Please Note: These minutes are pending Board approval.

Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting held on June 1, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. in the Newtown High School auditorium.

D. Zukowski, Chair
J. Vouros, Vice Chair
D. Ramsey, Secretary (absent)
D. Cruson
A. Plante
A. Plante
K. Kunzweiler (absent)
D. Godino (absent)
C. Melillo
A. Uberti
T. Vadas (absent)
50 Staff
160 Public
7 Press

Ms. Zukowski called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.
Item 1 – Pledge of Allegiance
Item 2 – Public Participation
Ms. Zukowski said public participation would be limited to 30 minutes and those who have not yet addressed the Board would be allowed to speak first.

Public-comment names and addresses omitted from this review excerpt.

MOTION: Mrs. Plante moved that the Board of Education accept the recommendation of the Special Review Committee that *Flamer* and *Blankets* remain in circulation in the Newtown High School library provided that the administration develop a process to address individual parent or guardian concerns related to their child(ren). Mr. Ramsey seconded.

Mrs. Plante spoke to her motion and reported that our attorney advised us that Robert's Rules and Board policy prevented the identical motion made at the May 16 meeting from being made tonight. This solution does not put the district at risk for litigation and asks the administration to implement a process that will support the choices of individual parents and guardians to make individual choices for their own children by charging our administrators with designing and implementing a more robust process. She is confident they will make this work. This solution supports our educators and is a vote of confidence for the Special Review Committee. It also

supports Mrs. Uberti and Mr. Melillo who have engaged in this process with thoughtfulness, open-mindedness, and patience that is to be commended. We are lucky to have them leading the district. This solution also supports the Board of Education because it shows we follow our own policies, respects our experts and serves all of our constituents. This solution leaves the operational authority where it belongs which is with our administrators. She is hopeful the Board will support this motion.

Mr. Cruson said it was not the motion he wanted, but understands the legal judgement. There's a link to the retention of the books with coming up with a procedure and is concerned if it's not done in a timely manner the books would be removed.

Mrs. Plante noted that we discussed that with Board counsel who said these books will remain on the shelf if we don't have a process in place.

Mr. Cruson preferred that it was an operational decision and not a Board decision. He knows they will come up with a procedure.

Mr. Vouros thanked Mr. Melillo and Mrs. Uberti and a concerned parent who spoke to Mrs. Uberti. Charging this motion to the administration will make parents know this will be addressed. He asked everyone to focus energies on summer with their children.

Mr. Ramsey appreciated the passion tonight as well as letters to the Board. This is a complex issue and appreciated going into middle and high school libraries to see what goes on during the day. He appreciates the motion and will vote in favor of it.

Ms. Zukowski thanked Mr. SanAngelo and Ms. Zandonella for the time she spent in their libraries. She knows the value that books bring and the trauma that books may bring to others. This motion deals with both. She thanked Mrs. Plante for this motion.

Mr. Cruson said this has been his personal position and is not political.

Motion passes unanimously.

Mr. Cruson stated the student engagement was positive through this and he appreciates that.

Mr. Ramsey said parents should have an active interest in their children's education. This issue could have been handled at the lowest level. Students should initiate the communication and be open and parents be receptive to their students.

Mrs. Plante thanked the educators in this process, the library media specialists, and members of the Special Review Committee.

Mr. Melillo thanked everyone who supported and didn't support the recommendation of the Special Review Committee because it was important to hear both sides and perspectives. He thanked the students and reached out to the Newtown community that we need to come together and ensure we are better together and there is no room for disparaging opinions that we don't like and to respect everyone's opinion.

Mrs. Uberti stated that all of us always tries to listen to students and parents and always try to do work with families to do what is best for students. To our students, you live in a different world compared to your elders. Maybe we need to be clearer why books are there. We want to