



**Monthly Meeting**  
Avon Board of Education  
34 Simsbury Road, Avon, Connecticut

**Mission Statement**

*Our mission is to inspire in each student a joy and passion for learning and a commitment to excellence, personal integrity, and social responsibility.*

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**Tuesday, October 17, 2023, 7:00 pm**

Avon High School, Library

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Avon High School  
510 West Avon Road  
Avon, CT 06001

**Minutes**

**Attendance**

**Board Members Present:** Jackie Blea; Debra Chute, Board Chair; Jeffrey S. Fleischman, Board Secretary; Lynn Katz; Nicole Russo; Thej Singh, Board Vice-Chair; Sarah Thompson; Liz Sommerkorn; Laura Young

**Board Members Absent:** None

**Administration Present:** Dr. Bridget Carnemolla, Superintendent of Schools; Jess Giannini, Assistant Superintendent; Roberto Medic, Assistant Superintendent; Susan Russo, Business Manager

- I. Call to Order  
*Ms. Debra Chute, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.*
  - A. Roll Call
- II. Pledge of Allegiance
- III. Mission Statement
- IV. Recognition - Students from TBS, RBS and PGS spoke about their experiences when author Katie Wood visited the students to talk about her book A Simple Seed.  
Mr. Sturm discussed the mission and goals of Avon, and how Ms. Wood's visit was aligned to Avon's Blueprint and Social Emotional Learning which is a critical part of the curriculum that teaches the students ways to be self directed and comfortable out in the world. All three elementary schools were honored to have Katie Wood visit the schools.  
RBS students Mollie Baker, Elliot Weeks and Dylan Luabeya started and talked about RAS (Reticular Activating System), the part of your brain that directs your good and bad thoughts. An example they gave was, if you have a bad part of your day, it doesn't mean your whole day is going to be bad. The students also mentioned if you are having a bad day, to be grateful for what you do have. The three students finished by telling the Board what parts of the Simple Seed journal they liked the most.  
PGS principal Ms. Amy Borio began by saying that the program with the journal, A Simple Seed, was started at PGS with Ms. Matos, a teacher in PGS who is friends with Ms. Wood. Ms. Matos' class

was the pilot class for the journal. Two students from that class spoke of what they learned; Ilyas Rifaey told the Board that last year they began each day by reading a passage from the journal, and wrote down what they were grateful for, and who they could make smile that day. Meghan Gjashta continued to say another item she learned was to not quit on a bad day, and gave a great example of this with her soccer playing.

TBS principal spoke to his school's experience with Ms. Wood and then handed over the presentation to Alexander Cogle to tell of his experience with the Ms. Wood visit; Alexander learned that if you improve your mindset, showing gratitude can better your life and those around you. Alexander went on to give great examples of training your mindset to be positive. Thomas Shultz told the Board that he learned about positivity, and how to incorporate it into our lives. Kindness goes a long way and the CARES values at TBS is a great way that TBS expresses their gratitude.

Ms. Chute thanked the students for being great ambassadors for the positivity message. Board member Ms. Blea also commented she was grateful to hear what they said and it had a big impact on her.

The second recognition that evening was for Board member Ms. Elizabeth Sommerkorn who is leaving the Board. Ms. Chute presented Ms. Elizabeth Sommerkorn with the traditional silver bell, marking her time on the Board of Education and wanted to say how grateful they all were for her time on the Board.

V. Approval of Minutes

A. Board of Education Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes of August 22, 2023

***Ms. Young made a motion to approve the BOE Regular Monthly minutes of September 26, 2023  
Ms. Singh seconded.  
Motion Passed 9-0-0***

VI. Communication from Public- Meghan Gagnard from Avon wanted to express her concern for the reading program chosen for the students of Avon Public Schools.

VII. Items of Information and Proposals

A. Student Representative Report – Lillian Peng and Nikolai Meltser

Nikolai began with PGS: PGS is highlighting attendance and it makes for a successful day when the students are on time; Unity day is October 18th, where the school will wear orange in the fight against bullying; the Halloween Parade is at 9:15 a.m. on the playground on the 31st.; and the students of PGS are being taught internet safety.

RBS: Students are learning about the 3 B's- **B**eing nice, **B**eing safe and always trying your **B**est; Parents are being reminded to bring their ID's to pick up their children.

Lilian then reported on AMS, AHS and TBS.

AHS: PSAT day was October 11th; Homecoming week is this week where students are showing off their school spirit, Pep Rally is the 19th; College Fair is October 20th and NEASC was at the high school on the 17th and 18th.

AMS: Eighth grade field trip to Boston is October 25th; Unity Day is the 18th where all will wear orange.

TBS: Guest speaker Katie Wood shared her fantastic presentation about the power we hold with ourselves to be courageous; Sturbridge Village field trip for the 5th graders.

