



**MINUTES  
SPECIAL MEETING  
AVON BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**Avon Board of Education Offices  
Meeting Room 1  
Wednesday, June 27th, 2018—8:00 a.m.**

**Attendance**

**Members Present:** Jackie Blea (phone), Debra Chute, Jeffrey S. Fleischman, Jason Indomenico, Houston Putnam Lowry, Jay Spivak, Laura Young (phone)

**Member(s) Absent:** David Cavanaugh, Bogdan Oprica

**Administration Present:** Dr. B. Heston Carnemolla, Superintendent of Schools; Myles Altimus, Director of Operations; Tim Filon, Director of Athletics; Heather Michaud, Director of Fiscal Affairs

I. **Call to order**

The meeting was called to order by Ms. Chute at 8:02 am.

II. **New Business**

A. 17-18/144 Discussion and Possible Appropriation of Funds for the Refurbishing of the AHS Baseball Field

Dr. Carnemolla explained the request for the Special Meeting was to ensure the Board members understood the why the cost of the refurbishing of the field was higher than anticipated; the scope of the work as a whole and why it needs to be done; and to have a discussion as to the funding of the work. Dr. Carnemolla reviewed the needs of the athletic fields and explained that bids to refurbish the AHS baseball field had come in higher than the anticipated cost of \$35,000. This higher cost was due to the fact that one of the companies that generally had a lower cost is now no longer in business and also the Town is not able to help with some of the necessary work as hoped.

Athletic Director Tim Filon explained that the baseball field at the high school was the original field built years ago. The usage of the field is very important especially since the field at Buckingham opens later in the season so all pre-season practice is held at the high school and is used not only by students but by town programs. In the past, outfields and infields were used and able to accommodate three teams, not so now. Some settling of the clay in the fields, which was first noticed during the Spring of 2016, has caused some areas to be unplayable – the grading of the pitcher’s mound is uneven and a safety concern; areas including by home plate retains water. Avon’s Director of Park and Rec as well as coaches have expressed concern regarding the condition of the field to Mr. Filon.

Dr. Carnemolla reminded the Board that the refurbishing of the fields was requested as a capital project for the 2018-2019 school year, however, only the fire alarm and security upgrades were

granted. Funds were also requested in a Feb. 2017 Finance Committee meeting but was tabled with athletes playing on the fields this past Spring. Officials have now said that unless repairs were made the fields would be deemed unplayable.

Mr. Altimus, Director of Operations, added that the fields were never constructed with proper drainage causing home plate to flood whenever the fields are irrigated; pitcher's mound also drains poorly. Over the years, resources and maintenance was also put off in the back fields. The Town has put in new layers of clay but it has gotten to the point where that no longer works. The bids have the fields being scraped down to the soil and then layers it with sand for drainage and then clay on top of that, which rebuilds the entire infield and pitcher's mound. They would also level out the lips formed by the settling of the clay along the baselines. Mr. Altimus feels the field is past the point of its usefulness.

Mr. Fleischman asked if doing this would solve the drainage issue to which Mr. Altimus replied that rebuilding the field will solve its problems and the fields can then be properly maintained.

Mr. Indomenico asked if the District or Town has the capability of properly maintaining the fields or whether it requires more expertise. Dr. Carnemolla expressed her shared concern and said that she had spoken with the Town Manager and they have decided that moving forward there would be a meeting of various Town and District people to assess the maintenance of all the fields in Town.

Ms. Young expressed her concern that the Board was setting a precedent in paying in full for the refurbishing of the field without the Town being a part of the equation since the fields are shared, citing the drainage issue Avon Middle School tennis courts had in the past where the community fund raised the majority of the money needed, and the Town and Board of Ed contributed some of the funds. Dr. Carnemolla replied that because the fields are on our school grounds, we are primarily responsible for maintaining the fields, also, we are not asked to pay for use or maintenance of Town fields (Buckingham) which Avon students' use. Dr. Carnemolla expressed her fear that if this is not taken care of now then the fields will have to wait for another capital fund cycle just to see if funds are appropriated leaving no choice but for the Board to maintain the fields now. Mr. Lowry added the choice to get rid of baseball would not be a popular choice.

Mr. Spivak shared Ms. Young's concerns and added his concern of not having a plan for all the fields as all the other fields also need work as indicated in the Championship Turf report. Mr. Spivak asked if there were a way to repair the fields to a safety level of playability and using the rest of the money to repair the other fields. Before spending all the money on one field, a plan should be developed addressing the repairs and maintenance all the fields.

Mr. Fleischman asked for the dollar amount to repair the baseball field, to which Ms. Michaud, Director of Fiscal Affairs, replied \$75,068. Ms. Young added that the amount was the amount presented to the Finance Committee back in February without any discussion about there being a lower bid.

Dr. Carnemolla, in response to Mr. Spivak's question, stated that she had also asked the same question if there was anything else that could be done to make the fields a safe level of playability to which she was told no. Mr. Altimus added he had had a discussion with the Town and contractor to see if the refurbishing of the field could be done for less or in phases, to which he was told no, not for less and the only thing that could be held off was the pitcher's mound which cost \$4,000. The recommendation is to do the entire field at once.

