

Fort Edward Union Free School District
Meeting of the Board of Education
220 Broadway, Fort Edward, NY 12828

DATE: September 13, 2021

TYPE OF MEETING: Regular Meeting

PLACE OF MEETING: YouTube Channel Link for Public <https://youtu.be/FgmtGXf17v8>

MEMBERS PRESENT Thomas Roche, Christopher Miles, James Donahue, Ella Collins, Joseph Carroll, Amanda Durkee and John Guglielmo

MEMBERS ABSENT: Christina Durkee

OTHERS PRESENT via the above mentioned ways:

Interim Superintendent Mark Bessen, Tobie Bessette, John Godfrey, Katherine Elms, Neil Lamphear, Jack Toomey, Kathleen Hunt, Stacie Brown, Doreen Rabine, Brittany Schroeck, Lucy Baldwin, Kenneth Mitchell, Stephanie Bruce, Nicole Smith, Stephany Gulick, Amanda Rabine, Erin Donahue, Colleen Fisher, Dan Fisher, Cheryl Fisher, Erica Adams, Liz Dragon, Paige Rabine, Christopher Boucher, Taylor Boucher, Antoinette Toomey, Alexa Grimes, Jean LeGodais, Ashton LeGodais, Rachel Taylor, Mary Denton, Marian Roberts, Michele Nevens, Tom Roberts, Maddy Boucher, Christopher Boucher Sr., Stuart Alheim, Debi Alheim, Audra Aul, Patrick Columbetti, Tricia Columbetti, Sue Stewart, Donald Stewart, Josh Plude, Nicole Daly, Patty Suprenant, David Cutler, Jennifer Jenks, Tina Jenks Michelle D'Angelico-Taylor, Sherry Genier, Daniel Boucher, Nicole Schilling, Maggie Torra, Megan Munoz, Shannon Smith, Stephanie Iulicci, Jill Boucher, Marge Durkee, Tim Cutler Jr. Vicki Plude, Marie Carter, Jeremy Carter, William Taylor, Elaine Trackey Saltsman, Cheryl Roods Hall, Shauna Brown, Kristin Suprenant, Nelson Chase, Samantha MArkhan, Sarah Taylor, Michael Smith, Page Toomey, Kristina Bump, Eric Becker, Jessica Colvin, Ann Lilac, Maryanne O'Rourke, Lorinda Huntington, AMber Bement, Tiffany Wendel, Peter Prindle, Jodi Brewer, Joanna Scotch, Marianne Stark, Elizabeth Tholl, Heather Havens, April Lamoy

President of the Board Thomas Roche , called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

I. Pledge of Allegiance - Mr. Thomas Roche asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call was made by Mrs. Bessette:

Tom Roche, Christopher Miles, Joseph Carroll, Ella Collins, Amanda Durkee, John Guglielmo, and James Donahue

Absent: Christina Durkee

II. Community Comments: Mr. Roche read the following:

A public comment period not to exceed thirty (30) minutes each shall be provided at each business

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meeting. In an effort to provide an opportunity for all interested speakers, all speakers shall be limited to three (3) minutes during the public comment period. Community members, who wish to address the Board, are requested to complete the speaker request form and submit it to the Clerk of the Board prior to the meeting. Comments regarding agenda items will be taken first. Speakers are reminded of the three-minute time limit. Should the 30 minute time limit expire additional written comments may be taken prior to the meeting's adjournment. A member of the Board or the Superintendent will respond that the BOE received and reviewed the comments.

When members of the public speak to the Board, they shall state their name and address, the name of the organization (if any) which they represent, and the agenda item they wish to comment on. Please be aware that by law individual student information or particular personnel issues cannot be discussed at public sessions of the board. The Board will not permit interruptions, slanderous remarks or "name-calling" by speakers or the audience. We take public comment very seriously and careful notes will be taken. However, the board generally does not respond while the meeting is in public session.

Jack Toomey: Spoke to the Board letting them know that he appreciates that they are on the Board and that it is not easy. He is annoyed about the paper stating about the opportunities our kids will have, -our kids like it here. Before GF Transit started up former students that would walk here from as far away as the Dog Shack in Hudson Falls. 90% of the kids will make it if this Annexation goes but what about the other kids? Our concern should be all the kids. Please think about everyone when you make this decision. "if a kid doesn't make the volleyball team they can make the basketball team"- that is a false statement. How is the person that did the study that we are going to be ok, don't tell us that. Our top end will make it great, but what about all the kids? Think about everyone when you make the decision.

