00 pm.

II. **Pledge of Allegiance**

A moment of silence was held in memory of the victims of Parkland, Fl.

Chair Chute began the meeting reading the district's mission statement, "Our mission is to inspire in each student a joy and passion for learning and a commitment to excellence, personal integrity and social responsibility." Chair Chute thanked everyone for attending the meeting and being involved in the work being done for all students. She reaffirmed that the safety and security of all students and staff must remain a main priority requiring a multi-layer approach working in concerted effort with the Avon Police. The Board is also committed to the mental health and well-being of our students. In addition to school counselors and psychologists, the district has brought back two social workers this school year with a hope of another the next school year. Ms. Chute implored that parents partner with the Board and if they hear or see something of concern to please say something to either their school administrators or the district's confidential tip line (860-409-2187). A resource page has also been established on the district website offering different options for families. Ms. Chute asked that everyone choose to embody, encourage and inspire kindness.

III. **Avon Achievers**

A. Dianne Anderson, PGS Staff – in recognition of her leadership, hard work, and dedication in Pine Grove School's main office. Ms. Anderson's interactions with students, parents and staff sets a positive tone for the school.

B. Chair Deb Chute asked the agenda to be amended to recognize the work of the Interim Superintendent, Dr. JeanAnn C. Paddyfote. Chair Chute expressed her appreciation of Dr. Paddyfote's hard work and efforts to what could have been a very chaotic time in the district. Though Dr. Paddyfote's title was Interim, Chair Chute thanked her for fully being the Superintendent and will be missed. Dr. Paddyfote acknowledged the appreciation and added that it has been an honor and a privilege to serve the students, the staff, the Board and community as Interim Superintendent; Avon is a very special place.

IV. Presentation

A. Avon Education Foundation (AEF) Grant Funding – Beth Zweibel, AEF President

- The AEF is a non-profit community 501.C organization established in 2004.
- The Board consists of eight (8) Avon residents but welcomes new members to join, especially someone who may be proficient in FaceBook to help promote the Foundation.
- Some of the projects AEF has funded are: the AHS acoustic shells; TBS book publishing project; pilot projects
- The AEF also funds community projects as well such as iPads for the Senior Center, and Launch Pads and the Wright Brothers' glider at the Avon Public Library.
- There are two cycles annually, fall and spring.
- Mini grants are \$1,000 or less; program grants are over \$1,000.
- The most recent grant was approximately \$5,000 to the middle school for four sets of electric musical instruments.
- The website is www.avonedfoundation.org.
- Teachers are reminded to fill out grant requests for projects that may not be funded by the budget. Applicants must be an educator or employed by the Town.

V. Approval of Minutes

A. Board of Education Regular Monthly Meeting, January 16, 2018

B. Board of Education Special Meeting, February 21, 2018

Houston Putnam Lowry moved and seconded by Laura Young to approve the January 16, 2018 Regular Monthly Meeting minutes as presented.

The motion carried 9-0-0.

Houston Putnam Lowry moved and seconded by Jackie Blea to approve the February 21, 2018 Special Meeting minutes as presented.

The motion carried 9-0-0.

VI. Communication from Public

Avon resident, Adam Fischler, thanked Chair Chute for her opening remarks. Mr. Fischler stated his remarks stemmed as a concerned parent with two concerned high school daughters. Prior to the FL shooting, his daughters expressed concern for their personal safety at school. Mr. Fischler read an email he had sent to AHS Principal, David Peling addressing questions about security. Mr. Fischler would like to know that security issues are continuing to be addressed, reviewed, periodically tested and modified as needed. He also felt that an update of communication to parents and students would be appropriate regarding this topic. Mr. Fischler also read an email his daughters wrote to Mr. Peling, previous superintendent Mr. Mala, and the Board of Education regarding their concerns of the security and safety of the students at the high school.

VII. Items of Information

A. Student Representatives Reports – Amir Johnson and Heather Monroe, Student Representatives
Amir Johnson reported that on January 27th Love of the Game basketball game was held, SATs will be held on March 21st, AHS Student Government is also collecting for care packages for our troops, twelve students presented on their fall internships.

Heather Monroe added that AHS recently held their Acoustic Night fundraiser raising \$1,001.

B. Financial Report – Heather Michaud, Director of Fiscal Affairs

Heather Michaud stated that there were no significant changes in financial status since the December report but has performed a fiscal year to date look-back from January 2017 to January 2018 which showed that the district was encumbered \$20 million for both periods. The unencumbered balance for January 2018 is \$729,000 less than the year prior; right in line with trend.

