

**BERLIN BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**November 28, 2022**  
**MINUTES**  
**ANNUAL MEETING**

Attendance: Julia Dennis  
Melissa Gibbons  
Jaymee Miller  
Gina Nappi  
Adam Salina  
Kari Sassu, Ph.D. – electronically (without camera feed)  
Tracy Sisti  
Matthew Tencza – electronically (with camera feed)  
Peter Zarabozo  
Student Representatives: Samantha Negrao  
Ian Saunders

Also in attendance: Superintendent of Schools Brian J. Benigni; Director of Business Operations Jeffrey Cugno; Finance Director Ashley Dorsey; Director of Pupil Personnel Services Linda Holian; Director of Human Resources Denise Parsons; Co-Directors of Curriculum Laurie Gjerpen and Kara Watson; Assistant Principals of Berlin High School Katie Amenta and Barbara Ventura; Principal of McGee Middle School Salvatore Urso; Assistant Principal of McGee Middle School Tim Chiaverini; Principal of Willard School Megan Sirois; Principal of Hubbard School Alfred Souza; and Principal of Griswold School Jonathan Campbell.

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

A. Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. Dennis called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. in the Berlin High School Auditorium at 139 Patterson Way, Berlin, Connecticut. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Ms. Dennis congratulated re-elected Board members Melissa Gibbons and Jaymee Miller and welcomed newly-elected Board member Peter Zarabozo.

Hearing no objection, at this time, Item III was moved up in the agenda.

**III. STUDENT PRESENTATION – BERLIN HIGH SCHOOL**

Prelude music was provided by Nick Manzi and Adriano Rasmussen. Madrigals Ruth Brown, Giselle Cooper, Robin Crisler, Max Ding, Nathaniel Elmani, Meredith Gendreau, Addison Guarino, Laura Munch, Achilles Niecikowski, Sara Rogan, Meghan Snyder, Jameson Urrunaga and David Wadstrup performed the “National Anthem” and “America The Beautiful.”

**II. REORGANIZATION**

A. Annual Election of Officers

The election of officers shall be conducted in accordance with State Statute 10-218, a copy which was provided to Board members. Elections shall be in open session. Board of Education past practice has been that elections are carried out using signed ballots. Also, according to Policy 9050, a copy which was provided to Board members, officers shall be elected from the Board, "...by majority vote of those Board members present and voting."

1. President: Superintendent Benigni presided over the election of President. Superintendent Benigni collected the signed ballots and received Board members Sassu's and Tencza's votes via text and announced that Ms. Dennis was affirmed. Superintendent Benigni announced seven (7) votes for Ms. Dennis (5 present; 2 electronically); one (1) vote for Mr. Tencza (present); and one (1) vote for Ms. Gibbons (present). Ms. Dennis presided over the remainder of the meeting.

2. Secretary: Ms. Dennis presided over the election of Secretary. Ms. Dennis collected the signed ballots and received Board members Sassu's and Tencza's votes via text and announced that Ms. Sisti was affirmed. Ms. Dennis announced seven (7) votes for Ms. Sisti (6 present; 1 electronically); one (1) vote for Mr. Tencza (electronically); and one (1) vote for Ms. Miller (present).

B. MOTION for Annual Schedule of Regular Meetings

Board members were provided with a memo regarding proposed Board of Education meeting dates, in accordance with Policy 9085.

**Moved by Mr. Salina, seconded by Ms. Miller, to approve the Annual Schedule of Regular Meetings, in accordance with Policy 9085, as presented.**

**FAVOR: ALL  
MOTION CARRIED: 8:0; including President Dennis**

C. MOTION for Fiscal Management

Approval of designees for the purpose of signing checks for the General Fund and Grants, Berlin High School Enterprise Fund, Berlin Public Schools Activity Fund, Cafeteria Fund, and the Board of Education Programs is necessary, in accordance with Policy 9046.

**Moved by Mr. Salina, seconded by Ms Miller, that Kevin Delaney and the Board of Education president be designated signers of the General Fund and Grants; also move that Katie Amenta and Doreen Guy be designated signers of the Berlin High School Enterprise Fund; also move that each principal and Doreen Guy be designated signers of the Berlin Public Schools Activity Fund; also move that Brian Benigni and Doreen Guy be designated signers of the Cafeteria Fund; and lastly, move that Ashley Dorsey and Doreen Guy be designated signers of the BOE Programs.**

**FAVOR: ALL  
MOTION CARRIED: 8:0; including President Dennis**

D. Appointment of Board Legal Counsel for 2022-2023

In accordance with Board Policy 9055, the legal counsel to represent the Board of Education for the next year, 2022-2023, should be selected at this time.

