

**BERLIN BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**September 12, 2022**

**MINUTES**

**REGULAR MEETING**

Attendance: Julia Dennis  
Melissa Gibbons  
Jaymee Miller  
Gina Nappi  
Timothy Oakes  
Adam Salina  
Kari Sassu, Ph.D.  
Tracy Sisti  
Matthew Tencza  
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 Human Resources Denise Parsons; Director of Pupil Personnel Services Linda Holian; Supervisor of Special Education – Elementary Michelle Zeuschner; Supervisor of Special Education – Secondary Cindy Martin; Director of Literacy and Social Studies Laurie Gjerpen; Director of Mathematics and Science Kara Watson; 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 6:05 p.m. in the Board of Education (“the Board”) meeting room at 238 Kensington Road, Berlin, CT. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Ms. Dennis welcomed new student representative Ian Saunders and returning student representative Samantha Negrao.

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

A. Report of Student Representatives

Mr. Saunders reported the first day of school was Thursday, August 25, 2022, and the senior class participated in Senior Sunrise; the Berlin Fair begins this Thursday, September 15, 2022, with UpBeat students volunteering and the Berlin High School chorus and band and McGee Middle School band performing at the fair; and Freshman Orientation was held on Friday, August 19, 2022, for the class of 2026. Mr. Saunders reported, during the first week of school, students participated in drill week wherein all safety procedures were reviewed and noted every morning students must show their IDs before entering the school.

Miss Negrao reported on the fall sports season to date. Miss Negrao reported UpBeat Registration Night had a huge turnout with a great number of students signing up, and the new student breakfast was held at the Berlin High School which provided new students an opportunity to be paired with an UpBeat student.

B. Committee Reports

Mr. Oakes reported the Ad-Hoc Committee for Policy Review/Revision met prior to tonight's meeting and discussed policy review/revision, which appears later in the agenda for a first reading.

C. CREC Report

There was no CREC report this evening.

D. Correspondence to the Board

There was no correspondence this evening.

**III. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS**

No members of the Berlin community addressed the Board this evening.

**IV. CONSENT AGENDA**

- A. Approval of Minutes
  - 1. Regular Meeting of August 22, 2022
  - 2. Special Meeting of September 2, 2022
- B. Monthly Budget Report – Period ending August 31, 2022
- C. Facilities Update

Director of Operations Jeffrey Cugno provided a Facilities Update that has been posted in Schoology.

- D. Overnight Field Trip Request – BHS – Orlando, FL – March 29-April 2, 2023

Berlin High School Principal Eileen Eustis requested permission for approximately 75 band and chorus students to travel to Walt Disney World, in Orlando, Florida, to participate in the Disney World Imagination Campus Performing Arts Soundtrack Sessions. Disney's exclusive programs, facilitated by professional musicians and educators, include unique performance opportunities and musical experiences for students.

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

**FAVOR: ALL**  
**MOTION CARRIED: 9:0; including President Dennis**

**V. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Update on Summer Programs**

Director of Pupil Personnel Services Linda Holian and Supervisors of Special Education Michelle Zeuschner and Cynthia Martin reported on the ESY program offered to students qualifying for these services. Ms. Holian thanked Michelle Zeuschner and Cindy Martin for putting together the successful ESY summer program. Board members were provided with a handout regarding their presentation, which provided some history for the last two years. Ms. Holian stated the total cost for the ESY Program for 2022 (\$135,169) reflects only the program itself, and PMT training, student evaluations, transportation and nursing services are not included.

Dr. Zeuschner stated the numbers have stayed consistent the last two years. She stated 106 students and 104 students participated in 2019 and 2020 respectively. Ms. Martin stated in 2020, the year of COVID 19, a number of parents did not send their children. Dr. Zeuschner stated since then the Transition Academy Summer Program has been added.

In response to Mr. Salina's question, do students that actually begin the program complete the program or do students tend to drop off at the end, Dr. Zeuschner stated, at the elementary level, attendance was consistent. Ms. Martin stated, at the secondary level, there were a number of students that decided not to attend as some had planned vacations, but, otherwise, students participated for the four weeks. Dr. Zeuschner stated in 2022, there were 14 students recommended who indicated they were going to attend and did not, and in 2021, there were 39 students. Ms. Holian stated, in 2022, approximately 450 students were eligible; however, only those students who, without this extra instruction, would regress whether academically, socially or emotionally, over the summer, are recommended for the ESY Program.

In response to Mr. Salina's question is transportation included, Ms. Holian stated transportation is provided to allow students access to the program. She stated transportation costs for the month of July was \$90,645.00. August is pending.