C. Update on Early College Experiences and Advanced Placement Courses – Dave Peling, Avon High School Principal and Peter Ettlinger, Director of Guidance

Mr. Peling gave an overview of the academic opportunities for students at Avon High School to receive college credit.

- Two different paths that allow more of Avon’s students the opportunity to earn college credits:
 - Advanced Placement with 21 various courses, exams given in May and scored from 1-5 with 5 being the highest, a score of 3 or higher to be considered passing. Colleges will usually accept the credit for scores of 4 or higher.
 - There are approximately 750 enrolled in AP classes this year with an increase in number from each prior year.
 - Avon was ranked 31st of 169 districts in Connecticut for AP participation and 22nd with percentage of students passing AP courses with a score of 3 or higher.
 - Given the high SAT scores Avon students receive it is expected that the number of students taking AP classes will only rise.
 - UConn Early College Experience (ECE) with eleven courses. Teachers must have graduate credits in the respective discipline and apply to UConn in order to teach these classes; which puts them on the level as an adjunct professor. Whatever grade they earn in the class at the high school becomes their grade on the UConn transcript. Students taking ECE classes also have access to the UConn Library and databases as a high school student.
 - There are approximately 600 students currently taking ECE courses.
 - There is a website that lists which schools accept UConn credits according to state.
 - The fee is approximately \$125 per course compared to the \$1,700 at UConn.
 - 12-15 credits, or an entire semester, can be acquired while as a high school student.
 - Many area high schools, West Hartford and Glastonbury, also offer ECE.
- Questions and Comments from the Board
 - Ms. Blea asked if CPC and honor classes were still available to which Mr. Peling replied that one or two honors courses were converted to ECE after comparing the curriculum. Ms. Blea expressed her concern that Avon offer true learning experiences to support a range of students of all levels.
 - Mr. Fleischman expressed his concern that Avon’s participation was relatively low and asked what were the hurdles in preventing higher enrollment. Mr. Peling could not comment on the historical reasons being relatively new, but shared that the processes of getting information and support to students was very important. Communication through The Falcon helped bring awareness of the availability of the programs. Mr. Fleischman also asked if the school was looking to find the potential students through the College Board, perhaps to even identify sophomores to which Mr. Peling confirmed they were using SAT and PSAT data to help identify students that could potential take AP and ECE courses.
 - Mr. Spivak commented that although the percentage of those taking AP classes has increased he wondered if it was more due to the added AP courses now being offered

and worried that the participation in the core courses of AP was not increasing. Mr. Spivak asked how Mr. Peling was able to increase participation in his previous district. Mr. Peling explained that in his previous district the increase was due to a combination of offering additional AP courses, changing the philosophy of teachers and having more conversations with the faculty, parents and students that AP courses are for all students, not just the elite.

- Student Rep, Amir Johnson, agreed with Mr. Spivak that some students think these courses are only for the elite and to be able to take some of these classes you have to be recommended which may be an issue for students participating. You must pass these classes to graduate.
- Mr. Fleischman added there are typically AP courses slated to be offered to freshman and/or sophomores and suggested Avon consider these courses. Mr. Fleischman also questioned if the cost of the courses was a factor especially if students were taking several at a time.
- Mr. Lowry asked how many students go around the high school and enroll in college courses directly to which Mr. Peling replied that he did not know. Mr. Lowry also asked what kind of approval did students need to take a class and felt it was inappropriate for a teacher to dissuade a student from participating in an advanced classes. Mr. Peling will report back on this issue.
- Mr. Oprica asked how Mr. Peling could educate the parents on the offerings to which Mr. Peling replied having teachers and counselors have the conversation with the students and also write it well to get the information to parents to build awareness. Mr. Oprica also asked if there were a long-term vision to replace one with the other to which Mr. Peling responded no and would like to have higher numbers in both AP and ECE to ensure Avon was meeting the needs of a greater number of students. Mr. Oprica asked if only ECE students were able to access UConn's library to which Mr. Peling confirmed. Mr. Oprica asked if there would be expansion to the offerings to which Dr. Rusack replied it is done through curriculum review of the CPDC.
- Ms. Young stated that students had presented at a past Policy meeting that there is a culture of students taking a lower level class in order to get a higher grade rather than risk a lower grade in a higher level class. This should be taken into consideration as it is about the learning and not the grade.
- Mr. Indomenico asked if there was any consideration of speaking with other districts with higher participation rates to ask which courses are being offered and ensure the lack of participation was not due to lack of opportunity. Mr. Peling felt that offering 21 AP courses was comparable and makes for a robust program though there may be a few more courses to offer. The participation is not from lack of capacity but needing to change the culture of the school.
- Mr. Fleischman asked for confirmation that the AP score had no bearing on the grade of the class to which Mr. Peling confirmed. Students would still receive the credit for taking the course but lose the college credit.
- Mr. Spivak expressed concern that what was told when collapsing levels, that more students would move up to higher level courses, has not happened. The teachers have to make the recommendations, the counselors have to encourage the students and the students have to believe they can handle the courses. Mr. Spivak said that after researching other districts he could not find any that offered both AP and ECE courses in the same subject. Mr. Spivak was concerned that colleges know what AP is while not accepting ECE courses. Why does Avon offer both? Mr. Peling explained that both courses are offered when the overlap is there which then offers two pathways to obtain college credit. Would students be at a credit disadvantage

