



**MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING
AVON BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**AVON BOARD OF EDUCATION OFFICES
Meeting Room #2
Wednesday, February 21, 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; James Connelly, Director of Security; Heather Michaud, Director of Fiscal Affairs; Dr. Donna Nestler-Rusack, Assistant Superintendent

- I. Call to Order
The meeting was called to order by Chair Debra Chute at 7:00 pm.
- II. Pledge of Allegiance
- III. Item for Discussion and Possible Action
 - A. Request to Avon Town Council and Board of Finance to repurpose funds earmarked for the modification of science labs at Avon Middle School to purchase and install digital video recording cameras and devices in each school and Central Office.

Jay Spivak moved and seconded by Laura Young to repurpose capital improvement funds originally allocated for the Avon Middle School Science Laboratory Renovations to Security Upgrades covering each of the six Board of Education facilities. The total funding to be repurposed is \$667,412.00 from Town of Avon account number 02-4859-53115 to a new account labeled Security Upgrades with an account number pending establishment by the town of Avon.

- Mr. Lowry expressed that the motion should comply with the agenda in reference to digital video recording cameras and devices and does not mention the name of the fund “Security Upgrades.” Dr. Paddyfote explained that the motion is what the Town of Avon’s Director of Finance recommended. She also explained that discussions can be had and out of the discussion a motion can be made that includes that language.
- Mr. Spivak shared that having been on the Board’s Capital Budget committee, there was difficulty spending the money as allocated and in the near term it would not be spent on the middle school science laboratories renovations. He is comfortable with the motion, however, he would not like to sacrifice anything academic for security; we should be able to fund both. Mr. Spivak also mentioned that he would like to see school resource officers in the district and is also concerned that the current security staff at the high school is not checking everyone’s ID. Mr. Spivak would like to have administration ensure security staff check the IDs of everyone coming in and out of the buildings.

- Mr. Fleischman asked why the science labs are not being renovated and if the funds are in the current budget. Mr. Fleischman also inquired of the academic impact of not having renovated science labs given the NGSS standards and when in the future would any type of renovations possibly take place? Dr. Paddyfote replied that the funds are not in the current school budget but in a special fund held by the Town, which came about after money was set aside for the renovations. An architectural study was done showing it would cost \$2.1 million for the renovations. Dr. Rusack explained that the thought of renovating the middle school science labs came about when the science curriculum was being reviewed and revised. Dr. Rusack feels the lack of renovated science labs does not have an academic impact on the NGSS standards as the new science curriculum has been teaching those standards for the last two or three years. Students are still receiving the lab experiences as written in the curriculum. Because of the age of the middle school building and the need to renovate throughout the building it is difficult to just isolate when the science labs would be renovated.
- Mr. Cavanaugh asked how the amount of \$667,412.00 was arrived, whether that is the science lab allocation or the projected amount needed for the security equipment. Ms. Michaud explained that the amount is the remaining amount in the science lab project fund. The exact cost of the security equipment is not yet known.
- Ms. Young added that she had been inquiring about the science lab project fund since the summer. After reviewing past Capital Budget and Board minutes Ms. Young saw the difficulty in mitigating the difference between the amount funded and the renovation bids. It may be necessary to rethink what is the appropriate renovation for the middle school building and could be met through capital funding or bonding requests. Until then, this is a very good use of the funds but would like to know what the costs are for purchasing and installation of cameras.
- Ms. Blea stated that she agreed with Mr. Spivak's points including the role of SROs and the current roles of the security staff. Ms. Blea asked what research has been done to support the need for the video equipment. Dr. Paddyfote shared that she learned that back in 2013, post Sandy Hook, the district had a plan to install safety cameras at all the schools. The beginning phase of that was included the installation of some perimeter cameras. The subsequent phases of the plan never materialized. Mr. Altimus explained that the Town had installed cameras outside their buildings and we would do the same using the same cameras and software. After meetings with the Town, Police Department and others, a very detailed plan was developed consisting of approximately 275 cameras in all the buildings. With new technology some modifications will need to be made.
- Mr. Lowry asked how this would impact the next item on the Capital Budget's priority list and is concerned how priorities are being rearranged. Ms. Michaud stated that the next capital item is the fire alarm system which is currently funded in the budget. Mr. Altimus added that Phase I of the high school HVAC system would be the first item to be impacted which is fine to wait. Mr. Lowry expressed concern of having more cameras just to watch what is going on and may not be the most judicious use of our resources given today's security concerns. It may be more prudent to fix the schools so bullets are harder to go through doors. The appropriate response is not to watch but to "harden" the facility to protect students and staff.
- Dr. Paddyfote added that the plan was developed but never fully implemented. Dr. Paddyfote said that several layers of security are needed which includes exterior cameras.
- Mr. Fleischman commented that cameras do not just address shootings but other security issues such as abductions, strangers in the building, students not where they ought to be, non-custodial parents trying to make contact. It is more than just guns. Mr. Fleischman did

ask who would have access to the cameras to which Dr. Paddyfote addressed that only those with the software can access the cameras which can be done from any location.