B. Financial Report – Susan Russo, Business Manager

Ms. Susan Russo began by saying September was a fairly quiet month financially. Within Certified staff there were some positive balances due to unfilled stipend positions yet to be encumbered and the Non Certified line staff has some variances due to additional staff needed for field trips as well as some movement in Maintenance staff due to FMLA reasons.

Ms. Russo continued to say that Special Education is still getting final contracts so more items will be encumbered in October.

General Funds:

9/30/23 - Balance, \$7,272,198 or 10.907% unencumbered

9/30/22- \$5,458,714 or 8.44% unencumbered

VIII. Committees & Liaison Reports

A. Committee Reports

- Curriculum & Professional Practices – First Meeting will be on October 24, 2023.
- Finance – Lynn Katz, Chair - Ms. Katz stated the Finance Committee met on October 10, 2023, the minutes are included in tonight's packet as well as the specifics of the Capital Improvement Projects that will be presented tonight. The November meeting is canceled, so the next meeting will be December 12th.
- Negotiations – Deb Chute, Chair - We are not actively negotiating with any one at this time.
- Policy – Laura Young, Chair - Policy did not meet in October, but will be meeting in November.

B. Liaison Report

- Capital Region Education Council – Jackie Blea, Board Representative  
Ms. Blea mentioned the next meeting will be Wednesday, October 18, 2023.

IX. Chair's Report –Ms. Debra Chute, Board Chair

- A. Board Chair Update - Ms. Chute was highly impressed with the presentation tonight. The skill of the student's public speaking at this young age is wonderful. Ms. Chute mentioned how grateful she was for the work all the principals are doing with the students, not just with academics but the humanity aspect as well. Budget is coming along and Ms. Chute was grateful for all the work that goes into that as well.

X. Superintendent's Report – Dr. Bridget Heston Carnemolla

A. Hiring Report -

Mr. Medic started by stating that we are still working to fill our non-certified positions, and had a strong month filling roles of Teacher Assistants and Nutrition Services and long term substitutes. Mr. Medic recognized 2 retirements; Ms. Sharon Major who worked for the district for 18 years, as a para educator, we thank her and wish her well. The other retirement is Sarah Parsons, who joined our district in 1989, and is departing in November. We want to thank her for her 34 years of dedicated service to our Special Education students.

B. Enrollment Report-

Dr. Carnemolla stated we are only up 12 from where we were last year, holding steady with enrollments.

C. Strategic Plan Update - None at this time.

- D. Updates - Thank the students/teachers and Mr. Kramek for spirit week this week at the high school. Thank you to the PTO for their assistance with the spirit week and homecoming dance as well.

XI. Consent Calendar -

A. 23-24/12 - Budget Transfers

***Ms. Katz motioned to approve the consent calendar as presented, Mr. Fleischman seconded  
Motion passed 9-0-0***

XII. Old Business - No Old Business

XIII. New Business

- A. 2024-2025 Budget Timeline- Dr. Carnemolla stated that these dates are given to us by the town, to bring to the Board as an FYI for the Board to view the dates and times for the Budget meetings for the 24-25 budget. Capital Improvement budget presentation will be done on the first night of the Town Budget Meetings, and Dr. Carnemolla expressed that if any Board members can be there, that would be appreciated. A lot of work is done between now and the presentation to the town, with all the administrators and the Business Office coming together to form the best budget.
- B. Avon Capital Improvement Projects - Mr. Myles Altimus presented to the Board the projects that Avon is looking to do under the Capital Improvement budget of 2024-2025 and beyond. Mr. Altimus began with the history of the projects done this past year and ongoing projects presently. He then went on to the recommended projects for next year, that were in order of priority, as well as the listing of projects for the next 5 years.
- Mr. Altimus went into more detail about the projects on the CIP, including the high school roof which is in phase one of the project and is looking to do the other phases in the next year. Doors at the Middle School are also on the CIP budget, showing the pictures of the damage to the doors that need to be repaired. The middle school also needs an upgrade to the electrical system, it is a multi year project but the funds stated are just for next year.
- Tiles in all schools need to be replaced every year as they wear down in all schools. Central Office needs significant work, with Mr. Altimus showed pictures of the Central Office to reiterate to the Board the need for it to be on the Capital Improvement budget, which includes siding, windows and making the bathroom ADA compliant.
- Thompson Brook Basketball courts have significant cracks (pictures were shown), and the goal is to rip up the whole court and start fresh to avoid the cracking in the future. Roaring Brook has new playground equipment on the CIP as well as a new roof at Thompson Brook and District Wide security updates.
- Mr. Fleischman posed the question about the flooding at the Central Office, and if the reason it flooded has been remedied. Ms. Russo answered what was done to rectify the issue of the flooding.
- Ms. Blea made a statement that she was very concerned about the bathrooms not being ADA compliant, asking if they could be remodeled to be compliant. Dr. Carnemolla answered that it currently is not possible to fix the bathrooms due to the structure of the building. Ms. Blea questioned if the building itself was ADA compliant, and was answered that yes, the building is ADA compliant. Ms. Blea asked about the basketball court at TBS and Mr. Altimus answered that the court will be milled down and a whole new court will be put in place, with new technology for it to last, and not crack.
- Ms. Katz commented that after the Finance Committee meeting, she was given the impression that it would cost millions of dollars to rectify the Central Office, and there was a discussion of finding another home for the Central Office. Ms. Russo was able to update the board on this subject, saying that her and Mr. Altimus had met with the Town of Avon with the study

