

NEW CANAAN BOARD OF EDUCATION
GENERAL MEETING
REMOTE MEETING
March 1, 2021
7:00 P.M.

I. Call to Order

Chair, Ms. Parkhill, called the meeting to order at 7:06 PM.

Attendance:

	Carlson	Gardiner	Hayes	Naughton	Parkhill	Rashin	Reeves	Richardson	West
Present	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Absent				✓					✓

II. Approve Minutes: January 25, 2021 - Regular Meeting

Ms. Rashin moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Ms. Richardson.

	Carlson	Gardiner	Hayes	Naughton	Parkhill	Rashin	Reeves	Richardson	West
Yes	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
No									
Abstain									

III. Review and approve Agenda: March 1, 2021

Ms. Parkhill moved to amend the agenda to add a statement of accounts review and possible action to approve transfers and an update of the budget discussion with the Board of Finance by the Resources Committee and possible actions.

Ms. Rashin moved to approve the amendments, seconded by Mr. Gardiner.

	Carlson	Gardiner	Hayes	Naughton	Parkhill	Rashin	Reeves	Richardson	West
Yes	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
No									
Abstain									

Ms. Carlson moved to approve the amended agenda, seconded by Ms. Richardson.

	Carlson	Gardiner	Hayes	Naughton	Parkhill	Rashin	Reeves	Richardson	West
Yes	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
No									
Abstain									

IV. Public Comments

Members of the audience spoke about the Board’s goal of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. They asked questions about the curriculum, spoke about a newly founded Coalition of Parents, Alumni and Community members and asked to see more progress towards this goal. They also discussed

the School Start Time change that is in the current budget for midway through the year and requested that the Board look for another solution that they believe would be equitable for all students.

V. Reports and Recognition

A. COVID-19 Update

Dr. Bryan Luizzi & Cabinet

Last Monday, the Governor changed protocols to allow teachers to be vaccinated as of March 1st and encouraged districts to work with their local health departments. The district's goal was to take the stress out of the process of scheduling for everyone and focus on equity of access, minimized disruption and quick action. The first doses will be given this coming Wednesday afternoon to staff identified by full-time/part-time, prioritized by age and scheduled by the district.

In a South School update, Matt Kascak and Zoe Robinson shared that physical spaces have been updated to better accommodate students during COVID. They have focused mitigation strategies and monitor them daily. This has been working well as only four students have tested positive all year, with three classes needing to be quarantined. In all cases, remote learning was very successful. Only essential furniture has been left in classrooms which allows for greater social distancing and a decrease in the amount of shared materials. Passing times for students have been limited and there are blue paw prints indoors and outdoors to help students maintain social distancing. Specials classes are being held in the classroom and library books go through a 48-hour quarantine. Ms. Robinson said that COVID has not held the school back. They have continued annual events such as "Walk to School Day", Readathon, fire safety with the Fire Department and virtual author visits. She also stated that the one-to-one computer model and the professional development for teachers on Wednesdays has helped to meet the challenges of the pandemic.

B. West School Outdoor Learning Center

Ms. Janet Murphy & West PTC

Ms. Murphy thanked her two PTC Co-Presidents, Lauren Erickson and Erica Schwedel, for all their work on updating the outdoor space at West. She also thanked Mr. Michael Canora for help with the design of the Outdoor Learning Center. West teachers were looking for a space where students could collaborate and work together in a unique learning environment. The space had to be low maintenance, ADA compliant and have shade. In 2019, Phase I was implemented in the courtyard area with landscaping and a shade structure added. Phase II will create a performance stage with covering, rubber tiles (hardscape), additional landscaping and a reading circle area. Two classes will be able to use the space simultaneously. Pending BOE approval for Phase II (estimated at \$78,525) they plan to continue fundraising and hope to begin work during Spring Break 2021, weather permitting.