Kathleen Hunt- Kathleen came to support our school and the audience stood and Sang the Alma Mater, and all present stood and sang along with Ms. Hunt. Without this school she would not have made it to graduation. Ms.Hunt also commented that no one is considering the kids here, putting our students in South Glens Falls will have it a lot harder than they do now. Students will not have the connections as they are here at Fort Edward. Without this school she would not have made it to graduation.

Christopher Boucher: How about the Brown Family? and Jack ?(35 years) and his father taught here at Fort Edward and now his daughter is teaching here. Fort Edward Pride. Mr. Boucher presented to the Board from the adult community members-726 signatures to stop the annexation. Drive around Fort Edward and see the support of the Fort Edward School. Read the petition and drive around and see the signs before you make your decision on October 6th.

Stuart Alheim: Mr. Alheim stated that he agrees with Mr. Toomey and he thanked him for his service. We, the community, want it to stay. He was on the Rescue Squad and because of a mis quote in the Post Star they wanted to skin him alive. He was the captain, so when the community is angry, it's because of what you are presenting, not you personally. You are the ones who need to end it. We, the community,

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want the school to stay. Seems opportunity is the push for this. He graduated in 1986 with a graduating class of 42 and had the opportunity to know all his classmates by name and still keep in contact with most of them. Moved here in 1997 and when his children went to school he had the opportunity to know all his kids teachers by name, he had the opportunity to be part of 10 different Girls Basketball teams and bringing a Section II title to Fort Edward, on a Fort Edward School Bus, driven by a Fort Edward bus driver- "Fast Eddie" led through the streets of Fort Edward, escorted by Fort Edward Police Department, Fort Edward Rescue Squad, Fort Edward Fire Department. Four of those teams were also escorted when they brought home Regional titles. If you vote to go forward with this annexation, the opportunity for the for the team to bring home this title will go away. The sign on the front lawn bears the title "#We are Fort Edward" the question is, are you?

Erica Adams: Mrs. Adams stated that she had the privilege of attending the Fort Edward school until her sophomore year, moved and for 3 years was in a large school. Having personally experienced both aspects she made the decision to move home and be able to experience the love of this village, for them to go to school here, to know that they were more than a body in a desk. That when someone saw them they would not only know the face but also know their name. That they mattered to the teachers and their coaches. This community helped shape them into the amazing young men they are, it really does take a village. Please do not do this to our children.

Joshua Plude: Mr. Plude stated that his issue is with the boundaries of the school district. That the lines have to be contiguous, meaning they have to touch each other. He has overlaid the maps for South Glens Falls District and Fort Edward-they do not touch anywhere. He feels the study should not have taken place. There is a member of the Board that stands to benefit from this annexation. The New York State School Board Association states that it is a conflict of interest. If a school board member is to benefit financially from a decision that members may make on behalf of the school district, they should recuse themselves. The other is when we are a school that is starving for money, how is it selling a building for \$1.00 when the community has to come together to raise funds for our children to have extracurricular activities? That hurts everyone here. He also stated that if this annexation goes through the former employees benefits are at risk.

Vicki Plude: Mrs. Plude stated that she has lived in the village for 63 years she also resides in the family homestead. She is numb at where we are now. A community so divided and once friends we harbor hostility. This was supposed to be a merger study and now we are at an annexation. You are choosing to lose Fort Edward, lose these students. Some have children going here, some have graduated from here, some have children who have graduated from here. Some have children going to South Glens Falls, I respect your decision, however the majority of this district wants this small town school, and wants it just the way it is. Many do not have the means, or opportunity to place them in another small town school. What you are doing is just wrong. She also stated that she is very proud of 4 high school students that went out for football and play for the South Glens Falls teams (2 seniors, 2 sophomores) she feels that the

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Superintendent could not tell you these 4 kids' names. Thank you Mr. John Godfrey for taking the time out of your schedule to show these kids that they matter.

