

TOWN OF NEW FAIRFIELD

AGENDA

BOARD OF FINANCE

SPECIAL MEETING

MONDAY May 11, 2026

7:00 PM

via ZOOM

<https://zoom.us/j/97903000645>

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Appointments
4. Announcements / Correspondence
5. Discuss / Vote to approve and bring to a Town Meeting additional appropriation for unanticipated Special Education costs
6. Discuss / Vote to set the Mill Rate for the Fiscal Year 2026/27 budget
7. Public Comment
8. Board Member Comments
9. Adjournment



NEW FAIRFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION

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www.newfairfieldschools.org

April 23, 2026

Via Email:

New Fairfield Board of Finance
New Fairfield Board of Selectmen

Re: Request for Supplemental Appropriation for Special Education Necessary to Balance the Budget of the New Fairfield Board of Education for FY 2026

Dear Members of the Board of Finance and the Board of Selectmen:

I am writing pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-222 to formally notify you that the New Fairfield Board of Education (the “Board”) anticipates a shortfall in its fiscal year 2026 budget and must request a supplemental appropriation in order to end the fiscal year in balance, as required by law. This projected shortfall is the result of unanticipated expenditures beyond the Board’s control associated with legally mandated special education services.

Below, I set forth the nature and extent of the projected overages, and describe the measures taken by the Administration of the New Fairfield Public Schools (the “Administration”) to balance the budget prior to submitting this request. At this point, the Administration estimates a shortfall for the remainder of the current fiscal year in an amount not to exceed \$455,678.

The Board was forced to exceed the budgeted amount for unanticipated expenditures to comply with federal law to provide appropriate special education programming for students as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Much of this overage is accounted for by a 50% increase in additional special education students who required educational placement in out-of-district special education facilities. These students were not anticipated to require outplacement or projected for outplacement at the time of the preparation of the Board’s budget for the current fiscal year. Some of the students moved to New Fairfield after the preparation of the Board’s budget for the current fiscal year.

In other words, there was not any way for the Board or Administration to foresee these costs. Federal and state special education laws require that the New Fairfield Board of Education pay the tuition and related costs, such as specialized transportation, for such outplacements. These unanticipated outplacement and transportation costs total \$1,336,640.

The Administration has taken numerous steps to attempt to balance the budget. The staff was informed of a budgetary freeze, and the administration has implemented close monitoring of all expenditures and has limited non-essential spending across departments. In addition, all remaining special education contingency funds have been fully expended to reduce the deficit.

Further, the district is actively pursuing reimbursement for special education outplacements through the State's Excess Cost grant pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-76g. However, this funding is limited, as it only applies to eligible individual student costs that exceed 4.5 times the district's per pupil expenditure, and is reimbursed at a rate of approximately 68%. As a result, a significant portion of these unanticipated expenses are not covered by state funding.

Finally, at its January 15, 2026 meeting, the Board approved the designation of \$65,225 in fiscal year 2025 unexpended funds to help offset the special education deficit. Despite these efforts, the Board does not have any remaining discretionary funds from which to make up these overages.

Concurrently, the Administration has undertaken a comprehensive review of special education programming to identify opportunities to expand the continuum of supports and services within the District's public schools. As part of this effort, for example, a pilot program at New Fairfield High School has provided expanded access to more intensive therapeutic support to serve students who need increased support to access and engage in school. Early indicators suggest this approach is increasing student engagement and supporting students in accessing their education within the district.

The Board respectfully requests that the Town of New Fairfield take prompt action on this matter. Given the time-sensitive nature of this request, please contact Dr. Craw at your earliest convenience to outline the steps the Board and the Administration must take in order to obtain the funds necessary to balance the Board's current fiscal year budget.

Thank you for your assistance with this matter.

Sincerely,

Dominic Cipollone
Chairman, New Fairfield Board of Education

cc: Kenneth G. Craw, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools
Adam Lawrence, Town Finance Director
Terry Friedman, Town Treasurer
Members of the New Fairfield Board of Education
Carrie DePuy, BOE Director of Business and Operations

**Fiscal Year 2026 Supplemental Appropriation Request
for Unanticipated Special Education Costs**

**Board of Education Special Meeting
April 23, 2026**

Overview

At a Glance:

- Projected fiscal year 2026 shortfall: \$455,678.
- Driven by unanticipated special education costs.
- Costs were not foreseen at the time of budgeting.
- Costs are legally mandated and necessary to maintain the safety of students.
- Administration has taken all available mitigation steps.

Request:

- Supplemental appropriation required to balance budget.

Statutory Requirement

Pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-222:

- Board must maintain a balanced budget.
- Board Chair must notify the BOS & BOF of the need for the supplemental appropriation to balance the budget.

Why This Occurred

Unanticipated student needs emerged following budget adoption:

- 50% increase in the number of students requiring outplacements.
- New special education enrollments.
- Intensity of student needs increased during the year.

Strategies to Address Shortfall

Budget Mitigation & Offsets:

- Implementing budget freeze & controlling spending.
- Expending all special education contingency funds.
- Applying \$65,225 from prior year unexpended funds.
- Actively pursuing Excess Cost reimbursement for costs above 4.5X per pupil expenditure.
- Expanding continuum of in-district supports with pilot program.
- Restructuring efforts decreased reliance on contracted services.

~~Gap remains despite these continued efforts.~~

Special Education Unanticipated Costs & Mitigation

Unanticipated Costs	Amount
Special Education Tuition	\$ (1,142,097)
Special Education Transportation	\$ (194,543)
Total of Above Unanticipated Costs	\$ (1,336,640)
Excess Cost Reimbursement Received	\$ 323,084
Excess Cost Estimated Final Reimbursement	\$ 336,028
BOE FY25 Unexpended Funds	\$ 65,225
Special Education Contingency	\$ 106,625
Budget Mitigation	\$ 50,000
Total Request After Budget Mitigation (Not to Exceed)	\$ (455,678)

Next Steps & Questions

- BOE must authorize the Chair to submit request for supplemental appropriation not to exceed \$455,678 to the Town to:
 - Maintain legal compliance, and
 - Balance the current budget.
- BOE Chair submits request letter to BOS & BOF.
- Administration continues budgetary controls and close monitoring of expenditures.