C. Block Schedule Survey Results

Dr. Bryan Luizzi, Mr. Bill Egan

The first day of remote learning for NCHS students was March 13th, 2020. In the Spring, the high school pivoted to a block schedule, which allows students to have four periods a day versus up to seven in the old schedule. A survey went out to students, parents and teachers in December 2020 to collect some benchmark/baseline data about how the block schedule was working. From this data, there were three primary recommendations: to consider permanent adoption, provide teachers with strategies for success in a block schedule, and to drill further into Grade 10 students who feel there are more drawbacks and fewer benefits. According to the survey, most parents and students

feel that the schedule is beneficial for managing homework, helps with academic performance, has a positive effect on extra sleep and feeling well rested, and helps to decrease traffic congestion. Two thirds of staff members feel the block schedule is positive or very positive in terms of completing work-related tasks. Moving forward, Mr. Egan said he would like to create some focus groups to ensure that everyone’s voice is heard.

D. Budget Update

Dr. Bryan Luizzi & Cabinet

On March 2nd there will be a Board of Finance Public hearing on the budget, followed by a vote on Thursday March 4th. Drivers for the budget include COVID expenses, insurance costs and school start times. Implementing the school start time scenario will align all three elementary schools and have students in school during their high learning times. A two-tiered solution was looked at and would not be a viable solution due to the bus and bus driver needs and to the fact that Saxe cannot viably be on one tier. Dr. Luizzi has also been working with the PTC presidents and the Nature Center to work on an after school program for the elementary schools. More information on the budget can be found on the district website at: <https://www.ncps-k12.org/domain/741>.

The Resources Committee has been working with the Board of Finance which said that they support the budget with three exceptions. They would like the Board of Education to remove the \$900,000 budgeted for COVID expenses and move them to a special appropriation. The BOF took issue with the 9.2% increase in Health Care expense for COVID that was put into place to cover procedures that were deferred last year, a yearly increase in costs and a normalization of claims. Lastly, they are requesting to consolidate the BOE’s Internal Services Fund with the Town’s. The Board discussed these items and Ms. Parkhill made the following motion:

Move to authorize the Resources Committee to respond to the letter from the Board of Finance regarding the Internal Services Fund, COVID related expenses and actuarial adjustments.

Mr. Hayes moved to approve, seconded by Ms. Richardson.

	Carlson	Gardiner	Hayes	Naughton	Parkhill	Rashin	Reeves	Richardson	West
Yes	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
No									
Abstain									

E. Statement of Accounts

Dr. Jo-Ann Keating

Dr. Keating gave an overview of the accounts as of January 31, 2021. There is 8.3% of the budget remaining which relates to accounts that cannot be encumbered such as substitute teachers, stipends, overtime and utilities. Most line items have been impacted by COVID. After the budget was reforecasted and necessary transfers were made, the projected unused year-end balance is \$1,017,253. Dr. Keating brought to the Board’s attention the Food Service account. Due to an increase of students leaving campus and a decrease of students eating in the cafeteria, there is a deficit of approximately \$400,000 in the account which is going to take time to rebuild.

Move to approve the transfers reflected in the statement of accounts.

Mr. Gardiner moved to approve, seconded by Mr. Hayes.

	Carlson	Gardiner	Hayes	Naughton	Parkhill	Rashin	Reeves	Richardson	West
Yes	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
No									
Abstain									

VI. Action Items

- A. *Move to approve a donation of \$78,525 by the West PTC for Phase 2 of the West Elementary School Outdoor Learning Center.*

Ms. Rashin moved to approve, seconded by Ms. Reeves.

	Carlson	Gardiner	Hayes	Naughton	Parkhill	Rashin	Reeves	Richardson	West
Yes	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
No									
Abstain									

VII. Public Comments

A member of the public spoke about the proposed later start time and how it affects optimal learning. They asked if there were alternative schedules if the Two-Tiered one discussed during the meeting is not an option.

VIII. Announcements and Future Business

Next BOE Meeting: March 15, 2021

IX. Adjournment

Ms. Rashin moved to adjourn at 10:05 PM, seconded by Mr. Gardiner.

	Carlson	Gardiner	Hayes	Naughton	Parkhill	Rashin	Reeves	Richardson	West
Yes	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
No									
Abstain									

Respectfully Submitted,

Ms. Julie Reeves
Board of Education Secretary