- Ms. Young stated that the use of cameras are included in Newtown Public Schools' best practices which is a collaborative approach and recommended to other districts. Ms. Young would like to know the best practices of surrounding districts.
- Mr. Lowry stated the concern that someone must be monitoring the cameras this to be effective, another suggestion was to chip ID cards to which Dr. Paddyfote agreed that would be another level or layer of security and all tiers are needed.
- Ms. Blea asked if the Town's security plan was fully implemented to which Mr. Altimus stated that he believed it was fully implemented. Ms. Blea also agreed with Mr. Fleischman that not everything is a gun issue and thankful that social workers are being brought back to help with intervention. Ms. Blea agrees with the importance of cameras and is disappointed that this portion of the plan has not yet been fully implemented since 2013. Ms. Blea asked for verification that the funds being requested cannot be used for personnel to which it was confirmed that funds can just be used for capital items.
- Mr. Cavanaugh reminded that incidences with shooters are usually over within a couple of minutes and cameras cannot change that but there are other things for which they are useful.
- Mr. Lowry asked if the cameras would be constantly monitored to which Mr. Altimus said that the monitors are on in the offices and the office staff would notice any movement but there would not be anyone dedicated to watching the screens as to present staffing. Current security staff at the high school are watching the monitors.
- Chair Chute summarized that there are various layers needed to be implemented in the schools with cameras being one of them to be done in a timely manner not just for extreme situations but for keeping our students safe on a daily basis.
- Mr. Spivak questioned whether the motion made should be amended to allow for other items and not be limited to just cameras or upgrades.
- Chair Chute added that the Town Manager, Brandon Robertson, asked that the Board act on this so that he can add the reallocation to the agenda for the upcoming Town Council meeting.
- Mr. Oprica asked for clarification that the motion does not state the funds are used solely to install cameras and the inclusion of the word devices in the motion makes clear it opens the realm to other possibilities to strengthen our security than just security cameras to which Dr. Paddyfote agreed.
- The Board amended the initial motion to better clarify its intent based on Mr. Lowry's initial concern.

Jay Spivak moved and seconded by Laura Young Motion to repurpose capital improvement funds originally allocated for the Avon Middle School Science Laboratory Renovations to Security Upgrades, including the purchase and installation of digital video recording cameras and devices in each of the six Board of Education facilities. The total funding to be repurposed is \$667,412.00 from Town of Avon account number 02-4859-53115 to a new account labeled Security Upgrades with an account number pending establishment by the Town of Avon.

- Mr. Indomenico wanted to make clear that the Board's hands are tied as the money reallocated is set for capital improvements, things to be spent on buildings, which is now being transferred from science labs to security building upgrades. Also, security is a community issue. We cannot be afraid to ask the Town for help in regards to other security items. We should not sacrifice the educational side to make our schools safe.

- Ms. Blea asked Mr. Altimus to explain who made the suggestions back in 2013. Mr. Altimus replied that the Avon Police Department did the security consulting and are currently doing an assessment for future capital needs for facility upgrades. The actual technical consulting of the cameras and their capabilities was from the factory representatives and the contractor installing the cameras.
- Ms. Young commented that if they thought the cameras were relevant in 2013 then they should be just as relevant now. The community should realize how important and useful real-time video image cameras can be on an everyday occurrence. Hopefully the importance of this will be addressed in a community wide discussion with the Town in participation as to how we manage this as a community especially in a time of financial difficulty and that it is a priority.
- Mr. Indomenico asked that assuming the Town Council and Board of Finance agree to the reallocation of the funds whether we would be able to begin right away to which Mr. Altimus answered that given the approval cameras would be installed beginning this summer.
- Mr. Oprica asked for clarification that the motion did not limit the district to just cameras but allows the district to look for the best possible security options. Mr. Lowry agreed that it should include security upgrades and not just videos.
- Mr. Cavanaugh asked if the videos would be subject to FERPA to which Dr. Paddyfote replied only if the district releases the videos and that videos are not FOIable. Police do not access interior videos unless there is a state of emergency.
- Mr. Fleischmann wanted to make clear that this is not the total of the district's security plan but just one step; there is an extensive plan laid out for the next couple of years and the plan will be revisited often.
- Ms. Young asked for verification that the safety plan has been submitted to the state and the district in compliance to which Dr. Paddyfote confirmed.

The motion passed 9-0-0.

IV. Adjournment

Jason Indomenico motioned to adjourn the Special Meeting at 7:44 pm which was agreed upon by unanimous consent.

Minutes prepared by Shirley Moy, Board Recording Secretary

Minutes respectfully submitted by Jeffrey S. Fleischman, Board Secretary

Jeffrey S. Fleischman
2/23/2018

Board minutes are approved at the next regular monthly Board meeting, and any corrections to the minutes, if needed, will be made at that time.