

BERLIN BOARD OF EDUCATION

June 10, 2019

MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING

Attendance: Richard Aroian – Arrived at 7:32 p.m.
Julia Dennis
Jake Fisher
Jaymee Miller
Timothy Oakes – Absent
Adam Salina – Absent
Kari Sassu, Ph.D.
Tracy Sisti
Matthew Tencza
Student Representatives: Alexander Halkias – Departed at 7:54 p.m.
Jenna Smalley – Departed at 7:54 p.m.

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 Berlin High School Eileen Eustis; Assistant Principal of Berlin High School Barbara Ventura; and Assistant Principals of McGee School Heather Gish and Tim Chiaverini.

I. CALL TO ORDER

A. Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Tencza called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. in the Berlin High School Auditorium at 139 Patterson Way, Berlin, Connecticut. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

B. SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

1. Announcement – Teacher and Paraprofessional of the Year 2020

Superintendent Benigni announced Berlin School District's 2020 Teacher and Paraprofessional of the Year, Adam Leonard and Donna Van Dam, respectively.

2. Berlin High School Recognition

Superintendent Benigni and Principal Eustis recognized the following Berlin High School students, and Assistant Principals Gish and Chiaverini recognized the following McGee students:

Valedictorian – Madison Monroe and Salutatorian – Alexander Halkias
CAS Scholar Athletes – Madison Monroe and Alexander Halkias
CAS Governor's Scholar – Audrey Feldman
CAS Arts Awards – Meghan Fox and Benjamin Labadia
All-State Chorus – Tori Cascone, Katie Rochette and Dawson Trotman
All-State Band – Clemens Henning
CABE Student Leadership Awards – Julia Ladd and Christian Damiana – BHS
Meredith Gendreau and Molly
Szczesniak – McGee

Class of 2019 Officers:

President – Gabriella Pattavina

Vice Presidents – Mark Bednarczyk and Madison Monroe

Secretary – Ajlal “AJ” Khan
Treasurer – James Grieco
Social Chair – Erin Ferris
Student Government Officers 2019:
President – Christian Damiana
Vice President – Maya Patel
Secretary – Emily Rutledge
Treasurer – Jenna Smalley
National Honor Society Officers 2019:
President – Alexander Halkias
Vice President – Alexa Monroe
Secretary – Connor Recck
Treasurer – Alina Whiteside

3. Capstone Project Exemplars:

Evelisa Mayette recognized the following students as Capstone Project Exemplars:

Colin Asklar – *Community Development: A Skatepark in Berlin, CT*
McKenzie Cyr (*absent*) – *The Increase of Safety Standards in Sports Organizations to Protect Young Athletes from Sexual Abuse*
Christian Damiana – *Supporting in Healthy Communities*
McKenna Evans – *Female Entrepreneurship*
Alexander Halkias – *Behavioral Economics*
Maisie Hayes – *Paranormal Beliefs*
Ben Labadia – *The Psychology of Film*
Emily Leite – *Eco-friendly Homes and Effects of Pollution on the Environment*
Zenaé Lewis – *Positive Impacts of Hip Hop Music*
Mikayla Mancini – *How Media Bias Influences Politics*
Gabby Pattavina – *Passion Into Action: How to Give Back*
Courtney Trinh – *The Vietnam War and Amerasian Children*
Daniel Veleas (*absent*) – *Impact of Correctly Training the Mind on Athletic Performance*
Abigail Wendehack – *Impact of Color on a Hospital Patient’s Physical and Emotional Well-Being During Their Recovery Period*
Olivia Wezdenko – *The Impact of Gender Stereotypes in Film*

The students shared their topic, their mode of presentation and why they chose their topic.

4. Thank you to Board of Education Student Representatives

Mr. Tencza recognized Board of Education student representatives Alexander Halkias and Jenna Smalley for their enthusiasm, insightful reports and intuitiveness they provided this school year to the Board of Education. Jenna Smalley will return for the 2019-20 school year.

A short recess was taken from 7:40 p.m. until 7:52 p.m.