**Moved by Mr. Salina, seconded by Ms. Miller, that the law firm of Shipman & Goodwin of Hartford be appointed to continue as the Board of Education counsel for the 2022-2023 year and that they should be so informed.**

In response to Mr. Salina's comment that Shipman & Goodwin charges on an hourly basis, rather than a monthly or annual retainer, Superintendent Benigni stated that is correct.

**FAVOR: ALL**  
**MOTION CARRIED: 8:0; including President Dennis**

A brass group consisting of students Nathan DeJackoe, Cassidy Kemp, Evan Paone, Sara Rogan, and Whitney White performed "Sakura."

**IV. SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS**

A. Berlin Lions Club Donation

At the Berlin Fair, the Berlin Lions Club put out tip jars at their locations that sold beverages, which were designated for the support of Berlin teachers and their classrooms. The positive feedback received was overwhelming. Customers loved the idea and contributed generously to the cause. The Berlin Lions Club and the community recognized the challenges teachers face in creating a classroom environment that is welcoming, inspiring and enriching. In an expression of appreciation and support, the Lions Club generously donated the money to the Berlin Board of Education. Fair President Gary Schmidt, Immediate Past President Dan Daigle, Second Vice-President Steve Kulinski, Fair Treasurer Ron Bosco and Members Gary Bienkowski and Tony Butrimas presented the Board of Education with an \$85 gift card for each elementary school teacher to purchase classroom materials.

B. Certificate of Appreciation Award to Former Board Member Timothy Oakes

President Dennis, along with Board members, recognized and thanked former Board member Timothy Oakes for his service to the Board of Education.

Hearing no objection, at this time, Item VI was moved up in the agenda.

**VI. AWARDS & PRESENTATIONS IN CONJUNCTION WITH AMERICAN EDUCATION WEEK**

A. Superintendent's CAPSS (Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents) Student Awards

The administration and staff have selected ten students to receive the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) Superintendent/Student Award Recognition Program, "Certificate of Excellence" award. Students are selected for this prestigious annual award based upon criteria such as demonstrated leadership to the school community, community service and service to others, and

academic prowess relative to ability. Building Principals and Superintendent Brian Benigni presented the CAPSS awards this year to fifth graders Isabella Palmeri and Tregan Zampino from Griswold School; Annabelle Meagher and Joseph Vasi from Hubbard School; and Charlotte Henderson and Logan Buckley from Willard School. Also recognized were eighth graders Ava Barbagallo and Mason Shackford from McGee School; and seniors Kailee DeMaio and Terrence Dornfried from Berlin High School.

B. Introduction of the 2023 Building Teachers of the Year and the District Teacher of the Year

Curriculum Directors Laurie Gjerpen and Kara Watson and Superintendent Brian Benigni recognized the following building Teachers of the Year for 2023: Kristin Beaudet from Griswold; Rebecca Lorch from Hubbard; Kristin Piraneo from Willard; Jennifer Zaitoun from McGee; and Andrea Rodrigue from Berlin High School. Kristin Beaudet went on to become Berlin School District's Teacher of the Year. They each received a certificate of recognition, a book store gift card, and a copy of Parker J. Palmer's book, The Courage To Teach.

C. Introduction of the 2023 Paraprofessional of the Year

Director of Pupil Personnel Services Linda Holian recognized Guillermo Rivera, from Berlin High School, as the 2023 Paraprofessional of the Year. Guillermo Rivera has been nominated for the 2023 Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year award. He was presented with a certificate of recognition and a book store gift card.

D. Support Staff Recognition Awards

Superintendent Brian Benigni recognized support staff members for their outstanding performance and dedication to the students, staff, and parents of the Berlin Public Schools. This year's recipients were James McCabe, Griswold; Ashley Sego, Hubbard; Deborah Leidemer, Willard; Sam Blanks, McGee; Nick Smith, Berlin High School; and Margarita Alahverdian for the Board of Education Central Office. They each were presented with a certificate of appreciation and recognition along with a book store gift card.

