

BERLIN BOARD OF EDUCATION

April 22, 2019

MINUTES (Revised 5/13/19)

REGULAR MEETING

Attendance: Richard Aroian
Julia Dennis
Jake Fisher
Jaymee Miller
Timothy Oakes Absent
Adam Salina
Kari Sassu, Ph.D.
Tracy Sisti Absent
Matthew Tencza
Student Representatives: Alexander Halkias
Jenna Smalley

Also in attendance: Superintendent of Schools Brian J. Benigni; Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Erin McGurk; Director of Business Operations Jeffrey Cugno; Director of Human Resources Denise Parsons; Director of Pupil Personnel Services Linda Holian; Principal of McGee School Salvatore Urso; Assistant Principals of McGee School Heather Gish and Tim Chiaverini; Principal of Griswold School David Kitzman; and Willard Lead Teacher Megan Sirois.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Tencza called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. in the auditorium at the Catherine M. McGee School, 899 Norton Road, Berlin, Connecticut. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

II. STUDENT PRESENTATION – CATHERINE M. MCGEE SCHOOL

McGee eighth grade science students recently studied the topic of sound waves. Upon completing the unit, students were given the opportunity to explore a topic of their choosing, relating to sound. They planned and conducted controlled experiments and designed challenges or developed models that demonstrated an important scientific concept related to their specific topic. As a final demonstration of understanding, students created school-wide presentations for exhibit in McGee's first Sounds of Science Fair. Student presenters were Hailey Bigelow, Ethan Cooper, Ariana DiDomenico, Oksana Dyshuk, Emilia Janikula, Neil Patel, Landon Viera, Julia Wanke, Olivia Motta and Morgan Wesoly.

A short recess was taken from 7:21 p.m. until 7:28 p.m.

III. COMMITTEE REPORTS/CORRESPONDENCE TO THE BOARD

A. Report of Student Representatives

Miss Smalley reported report cards were distributed to students last week; the junior prom is Saturday, April 27, 2019; the spring band concert is May 2, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. in the Berlin High School auditorium; and the Upbeat May weekend is May 10 – 12, 2019.

Mr. Halkias reported spring sports are underway; AP testing will occur May 6 – 17, 2019; all physics classes will take a field trip to Six Flags on May 17, 2019; and the Graduation Party clothing drive was held on April 13, 2019. Mr. Halkias thanked all who donated.

In response to Mr. Tencza's question to the student representatives whether they have received any feedback concerning the proposed cuts to the budget, Miss Smalley and Mr. Halkias reported their peers have approached them concerning the importance of the ESS Program; marching band; sports; and parking fees. Mr. Tencza encouraged Miss Smalley and Mr. Halkias to bring forth anything they may hear regarding the cuts to the budget.

B. Correspondence to the Board

Mr. Tencza thanked Jan Zagorski for her insightful correspondence to the Board and for the time she spends at the Board meetings.

Superintendent Benigni shared thank you notes received from Laura Berch and Debbie Leidemer.

IV. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Sarah Patel, 65 Sbona Road, Berlin, Connecticut and Dawn Primo, 233 Elwood Road, Berlin, Connecticut addressed the Board concerning the elimination of Claire Cloukey's school counselor position at Griswold and Willard elementary schools.

V. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Minutes – Regular Meeting of March 25, 2019
- B. Monthly Budget Report – Period ending March 31, 2019
- C. Requests for Leave of Absence
 - 1. Mary E. Griswold School – Teacher of Grade 4

Alexandra Vieira, teacher of Grade 4 at Mary E. Griswold School, requested an unpaid leave of absence, for childrearing purposes, to begin immediately following her maternity leave through January 3, 2020.

- 2. Richard D. Hubbard School – Teacher of Music

Shelby Ryan, teacher of music at Richard D. Hubbard School, requested an unpaid leave of absence, for childrearing purposes, to begin immediately following her maternity leave through January 31, 2020.

Moved by Ms. Dennis, seconded by Dr. Sassu, to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 7:0; including President Tencza

VI. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Next Generation Accountability Report

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Erin McGurk shared information regarding the new Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) Accountability Measures and responded to the Board's questions concerning her presentation. The information shared will allow the Board of

Education to better understand the shift from a proficiency and goal model to a growth model as it relates to individual students, designated subgroups and the entire school district. Dr. McGurk's presentation consisted of the important purposes the accountability system serves; changes made to the accountability system; the twelve indicators; indicator weights by school type: elementary, middle, high school and middle/high school; new family of index scores: accountability index and performance index; Indicator 1: Index Score vs. Percent At/Above Level 3; Indicator 1: Grade 3 ELA Calculation Example; Indicator 1: Achievement Gap Focus on "Outliers"; Indicator 2: Academic Growth (Longitudinal); Berlin Public Schools District Report, 2017-2018; performance index gap for English Language Arts, Math, Science and Graduation; school category assignment per state law; accountability index category for each of the elementary schools, McGee School and the Berlin High School; and the efforts to increase the accountability index score at the elementary schools, McGee School and Berlin High School.