at prestigious colleges? Stanford had no preference as long as equal in rigor and would not affect their admission. Yale said either is great as long as students are being challenged but neither AP nor ECE would count since they do not accept credits from anywhere else. Princeton said there is no difference as they are weighted equally. Cornell said they are weighted the same, no difference. 5 out of 5 said that an ECE course had the same weight as an AP course.

- Mr. Lowry stated that it might not be a difference in college acceptance but a difference in college credit. Students should be aware that just because you take an ECE or AP course does not mean you will get college credit. Mr. Peling added that there are some very good colleges, like Quinnipiac, that take all ECE courses.
- Mr. Fleischman asked if Mr. Peling knew how many students attended college in state vs. out of state to which Mr. Peling replied 50/50. Mr. Fleischman suggested that counselors help students decide on which courses to take in relation to where students expected to attend college.
- Mr. Cavanaugh said some colleges may have other requirements and perhaps students should take these courses not with the expectation of college credit but to help with college admittance and for the sake of learning to which Mr. Peling agreed and stated that students taking more rigorous courses showed more grit and perseverance.
- Ms. Blea asked if students needing teacher recommendations to take more rigorous classes was a district policy to which it was replied it was more a procedure. Ms. Blea wondered how to shift the culture of average students to get them to want to take the risk without having to jump through hoops just to try the rigorous courses and hopes to continue this conversation in the Curriculum & Professional Practices committee.
- Chair Chute stated that it seemed that by offering both AP and ECE courses Avon is able to offer the opportunity to try more rigorous courses to more students and the shift is really getting the teachers to encourage the students and not that there is a lack in value in one over the other. It is more the experience in challenging the student and having the student see that he/she may succeed.
- Mr. Fleischman asked for clarification as to whether the recommendation to take a course is that of the teacher or whether it is a requirement set by the curriculum to which Dr. Rusack replied it is not a curriculum prerequisite requirement.

VIII. Committees & Liaison Reports

A. Committee Report

- Curriculum & Professional Practices
Curriculum & Professional Practices Meeting, February 6, 2018
Ms. Blea, Chair of the Curriculum & Professional Practices Committee, shared what had transpired at the first meeting of the committee in February. Details can be found in the C&PP minutes. The upcoming C&PP meeting will focus on the high school and middle school. C&PP meetings are generally held the first Tuesday of the month at 6:00 pm at the Central Office
- Finance
Finance Committee Meeting, February 13, 2018
Mr. Spivak, Chair of the Finance Committee said the committee discussed a transfer of funds to purchase AEDs for all the facilities. Also discussed the use of facility use funds, which has helped fund playground or upgrading the tennis courts in the past. Next meeting is Tuesday, March 13th at 6:00 pm at the Central Office.
- Negotiations

Negotiations Chair Jason Indomenico stated that there is one ongoing negotiation with Safety and Security and hope to reach an agreement soon.

- Policy

Policy Committee Meeting, February 13, 2018

Ms. Young, Chair of the Policy Committee shared that they are currently reviewing the 3000 series on policies regarding Business and Non-Instructional Operations. Policies are being reviewed against CABE and Shipman & Goodwin policies and will also look into one concerning fees. The next meeting is scheduled for March 13th at 7:00 pm and will continue its discussion on the 3000 series policies. Ms. Blea asked about exam fees for ECE and AP courses. Dr. Rusack replied that ECE fees would be waived for qualifying students eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch. The school handles AP fees for students needing assistance. AP fees are \$99. Mr. Fleischman added that the College Board has a program where fees are altered for students who qualify financially.