E. "Friend of Berlin Schools" Awards

The "Friend of Berlin Schools" awards are awarded annually to those volunteers nominated by each school's administration, PTO or community, and selected by the Board of Education for their outstanding contributions as a volunteer who has devoted time and energy to helping the children and schools of the Berlin Public Schools. Superintendent Brian Benigni recognized this year's recipients: Deborah Parafati, Griswold; Laura Galecki, Hubbard; Karen Pagliaro and Ryder (therapy dog), Willard; Jim Keefe, McGee; and Tony Butrimas for Berlin High School. They each were presented with a certificate of appreciation and recognition along with a book store gift card.

From 7:32 p.m. until 7:44 p.m., a short recess was held for refreshments and to informally meet the award recipients.

**V. COMMITTEE REPORTS/CORRESPONDENCE TO THE BOARD**

A. Report of Student Representatives

Mr. Saunders, along with Miss Negrao, congratulated Mr. Zarabozo and returning Board members Ms. Miller and Ms. Gibbons. Mr. Saunders reported the Winter Band/Chorus Pops Concert will be held on December 16, 2022.

Miss Negrao reported the Berlin High School football team advanced to the playoffs with an undefeated record, and she wished the team the best of luck as they go up against Branford tomorrow at Sage Park. Miss Negrao recognized the Red Sea, the Band and Color Guard and cheerleaders for their energy, hard work and for creating a great atmosphere. Miss Negrao reported Berlin High School held auditions for the spring musical *The Little Mermaid*, and the Powder Puff Football Game was held last Tuesday night.

B. Committee Reports

Ms. Miller reported the Curriculum Committee met prior to tonight's meeting and discussed the 2023-2024 Berlin High School Program of Studies and the District Continuance Improvement Plan 2022-2023.

C. CREC Report

There was no CREC report this evening.

D. Correspondence to the Board

Superintendent Benigni shared a thank you note from Ashley Dorsey.

**VII. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS**

Mr. Cornel Boudria, 115 Skinner Road, Berlin, Connecticut, requested schools be closed on referendum dates for school and student safety concerns.

**VIII. CONSENT AGENDA**

A. Approval of Minutes – Regular Meeting of October 11, 2022

B. Monthly Budget Report – Period ending October 31, 2022

C. Facilities Update

Director of Operations Jeffrey Cugno provided Board members with a written report.

D. Overnight Field Trip Request – BHS – Washington, DC – April 16-19, 2023

Berlin High School Principal Eileen Eustis requested permission for approximately twenty (20) AP Government students, along with chaperones, to travel to Washington, DC, to participate in the Close

Up Program on April 16-19, 2023. This program provides an opportunity for students to learn more about how national government works and students will develop debating and research skills.

**Moved by Ms. Gibbons, seconded by Ms. Miller, to approve the consent agenda as presented.**

**FAVOR: ALL**

**MOTION CARRIED: 8:0; including President Dennis**

**IX. NEW BUSINESS**

A. Approval of the District Continuous Improvement Plan 2022-2023

Curriculum Directors Laurie Gjerpen and Kara Watson presented the District Continuous Improvement Plan for 2022-2023 that district administrators collaborated on and responded to questions from the Board. Board members were provided with a copy of their presentation. Ms. Watson provided background for the District Continuance Improvement Plan and Berlin's mission and core values, beliefs about learning and the Vision of the Graduate. They provided the district's goals, desired outcomes, actions and how progress towards the goal will be measured.

**Moved by Mr. Salina, seconded by Ms. Miller, to approve the District Continuous Improvement Plan for 2022-2023 as presented.**

**FAVOR: ALL**

**MOTION CARRIED: 8:0; including President Dennis**

B. Possible Revisions to the 2023-2024 School Calendar and Graduation Date

Due to recommendations from parents and administrators, Superintendent Benigni proposed revisions to the 2023-2024 School Calendar to move the first day of school from Thursday, August 24, 2023 to Thursday, August 31, 2023, making the last day of school Friday, June 14, 2024, instead of Friday, June 7, 2024. These changes necessitate changing the date of graduation to Friday, June 14, 2024.

**Moved by Mr. Salina, seconded by Ms. Gibbons, to rescind the motion made on March 14, 2022, setting the 2024 Berlin High School graduation date for Friday, June 7, 2024; and moved further to approve the revisions to the 2023-2024 School Calendar as presented and set the 2024 Berlin High School graduation date for Friday, June 14, 2024.**

Board members entered into a discussion concerning the proposed revisions and shared their reasoning for not approving the proposed revisions to the 2023-2024 School Calendar. Student representatives also provided their thoughts.