Curriculum Directors Laurie Gjerpen and Kara Watson provided an overview of the summer academy programs that were available this summer to support academics and expand the arts programming. Board members were provided with a summary of the 2022 Summer Programming.

Ms. Gjerpen provided an overview of the Elementary Summer Academy, which provided additional reading and math support for students entering first, second and third grades; Jumpstart into Kindergarten, which provided school-like opportunities to students who did not participate in a formal preschool program; Elementary Camp Thundermoon, which provided additional socialization and language opportunities for students attending Berlin Public Schools through the Choice Program and for students who are multilingual learners; and Elementary Band Camp, which was open to students in elementary school who are taking an instrument for the first time. Ms. Gjerpen also provided the cost and funding for these programs.

Ms. Watson provided an overview of the McGee and Berlin High School Summer Math Academy, which provided small group instruction on priority math concepts that support students' successful transition into their math class for the new school year; and the Berlin High School SAT Math

Academy, which helped students develop the necessary skills to be prepared to take the SAT. Ms. Watson provided the cost and funding for these programs.

**B. Summer Curriculum Work Update**

Curriculum Directors Laurie Gjerpen and Kara Watson provided a brief overview of the work that was done during the summer of 2022 to update the district curriculum. Board members were provided with an information sheet, which provided a narrative of the summer curriculum writing as well as examples of the work that was completed.

**C. Endorsement of Grant Application – Connecticut Community Challenge Grant**

Director of Operations Jeffrey Cugno stated the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) has issued a Notice of Funding Availability for projects that qualify under the Connecticut Community Challenge Program. The Town of Berlin is interested in making application for funding some projects in the downtown area. Mr. Cugno stated, due to the district's current work with the YMCA and Town regarding the Central Connecticut Transition Academy (CCTA) on Main Street, as well as the YMCA Daycare facilities at Hubbard and McGee Schools, the Town would like the Board of Education's endorsement for the planned application. Mr. Cugno stated the Town applied for a grant in Round 1 of the Community Challenge Grant Program but did not receive funding because the project did not meet the minimum equity requirement. The second funding round applications are due October 7, 2022. If approved, the grant could provide additional funds for renovations at the CCTA facility. Board members were provided with a Memorandum prepared by Jim Mahoney, Economic Development Coordinator, and Chris Edge, Economic Development Director, both for the Town of Berlin, which provided a summary of the Connecticut Community Challenge Grant and a preliminary project budget. Mr. Cugno summarized the planned project scope, also outlined in the Memorandum.

**Moved by Mr. Salina, seconded by Dr. Sassu, that the Berlin Board of Education endorses and supports the Town of Berlin's application for funding under the Connecticut Community Challenge Program.**

Mr. Cugno highlighted the renovations that could be done at the Central Connecticut Transition Academy with the grant funding and responded to questions from Board members regarding the funding for the current work at the YMCA and Central Connecticut Transition Academy.

**FAVOR: ALL**

**MOTION CARRIED: 9:0; including President Dennis**

**D. Policy Review/Revision – First Reading**

1. **New** Policy 5129 – Policy to Improve Completion Rates of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
2. Policy 5132 – Student Dress
3. Policy 5141 – Wellness
4. Policy 6141 – Curriculum Development
5. Policy 6141.9 – Enrollment in an Advanced Course or Program and Challenging Curriculum
6. Policy 6146.11 – Weighted Grading and Calculation of Grade Point Averages

7. **New** Policy 6172.1 – Equitable Identification of Gifted and Talented Students
8. Policy 6172.61 – Credit for Online Courses
9. Bylaw 9010 – Construction and Posting of Agenda
10. Bylaw 9035 – Meeting Conduct
11. Bylaw 9040 – Minutes
12. Bylaw 9065 – Quorum and Voting Procedures
13. Bylaw 9085 – Time, Place and Notice of Meetings
14. Delete Policy 6172.6 – Distance Learning and Virtual/Online Courses

Shipman & Goodwin, LLP, has recommended new policies and revisions to policies and bylaws as noted on the summary sheet provided to Board members. The Ad-Hoc Committee for Policy Review/Revision met earlier today to review the recommendations. Since this is a first reading, no action is required; the second reading/adoption will take place at the October 11, 2022 Board meeting.

**VI. ADJOURNMENT**

**At 6:59 p.m., a motion was made by Mr. Tencza, seconded by Mr. Salina, to adjourn.**

**FAVOR: ALL**

**MOTION CARRIED: 9:0; including President Dennis**

Respectfully submitted,

Tracy Sisti, Secretary, Berlin Board of Education