Mr. Indomenico asked if the repairs would be for the entire field to which Mr. Altimus replied it is everything up to the arch where the clay meets the grass field including digging out the baselines, reseeding where the grass was disturbed, more top soil and sod, leveling, the entire infield, everything up to the outfield.

Ms. Young asked what the requested money would cover according to the Championship Turf report to which Mr. Lowry replied that there would be money left over. Mr. Altimus added that the District was planning to do some of the Championship Turf projects themselves to save some money. Championship Turf would do the things the District cannot do - decompaction and a one time aerification. Fertilization, seeding and irrigation is done in house according to a planned schedule.

Mr. Lowry asked the superintendent what must be given up for the cost of the fields to which Dr. Carnemolla replied that \$35,000 was already encumbered and recommended that money be taken from facility use funds. Ms. Michaud added that contingency funds were included for other bids and recommended taking the purchase orders for the blackout shades down to the exact amount of the bid which would give \$30,000. The remaining amount can be funded from the facilities fund and still leave a balance in the fund. Mr. Fleischman expressed his concern that the athletic field bid would not come out at \$75,000 and there would be no contingency plan after the fields were torn up.

Mr. Spivak suggested waiting until the meeting with the others from the Town to discuss what is also needed for the other fields in need of repair. Mr. Spivak feels to spend \$75,000 without knowing what will be done to the other fields is not a good plan. Mr. Spivak asked when the process needs to be started to have the fields done by Spring, to which Ms. Michaud replied before the ground is frozen and three to four weeks. Chair Chute asked if the urgency was due to the time of the year and that funds needed to be decided before the start of the next school year. Mr. Fleischman also asked if there might not be other options or additional funds at the start of the next school year. Ms. Young added that she thought the facility funds would be rolled over to which Ms. Michaud replied that she did not think taking the entire balance out of facility funds would be wise to do. Mr. Spivak also added that the year end encumbrances was left open to use on other fields. Mr. Altimus said the other fields will continue to be addressed as \$15,000 was encumbered for other field work including purchasing new equipment, supplies and Championship Turf to do some work.

Mr. Fleischman asked if this was the lowest bid to which Ms. Michaud replied no, the lowest bid was \$60,000 but was disqualified as they had not done field work before and their reference for the type of work was non-existent. Ms. Young expressed her concern that \$75,000 was too much money to spend without a plan for just one sport.

Mr. Lowry asked if anyone was willing to cancel baseball for next year as just adding clay did not make the fields playable. Ms. Blea added that she would be uncomfortable asking students to play on fields that were potentially unsafe. Ms. Blea asked how many students this field impacts to which Mr. Filon replied approximately forty when counting three levels (developmental, junior varsity & varsity).

It was also clarified that the money for the field would not affect money needed to repair the gym floors.

Mr. Fleischman asked if there were any additional fields that could be used in Town. Mr. Spivak asked how much it would cost to upgrade the Middle School baseball field. Mr. Altimus said that

the Middle School field was nothing more than a backstop and would probably cost the same amount of money. Dr. Carnemolla said that the field at the Middle School had its own issues which is why it had been abandoned and not been maintained and is in its current state. Mr. Filon added that Buckingham had one field which is virtually impossible to schedule three levels for practice as there are other teams waiting to use the field; there would be the possibility that there would be days one team does not get to practice. Mr. Spivak suggested Sperry Park to which Mr. Indomenico thought the fields too small. Mr. Filon said the only regulation sized fields in Avon are Buckingham, Avon High and the overgrown field at Avon Middle School; Thompson Brook School may be a little league sized field.

Chair Chute asked Mr. Filon to give an estimation of transportation costs should students need to be transported to another field to practice. Mr. Filon replied that transportation costs would be approximately \$65,000.

***Houston Putnam Lowry moved and seconded by Jason Indomenico to approve an allocation of \$75,000 to refurbish the baseball field at the high school to be considered as a priority item and to have the administration adjust the other recommended expenditures on the year-end encumbrances as presented at the June 2018 Board meeting (page 124) to accomplish that objective in the order of which the expenditures were ranked.***

Ms. Blea asked how the field hockey field was in comparison to the baseball field to which Mr. Altimus replied that money is being invested in the field hockey field, but not in the same way as the field hockey field does not need to be stripped down. Ms. Blea asked Mr. Altimus to confirm that the field would be up to standard to which Mr. Altimus said yes as much as it could be up to standard in the past, but as much as natural grass fields can be.

Mr. Spivak expressed that he could not vote for this today, not until a plan was in place for all the sports and all the fields in town, example, girls' lacrosse team had nowhere to practice and had to be bused elsewhere. A full plan analyzing all the sports is needed so it is understood where the baseball field is in relation to all the other sports. Ms. Young added that if fields cannot be done under capital improvement, and it seems a referendum may be needed for the artificial turf, without a plan, this situation will continue to happen as the fields become unplayable and dangerous.