**FAVOR: NONE**

**MOTION FAILED: 0:8; including President Dennis**

C. Graduation Site for Future Berlin High School Graduation Ceremonies

At the October 11, 2022 Board meeting, Berlin High School administration proposed maintaining Sage Park as the graduation site for future Berlin High School graduation ceremonies. A list of reasons for the proposal was presented, along with a comparison of graduation expenses for Welte vs. Sage Park, as there is a cost differential in hosting the ceremony at Sage Park. At that meeting, Board members shared their individual views as the proposal was discussed. To allow community members an opportunity to share their thoughts during the Audience of Citizens, this item was put on tonight's agenda for consideration. The Finance & Operations Committee met on October 6, 2022, to review the proposal.

**Moved by Mr. Salina, seconded by Ms. Nappi, to designate Sage Park as the graduation site for future Berlin High School graduation ceremonies and, in the case of inclement weather, graduation will be held indoors, in the Gibney Gymnasium at Berlin High School, with a video feed in the auditorium should additional seating be needed.**

Ms. Dennis stated she has not received any objections to this change.

In response to Ms. Nappi's question regarding cost differential, Assistant Principal Amenta stated there is a higher cost in having the graduation at Sage Park, roughly \$5,000, because of various materials needed to set up the venue. Ms. Amenta highlighted reasons for maintaining Sage Park as the graduation site for future Berlin High School graduation ceremonies.

**FAVOR: ALL**  
**MOTION CARRIED: 8:0; including President Dennis**

D. Policy Review Revision

1. Second Reading/Adoption

- a. Policy 2201 – Retention of Electronic Records and Information
- b. Policy 4118.5 – Employee Use of the District's Computer Systems
- c. Policy 4118.241 – Reports of Suspected Abuse or Neglect of Children or Reports of Sexual Assault of Students by School Employees
- d. **New** Policy 5130.6 – Meal Charging
- e. Policy 5144.2 – Physical Activity, Undirected Play and Student Discipline
- f. Policy 5145.401 – Section 504 and Title II
- g. Policy 5113 – Student Attendance, Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism
- h. Policy 5131.83 – Student Use of the District's Computer Systems
- i. Policy 5131.81 – Use of Private Technological Devices by Students
- j. Policy 6144.1 – Curricular Exemptions
- k. Policy 6135 – Parent-Teacher Communication
- l. Bylaw 9070 – Removal of Board Officers

Shipman & Goodwin, LLP, has recommended a new policy and revisions to policies and a bylaw based on statutory and/or regulatory changes, citation updates and best practices as noted on the summary sheet provided to Board members. The Ad-Hoc Committee for Policy Review/Revision met on October 5, 2022 to review the proposed new policy and recommended revisions. A first reading of the new

policy and recommended revisions took place at the Board of Education meeting on October 11, 2022. The second reading/adoption took place this evening.

**Moved by Mr. Salina, seconded by Ms. Miller, to adopt the new and revised policies and bylaw (items a.-l.) listed above.**

**FAVOR: ALL**

**MOTION CARRIED: 8:0; including President Dennis**

2. First Reading
  - a. Policy 1181 – Naming/Renaming of School Buildings, Components of Buildings, and/or School Grounds
  - b. **New** Policy 4118.2 – Exertional Heat Illness Awareness for Intramural and Interscholastic Athletic Events
  - c. **New** Policy 4118.31 – Emergency Action Plan for Interscholastic and Intramural Athletic Events
  - d. Policy 5141.21 – Administration of Student Medications in the Schools
  - e. Policy 5141.25 – Food Allergies, Glycogen Storage Disease and/or Diabetes
  - f. Policy 6146 – High School Graduation Requirements

Shipman & Goodwin recommended two new policies and revisions to policies based on statutory and/or regulatory changes, citation updates, and best practices. Revisions to the High School Graduation Requirements policy are being recommended to align with changes that are being made to the Berlin High School Program of Studies for 2023-2024. The Ad-Hoc Committee for Policy Review/Revision met on November 22, 2022, to review the proposed new policies and recommended revisions. Since this is a first reading, no action is required; the second reading/adoption will take place at the December 12, 2022 Board meeting.

## **X. ADJOURNMENT**

**At 8:37 p.m., a motion was made by Ms. Miller, seconded by Mr. Salina, to adjourn.**

**FAVOR: ALL**

**MOTION CARRIED: 8:0; including President Dennis**

Respectfully submitted,

Tracy Sisti, Secretary, Berlin Board of Education