done of the Central Office by a third party architect, to make the updates and make it compliant. Ms. Russo stated they have not met with the town yet to go over those findings in detail. On February 2nd, the town will meet and go over their budget and the findings of the evaluation of the Central Office and we will know more and be able to report next steps at that point.

Ms. Young stated that seeing the pictures and hearing about the disrepair that the Central Office is in, she feels the building is unsustainable. Whatever she/the Board can do to help relocate Central Office staff, you have support from her and the Board.

Dr. Carnemolla stated that the town commissioned the study, so they need to share it with the Town Council first, and then it will be shared with the Board of Education.

Mr. Fleischman asked why it wasn't on the CIP to build a new building for Central Office, and was answered by Ms. Susan Russo that the buildings are the towns property, we just maintain them, but have been working collaboratively with the town to figure out a solution as it affects the town and their assets too.

Dr. Carnemolla gave a small explanation of what they have discussed already with the town as well as some specifics of the Central Office needs that we will be looking for in other spaces.

Mr. Fleischman then clarified that any new space for Central Office would be on the Avon Town budget, and not on our budget because the town will own the building, and Avon Public Schools will be the 'custodians' of the building. Dr. Carnemolla did clarify that the Board of Education will be asked in the end for their input on a decision regarding the Central Office.

Ms. Young asked how much do we propose to the town for the budget and how much is approved by the town, Dr. Carnemolla answered that they have revamped the way the budget is done so that all items and dollar amounts are usually approved by the town, as we (APS) show what is only in need to be done and we also show fiscal responsibility.

Ms. Chute stated that the safety of the Central Office is paramount to the Board, and they are behind us for whatever decision needs to be made.

***Ms. Thompson made the motion to adopt the Capital Improvement Projects as presented,  
Ms. Blea seconded  
Motion passed 9-0-0***

C. Teacher Evaluation Model

Mr. Medic began by explaining that each year the Teacher Evaluation Model is brought to the Board for their approval. This year the State Department of Education continued to give flexibility to the Teacher Evaluation, as they had done during the pandemic. Working with the CPDC group in conjunction with the Teacher's Association there were changes made to the Teachers Evaluation, still focusing on Teacher Goals. Some changes were made to the educators who have been with the district for 1 or 2 years, and changes were made to the observation part of the evaluation for tenured teachers. This change specifically deals with changing over from formal observations to more frequent informal observations; these are not scheduled so they tend to be more organic observations. They will include written feedback and there will be a minimum of 3 per year. The state is looking for districts to go to less formal and more informal observations, so this is a great opportunity for Avon to try this option. Also for tenured teachers, they are able to elect to participate in a self-designed study still focusing on improving educator practice and student learning results.

Mr. Medic went on to explain how the Teacher Evaluation plan is guided and how they are following the guidelines of the SDE to be compliant and align to the State requirements and how Avon creates their Teacher Evaluation Plan.

Ms. Thompson questioned about the observation change, from formal to informal and if there is still feedback given to the teacher. Mr. Medic answered that Avon has had the informal observations in place for a while now, and now the state is asking districts to go towards that option, and he also confirmed that there is feedback given to the teachers after the informal observations.

***Ms. Thej Singh moved to approve the Avon Teacher Evaluation Model as presented and Ms. Nicole Russo seconded.***

***Motion passed 9-0-0***

XIV. Communication from Public

There was no communication from the public.

XV. Communication from Avon Board of Education Members

Ms. Nicole Russo is happy to see the changes to the Teacher Evaluations, and thanked them for the work done on that. Ms. Russo also commented on the self reflection she saw this evening, how wonderful it is to see and a thank you to the PTO for bringing the idea of A Simple Seed to the schools.

Mr. Fleischman wanted to thank Ms. Liz Sommerkorn for her time on the Board, and shared some kind reflections on her time in her position.

Dr. Carnemolla also wanted to thank Ms. Sommerkorn for her hard work and dedication to the Board, she will be greatly missed.

XVI. Adjournment

***Ms. Liz Sommerkorn made the motion to adjourn the meeting, Ms. Lynn Katz seconded***

***Motion passed 9-0-0***

Minutes prepared by Christine Sardinkas, Board Recording Clerk

Minute respectfully submitted by Jeffrey S. Fleischman, Avon Board Secretary