Sherry Genier: Mrs. Genier stated that she has worked here at Fort Edward School for 20 years and we have had many successful students here at Fort Edward. Her favorite time of the day is when school opens and the students come in and she is able to say good morning to each of them by their name and if they are not having a good day, they may just need a hug, hair combed, etc. Many of us have gone to the store during their lunch time to get them what they needed to help them get through the day. What will happen to the little ones that have to get themselves ready in the morning and if they miss the bus they won't make it to school. They need that one on one in the morning so that their whole day isn't ruined. She feels that they will not get that kind of attention in South Glens Falls. Mrs. Genier challenged the Board members to stand with them in the morning to see these precious kids, please do not take their school away from them.

Taylor Boucher: Ms. Boucher stated that Christopher Miles needs to abstain from this vote, it is a direct conflict of interest because your employer is to gain financially. Please think about it.

Elaine Trackey-Saltsman: Mrs. Trackey-Saltsman stated that there are other Board members besides Chris Miles that can benefit from the annexation. She feels that the Durkees should not vote. She stated that to let the people decide. Mrs. Trackey-Saltsman also stated people are keeping quiet because of the hate.

III. Presentations: Sharlene Petro-Durgan presented to the Board and the community the Fort Edward Five-year Fiscal Plan. This plan will be used by the Board and Superintendent to fine tune the budget, to project tax levy to resorte what was cuts Mrs. Petro-Durgan touched on the fiscal history, with the lack of support from local companies and citizens, tax cap and contingent budget have put us in a difficult position. The district could use an unassigned fund balance to cover these shortfalls in revenue for two to three years, but after that cuts would need to be made.

IV. Reports

A. Board Committee Reports (9 Board Committees)

a. Summer School - Jessica Smatko: Mrs. Smatko presented a slide show to the Board presenting the entire summer school program as it played out in the 2021 summer. Mrs. Smatko stated that the entire group did a great job to pull this together to make this a great opportunity for our students. 96% maintained learning levels in math, 98% maintained reading levels in a 4 week period. Mrs. Smatko stated that DoJo was a great way to stay in contact with parents and 100% felt it was a great experience for their children. Mrs. Smatko was happy to say that parent feedback was great and some thought it should be longer and if transportation was available they would have sent their child. Mrs. Smatko welcomed weekly Mystery Readers including Rookie the Police dog

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and thanked Dean Watkins for coming with Rookie. Thank you also to Ms. Toomey, Ms. Wendel and Emmy, Mrs. Morey the Beekeeper. Thank you to Joy Glass, Mindy Gregory, Tobie Bessette, Vickie Plude, Fort Edward Rec and the Cleaning department - Mrs. Smatko thanked the entire team.

- b.** 1. Finance Committee (next meeting TBD)Met tonight at 6:00
 - 2. Grievance and Negotiations Committee (Need mtg, next meeting TBD)
 - 3. Curriculum Committee (next meeting TBD)
 - 4. Policy Committee (need meeting TBD)
 - 5. Athletic Committee (next meeting TBD)
 - 6. Strategic Planning Committee (next meeting TBD)
 - 7. Personnel Committee (next meeting TBD)
 - 8. Building and Grounds Committee for Health & Safety (next meeting TBD)
 - 9. Building Project Committee (next meeting TBD)
- c. Superintendent Report:** Mr. Bessen stated that the first week of school was a success, thanked Mr. Godfrey, all the teachers, staff, it was a true team. The beautiful part was there were problem solvers not problem makers. The kids were all greeted, going to breakfast then meeting their new teachers they will have for the year.

COVID update - The New York State requires all individuals working in the Pre-K-12 public education be screened weekly, unless they are vaccinated. We will have a courtesy screening here by Adirondack Health starting the week of the 20th. Most people have signed up that are not vaccinated and there is a once a week screening. If they choose not to be screened there is a DOH requirement therefore it is a termed condition of employment.

We had our first positive case today and we were working on contract tracing protocols as we shared last month at the Board meeting. We have had 5 students identified within 6 feet of the student that needed to quarantine for 10 days, since they were not vaccinated. Others in the class, that there was a low transmission occurrence in their child's classroom.

Annexation Study A joint information presentation will be on September 22nd - a joint newsletter will go out to both communities. There will be a QR Code on the newsletter, a web location where questions will be addressed at the meeting. Questions will be printed and answered.

Mr. Bessen stated that there has been discussion about Board members being allowed to vote on various resolutions, as this has been an issue for some time, back to June when Dan Ward asked the attorney if any of the Fort Edward Board Members would need to

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recuse themselves for the October vote. Based on employment or with a familiar relationship the attorney stated that she sees no basis for conflict for either Board Members. They can feel free to vote on the school merger. No matter what happens if the annexation goes through the contracts with retired employees, their contracts rights through their retirement benefits, this is a New York State Law.