B. Liaison Reports

- Board Representative to Curriculum Professional Development Council

Chair Chute reported on the CPDC, which she and Ms. Blea attended. The CPDC concentrated on the English Language Arts curriculum and how to assess the development of the curriculum. Dr. Rusack added that the committee focused on the SRBI behavioral side of the triangle which will be rolled out to staff with the Counsel. The vision of a quality curriculum, which was developed six years ago, was also reviewed and refined.

- Board Representative to Avon Board of Finance

Mr. Cavanaugh shared that most of the meeting was regarding the audit performed by Blum Shapiro. The audit recommended a fraud risk assessment for both the Board of Education and the Town, which should be discussed in greater length at a future BOE Finance committee meeting. Included in the discussion of fraud risk was the issue of ransom ware attacks. Also discussed was reallocation of the middle school science lab funds to security upgrades and improvements including SRO. The Board of Finance asked if funds would be used for capitol equipment or salaries to which Mr. Cavanaugh replied to them at this time it is all for capitol. Ms. Young added that for the last five years they have asked for the fraud risk assessment to which Ms. Michaud agreed that Blum Shapiro have been asking for a fraud risk assessment and to add a fraud tip hotline, which has been implemented. Mr. Lowry added that this is a Board of Finance issue, as the Board of Education does not dictate what they do.

- Board Representative to Avon Town Council

Mr. Indomenico shared that he, Dr. Paddyfote, and other Board members attended the last Town Council meeting. They wanted to reexamine the possibility of combining the town and Board finance departments. Discussed at length was the tuft issue, which is a \$5 million with \$2.5 from the state to help fund the project is not likely. Suggestions included fundraising and advocate to the Secretary of the State for funds.

- Board Representative to Capital Region Education Council

Ms. Blea did not attend but would like to attach a hyperlink to their minutes on our website.

IX. Chair's Report – Debra Chute, Board Chair

Chair Chute reminded everyone that Avon's new Superintendent, Bridget Carnemolla's first day is March 6th. A reception in her honor will be held at the high school cafeteria on March 12th from 2:30 to 5:00 pm. Staff, parents, community members have been invited. Ms. Chute also reminded everyone that committee meetings have been shifted to Tuesday evenings with the first Tuesday of the month reserved for Curriculum & Professional Practices at 6:00 pm. On the second Tuesday of the month are back-to-back meetings of Finance and Policy with Finance at 6:00 pm followed with Policy at 7:00 pm. All meetings are held at the District's Central Office. The monthly Board meeting is generally held on

the third Tuesday of the month. Minutes of all the meetings are on the District's website to keep everyone informed of the work being done. Nutmeg TV also provides videos of the monthly meetings.

X. Superintendent's Report – Dr. JeanAnn C. Paddyfote, Interim Superintendent

A. Hiring Report

Nothing significant with people filling in for staff who are absent.

B. Enrollment

Pine Grove School went up 8 students with general enrollment up 9.

XI. Consent Calendar

Any member may remove an item from the consent calendar and it will be considered in full in the ordinary course after the consent calendar is voted upon.

A. 17-18/96 Approval of Budget Transfers

B. 17-18/97 Approval of AHS Robotics Team to Boston, MA from April 11 – April 14, 2018

C. 17-18/98 Approval of TBS Musica Dulce to New York City on June 8, 2018

D. 17-18/99 Approval of AMS Grade 8 to Boston, MA on October 24, 2018

E. 17-18/100 Donation from AMS PTO

Houston Putnam Lowry moved and seconded by Jason Indomenico to approve Items 17-18/96 through 17-18/100 as listed on the Consent Calendar.

The motion carried 9-0-0.

XII. New Business

A. 17-18/101 2018-2019 School Year Calendar

Dr. Paddyfote explained the two draft versions of the 2018-2019 school year calendar. Both are very similar except for the start date with one being August 30th and the other August 28th. The professional day has been taken away on the day after school ends with the PD more strategically planned throughout the year. Also, in November, one version maintains the half-day the day before Thanksgiving while the other version has the day off. The school principals and teachers' union were polled and were in favor of version B with the earlier start date and the day off prior to Thanksgiving.

Questions and Comments

- Student Rep, Heather Monroe expressed that she preferred version B giving the day off before Thanksgiving as many students are absent that day. Also starting earlier gives more time to adjust to the school schedule.
- Student Rep, Amir Johnson also preferred version B and since it will be his senior year he liked an earlier graduation date.
- Mr. Spivak was concerned about the long school period, especially between December to April, and would like some kind of March break. Also, having the teacher in-service day off prior to Martin Luther King Day gave an extra day for high school students to prepare for exams.
- Mr. Lowry cannot support any school calendar that starts school before Labor Day.
- Ms. Young asked if this could be tabled but Chair Chute stated that parents are asking for next year's school calendar.
- Mr. Oprica asked why the Teachers' Union preferred one version over the other to which Dr. Paddyfote explained that they liked the day off before Thanksgiving and starting earlier to be in school for four days the first week. Mr. Oprica expressed he felt the later start date gave more time to the summer.
- Ms. Young liked the idea of allowing teachers the Wednesday off before Thanksgiving but did value the later start date for families.