Dr. McGurk noted that Willard School was recognized as a 2017-2018 school of distinction for reaching the top 10% of points for high growth for students with high needs in the area of English/Language Arts.

B. Status of the Board of Education's Adopted Budget for 2019-2020

Superintendent of Schools Brian Benigni reported, at this time, administrators have spoken to staff, that needed to be contacted by the close of school today, to let them know of potential reductions or eliminations in the buildings. At the elementary level, a school counselor position will be eliminated and one technology integration specialist position will be eliminated resulting in a reconfiguration of the technology support at the elementary level. At McGee School, a physical education/health wellness position will not be filled and there will be a reduction of one math teacher and a 0.60 World Language teacher. There also will be an elimination of the 10-month assistant principal position at McGee School. At the high school, there is a reduction of a 0.50 Science teacher, a 0.50 English teacher and a 0.20 Social Studies teacher. There have been shifts in positions and staff has been notified of involuntary transfers. There is a technology integration specialist at McGee School that will take the open technology position, based on retirement, at the high school. Superintendent Benigni reported, at this time, he has not looked at stipends.

Mr. Tencza delivered the following suggestion on behalf of Mr. Oakes: Mr. Oakes suggested that the Board discuss the possibility of larger class sizes in an attempt to keep supports within the district. The Board discussed this matter, along with the possibility of implementing an activity fee for sports.

C. Non-renewal of Contracts for Non-tenured Staff

Superintendent of Schools Brian Benigni recommended the non-renewal of contracts of employment for the following non-tenured staff: Meghan Diorio, Christopher Dresko, Mary-Kate Farley, Justin Farrell, Kelly Milburn and Michelle Sonido.

Moved by Dr. Sassu, seconded by Mr. Aroian, that the contracts of employment for the following non-tenured teachers not be renewed for the 2019-2020 school year, upon their expiration at the end of the current school year: Meghan Diorio, Christopher Dresko, Mary-Kate Farley, Justin Farrell, Kelly Milburn and Michelle Sonido.

These contracts of employment are for one year, and all teachers knew the contract of employment was for one year. The district needs to provide these staff members with a notice of non-renewal by May 1, 2019.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 7:0; including President Tencza

D. Facilities Related Updates

Director of Business Operations Jeffrey Cugno reported the Willard vestibule project is proceeding on time and on budget, without much interruption to students and staff, and should be completed in the next few weeks; the updating of cable and cameras in the schools has begun, and the plan is to perform most of these improvements starting this summer. Mr. Cugno also reported that the planning firm, hired to design the new BLAST program room at McGee School, recently completed its program and schematic design of the renovations, and Mr. Cugno anticipates adopting a schedule and budget shortly to have the room completed by the start of the next school year.

E. Policy Review/Revision – Second Reading/Adoption

1. Policy 3323 – Purchasing
2. Policy 6161.1 – Evaluation and Selection of Texts and Instructional Materials
3. Policy 6161.11 – Selection of Instructional Materials – to be deleted

A second reading of the revised policies listed above took place. The revisions were reviewed by the Ad-Hoc Committee for Policy Review/Revision at its meeting on March 25, and a first reading took place at the March 25 Board meeting. The selection of texts and instructional materials has been merged into one policy (6161.1); therefore, there is no longer a need for Policy 6161.11 – Selection of Instructional Materials.

Moved by Mr. Salina, seconded by Ms. Dennis, that the Board adopt revised Policy 3323 – Purchasing and Policy 6161.1 – Evaluation and Selection of Texts and Instructional Materials, as presented, and delete Policy 6161.11 – Selection of Instructional Materials.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 7:0; including President Tencza

F. Proposed Affordable Residential Planned Development – 319 Units

Mr. Tencza reported an application has been made to amend the Berlin zoning regulations to rezone approximately 19.4 acres of land on Atkins Street for the purpose of developing affordable housing. Mr. Tencza understands this development will be in the Hubbard School district. Superintendent Benigni indicated, with that many housing units, there definitely would be concerns with Hubbard School accommodating that many students; the projected enrollment would shift; and there would need to be planning in terms of the capacity at Hubbard School and redistricting. The Planning & Zoning Department is asking for comments regarding the application, and a public hearing regarding the application is scheduled for June 6, 2019.

Mr. Tencza requested Superintendent Benigni provide the Board with a brief analysis of the impact this new housing development would have on Hubbard School and the district as a whole.

G. Personnel Matter

At 8:29 p.m., a motion was made by Dr. Sassu, seconded by Mr. Salina, to go into Executive Session to discuss a personnel matter and to invite Superintendent Benigni.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 7:0; including President Tencza

In attendance for Executive Session were Board members Aroian, Dennis, Fisher, Miller, Salina, Sassu, and Tencza. In addition, Superintendent Benigni was present.

At 9:17 p.m., the Board returned to Open Session.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:18 p.m., a motion was made by Ms. Miller, seconded by Mr. Tencza, to adjourn.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 7:0; including President Tencza

Respectfully submitted,

Kari Sassu, Ph.D., Secretary, Berlin Board of Education