Treasurer Report:

Reports are in packets. Finance committee met at 6:00 p.m.

Principal Report:

Mr. Godfrey stated that we had a great start to the school year, hallways busy gymnasium busy, teacher and staff full back and this is where we need to be. Fall sports are in full swing, football, volleyball and golf and looking forward to a great year.

Buildings and Grounds Report: In packet

V. Consent Agenda:

- (a) Motion made by John Guglielmo second by Christopher Miles to approve Minutes for the Board Meeting held on August 16, 2021 regular meeting. Motion carried 7-0.
- (b) Motion made by Joseph Carroll, second by Ella Collins to approve the Warrants and Claims for September 2021. Motion carried 7-0.
- (c) Motion made by Amanda Durkee, second by John Guglielmo to approve the Treasurer Report for July 2021. Motion carried 7-0.
- (d) Motion made by Christopher Miles, second by Amanda Durkee to approve the Budget Transfers. Motion carried 7-0.

VI. Action:

- a. Motion made by Christopher Miles, second by Joseph Carroll to approve the District Wide Safety Plan as developed by the District-Wide School Safety Team. Motion carried 7-0.
- b. Motion made by John Guglielmo, second by Christopher Miles to approve the increase in salary for Teacher Aides from \$13.10 to \$13.20. Motion carried 7-0.

VII. Personnel:

- a. Motion made by James Donahue, second by Amanda Durkee to accept the resignation of Sara Krahnke, as Health Education Teacher, effective August 31, 2021. Motion carried 7-0.
- b. Motion made by Christopher Miles, second by John Guglielmo to accept the resignation of Samantha Carroll, as Teacher Assistant, effective August 25, 2021. Motion carried 6-0-1-Joseph Carroll Abstained.
- c. Motion made by James Donahue, second by Joseph Carroll to accept the resignation of Jessica Shiels, as Teacher Aide effective September 1, 2021. Motion carried 6-0.
- d. Motion made by Ella Collins, second by Christopher Miles to approve the appointment of Shauna

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- Brown as Mentor at a rate of pay per the contractual rate effective 9/1/2021. Motion carried 7-0.
- e. Motion made by Christopher Miles, second by John Guglielmo to approve the appointment of Ashley Godfrey as Teacher Assistant at a rate of pay per contractual rate effective 9/1/2021. Motion carried 7-0.
 - f. Motion made by James Donahue, second by John Guglielmo to approve the appointment of Madeline Godfrey as Teacher Assistant at a rate of pay per contractual rate effective 9/1/2021. Motion carried 7-0.
 - g. Motion made by Amanda Durkee, second by Joseph Carroll to approve the appointment of Peter Prindle as Mentor at a rate of pay per contractual rate. Motion carried 7-0.
 - h. Motion made by Christopher Miles, second by Joseph Carroll to approve the appointment of Payton Pauquette as Teacher Aid at a rate of pay per contractual rate effective 9/1/2021. Motion carried 7-0.
 - i. Motion made by John Guglielmo, second by Joseph Carroll to approve the appointment of Alexa Grimes as Teacher Assistant at a rate of pay per contractual rate effective 9/1/2021. Motion carried 7-0.
 - j. Motion made by Christopher Miles, second by Joseph Carroll to approve the appointment of Kristina Delk as Teacher Aide pending completion and verification of all required credentials and at a rate of pay \$13.20 per hour. Motion carried 7-0.
 - k. Motion made by Amanda Durkee, second by Joseph Carroll to approve the appointment of Blythe Kellerher as non-certified Long Term Substitute Teacher pending completion and verification of all required credentials. Motion carried 7-0.

Second Community Comments: None

IX. Executive Session:

At 8:01 p.m. motion made by Joseph Carroll, second by John Guglielmo to enter into Executive Session to discuss matters referring to employment of specific individuals. Motion carried 7-0.

At 8:49 p.m. Motion made by Amanda Durkee, second by John Guglielmo to return to public session. Motion carried 7-0.

- X Adjournment:** There being no further business, motion made by Joseph Carroll second by Ella Collins to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 p.m. Motion carried 7-0.