- Mr. Indomenico added that it takes four weeks to have a full week of school, which is a long time to wait, so he is in favor of the longer start week.
- Ms. Blea reminded everyone that the earlier start means an earlier start to summer in June.
- Mr. Fleischman is concerned about families that may have already booked vacations thinking we generally start on the Wednesday.
- Dr. Paddyfote explained that starting school on the Wednesday created issues for new staff orientation and returning teacher workdays to begin on a Friday.

Jackie Blea requested to amend the January Professional Day from January 2nd to January 18th.

Houston Putnam Lowry motioned to call the question.

The motion carried 9-0-0.

Jackie Blea moved and seconded by David Cavanaugh to approve Item 17-18/101 2018-2019 School Year Calendar, version B, with an amendment for the January 2nd professional development to be held on January 18th.

The motion carried 6-3-0 (yay – Blea, Cavanaugh, Chute, Fleischman, Indomenico, Spivak; nay – Lowry, Oprica, Young)

XIII. Communication from Avon Board of Education Members

- Ms. Blea thanked Chair Chute for her opening remarks as security is on everyone's mind.
- Mr. Indomenico agreed with Ms. Blea and also agreed with Chair Chute in her comments to Dr. Paddyfote. He expressed his appreciation of all she did for the district.

XIV. Communication from the Public

- Carol Shubinski asked the Board to keep in mind the people aspect of security to consider adding back a counselor to be the first line of security in getting to know the students, to also help students with the AP/ECE selections and reaching out to colleges.
- April Mock shared that her daughter was not able to take an AP class as it was full and there was not staffing for it. Also many of the classes have over 20 students per class. You can't just fill the classes, you need the teachers.
- Amir Johnson shared that during the Code Yellow there were a lot of students wondered about the interior cameras in the schools have not been fully implemented since Sandy Hook so why now is it finally being implemented. School safety is important and it should have been important on day one. Also asking to see school ID is not consistent as to who is being asked.
- A parent stated that she trusts the school although it seems people trusted the school in Florida. The parent asked about the money being allocated from the Science labs. Are the labs regulated and approved by OSHA? Can the money be bonded? Where else can the money come from? We can't have Science labs that are not up to code but we cannot not have cameras either. Is this the right group to be asked, or should it be the Board of Finance or Town Council?

XV. Executive Session

A. Discussion of Matters concerning Security Strategy

Houston Putnam Lowry moved and seconded by Jay Spivak to enter into Executive Session to discuss matters concerning security strategy and invited into the session: Dr. JeanAnn Paddyfote, Interim Superintendent; Myles Altimus, Director of Operations; James Connelly, Director of Security; Heather Michaud, Director of Fiscal Affairs; Dr. Donna Nestler-Rusack, Assistant Superintendent;

James DiPace, Director of Emergency Management & Fire Chief; Officer Eric Lundell, Avon Police Dept.; Chief Mark Rinaldo, Avon Police Department; Brandon Robertson, Avon Town Manager; Officer Mark Vess, Avon Police Dept. Mr. DiPace left the meeting prior to entering Executive Session.

The motion carried 9-0-0.

Officer Eric Lundell, Avon Police Dept.; Chief Mark Rinaldo, Avon Police Department; Brandon Robertson, Avon Town Manager and Officer Mark Vess, Avon Police Dept. left Executive Session at 10:55 pm.

The Board returned to public session at 11:23 pm.

XVI. Possible Action related to Matters of School Security

Debra Chute moved and seconded by Jay Spivak to direct the administration to procure a school visitor management system to be implemented in each of the six Board of Education facilities.

The motion carried 8-1-0 (yay – Blea, Cavanaugh, Chute, Fleischman, Indomenico, Oprica, Spivak, Young; nay – Lowry)

XVII. Adjournment

The Board adjourned by unanimous consent at 11:24 pm.

Minutes prepared by Shirley Moy, Board Recording Secretary

Minutes respectfully submitted by Jeffrey S. Fleischman, Board Secretary

Jeffrey S. Fleischman
3/6/2018