Chair Chute asked the superintendent for her recommendation, to which Dr. Carnemolla stated she agreed that the District not throw good money after bad and we need to have a comprehensive plan to take care of all the fields but the meeting to be had with the Town is primarily about routine maintenance to keep them playable. Dr. Carnemolla feels this is a different situation where the field is not playable and is not comfortable not fixing it as the problem already clearly exists, however, Dr. Carnemolla acknowledges that she cannot predict what may happen to the condition of the other fields in the Fall but this is our field and it is incumbent on the District to take care of it. Dr. Carnemolla recommends the turf field gets put in and understands the need for a plan but the District is already following a plan in taking care of the other fields and is of the understanding that all the fields will be ready for play when school opens except for the baseball field.

Ms. Blea stated she hoped a plan could be established with the Town as to who maintains which fields in Avon.

Ms. Michaud explained that municipalities have until June 30<sup>th</sup> to make any changes as far as open encumbrances. Currently, the encumbrance is open only to what was authorized at a lesser amount.

The field work is an open encumbrance of just over \$15,000. Mr. Fleischman asked for clarification that if no action is taken or it is voted down the \$35,000 purchase order will be returned to the Town, to which Ms. Michaud said was correct unless something else was done with the money. Mr. Indomenico asked Ms. Michaud if taking the money down for the shades jeopardizes that ordering of the shades to which Ms. Michaud stated no. Mr. Fleischman expressed his concern that without the contingency money, should the bids come up higher we would have lost the items/projects. Dr. Carnemolla agreed with Mr. Fleischman, however, at the worse we will not be able to get everything but will get some of it and the majority of it will get done. The motion will allow the District to appropriate the funds.

Mr. Spivak asked how much funds is being allocated to the other fields to which Mr. Altimus and Ms. Michaud replied about \$14,000-15,000 to do much of the recommended work in house.

***Houston Putnam Lowry moved and seconded by Jason Indomenico to approve an allocation of \$75,000 to refurbish the baseball field at the high school to be considered as a priority item and to have the administration adjust the other recommended expenditures on the year-end encumbrances as presented at the June 2018 Board meeting (page 124) to accomplish that objective in the order of which the expenditures were ranked.***

***The motion carried 7-0-0.***

Ms. Young asked to develop a plan and Mr. Indomenico suggested this be put on future agendas for further discussion to which Dr. Carnemolla agreed.

B. 17-18/144 Discussion and Possible Approval of Policy 5113 – Attendance

***Houston Putnam Lowry and seconded by Jason Indomenico moved to adopt Policy 5113 – Attendance with one change the word “child” to the word “student.”***

Dr. Carnemolla explained that the policy was talked about in the Policy Committee meeting and made a recommendation to be brought to the Board for a vote. It was left off unintentionally on the last Board meeting agenda and had the opportunity to include this on this meeting’s agenda which gives the opportunity to have this included in the upcoming school year student handbooks. This version extends the provisions and regulations to the lower grades. What is in the regulations is what the law requires; which is best practices.

Mr. Fleischman expressed his concern with Section G of the regulations which says the procedures are for students in grades K-8 and not K-12 as it seems that the District will not be notifying and monitoring all students. Mr. Fleischman feels this is also a safety issue as the District should be monitoring students at all times and would like the regulations extended to K-12. Dr. Carnemolla responded that the regulations shown to the Board is not complete as additional work was needed regarding the attendance procedures at the high grades. The change to the policy will give the schools some guidance and the District oversight to what the schools are doing regarding attendance. Chair Chute reminded that the Board does not vote on regulations, however, Mr. Fleischman felt that the regulations should reflect the how the policy is to be implemented. Dr. Carnemolla agreed to change references as Mr. Fleischman suggested to state PreK-12.

Ms. Blea asked how the absentee policy was currently being implemented to which Dr. Carnemolla replied that improvement was needed at the high school whereas at the middle school it was very

similar to what was being presented. Ms. Blea stressed the importance of tightening up attendance procedures to ensure students with any issues are being addressed. Dr. Carnemolla replied that students with chronic absenteeism and school avoidance issues across the district, especially at the high school, staff are working closely and are easy to notice and help is given through guidance, SRBI and other interventions. Implementing the policy gives the opportunity to catch more students that may not otherwise be noticed in the lower grades.

Ms. Young also added that the new policy will meet all the new statutes to which Dr. Carnemolla said that the new policy is in conjunction with the Commissioner's focus on improving attendance.

*Houston Putnam Lowry and seconded by Jason Indomenico moved to adopt Policy 5113 – Attendance with one change the word “child” to the word “student.”  
The motion carried 7-0-0.*

IV. Adjournment

*Jason Indomenico moved and seconded by Jeffrey S Fleischman to adjourn at 9:15 am.  
The motion carried 7-0-0.*

Minutes prepared by Shirley Moy, Board Recording Secretary  
Minutes respectfully submitted by Jeffrey S. Fleischman, Board Secretary

**JEFFREY S FLEISCHMAN 7/12/2018**

*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.*