II. COMMITTEE REPORTS/CORRESPONDENCE TO THE BOARD

A. Report of Student Representatives

Miss Smalley reported at the annual state-wide Halo Awards Jenny Lin, Joey Julinsky and Ishanee Patel received the award for Best Scenic Design and/or Execution for *Up the Down Staircase*, and Dawson Trotman received the award for Best Performance by a Supporting Actor in a Musical as the donkey in *Shrek*.

Mr. Halkias thanked the Board of Education for welcoming him the past two years. Mr. Halkias reported graduation is this Sunday and girls track will be competing at Nationals while the senior class is graduating.

B. Committee Reports

1. Educational Resources Committee

Mr. Tencza reported the Educational Resources Committee met via telephone Friday morning, and the focus of that conversation was to discuss the use of the recurring account. Pursuant to the audit requirements, the ESS Program will be paid from the Operating Budget in which the services reside. Mr. Tencza reiterated that, from the Board's perspective, if the town or auditing department can provide the Board with documentation that allows the Board to pay for the ESS Program, or any program of that nature, out of the previous year's funds, the Board would consider that. The Educational Resources Committee discussed the capital improvements the Board has agreed to fund, in lieu of or not having any capital assigned to the Board for next year. Those items include the BLAST program classroom at McGee School; telephones at the elementary schools; repair and maintenance of gym floors in all schools; elementary school cameras and systems; McGee cameras and video system; and security equipment for the security guards.

2. Ad-Hoc Committee for Policy Review/Revision

Superintendent Benigni reported the Ad-Hoc Committee for Policy Review/Revision met prior to tonight's meeting to discuss a new policy concerning advertising and promotional activities on school property. The new policy appears later in the agenda for a first reading.

C. Correspondence to the Board

Ms. Dennis shared highlights from correspondence she received earlier today from Melissa Cohen, 90 Patrick Drive, Berlin, Connecticut, concerning the elimination of Claire Cloukey's school counselor position at Griswold and Willard elementary schools.

Mr. Tencza responded the Board of Education has heard loud and clear the importance of the positions that have been discussed for reduction due to the budget process. Mr. Tencza has asked Superintendent Benigni, on behalf of the Board, to look at where the district is following the hiring of all positions that need to be filled and also to evaluate the Open Choice funding and the needs of the district to see if some of those positions can be reinstated.

III. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Mr. Eric Westman, 4 Edgerly Street, Berlin, Connecticut, addressed the Board concerning the elimination of the school counselor position at Griswold and Willard elementary schools and the assistant principal position at McGee School and inquired as to why these positions were not reinstated after the referendum.

Ms. Jan Zagorski, 63 Grandview Avenue, Berlin, Connecticut, addressed the Board concerning the reduction of health education at McGee School.

Ms. Imelda Mongillo, 86 Devonshire Way, Berlin, Connecticut, addressed the Board concerning the decision to use the \$500,000, that was restored to the Board's budget, for the ESS Program and athletics and not to reinstate the school counselor position at Griswold and Willard elementary schools, the Assistant Principal position at McGee School and the technology integration specialist position. Ms. Mongillo believes the topic Pay to Play for sports should be discussed within the town. Ms. Mongillo referenced an article which appeared in the *Berlin Citizen* wherein it states Mr. Tencza supports using the money that was set aside in this year's budget for the purpose of repaying the ESS contract to instead install security cameras at McGee, which will help alleviate the strain of disciplinary issues at the school in the wake of the loss of an assistant principal. Ms. Mongillo believes this was taken out of context and not the intention of the comment.

Mr. Tencza responded by saying at no time did he say or suggest that video cameras would replace an administrator, although he may have said the cameras will assist future administrators to determine what actually happened in an event. The Board discussed using funds left over at the end of this school year to buy cameras, not only for elementary schools but also the middle school, as these funds cannot be rolled from one budget to the next. The Board has never said all positions would be reinstated. The Town Council did restore \$500,000, which will be used for the ESS Program as the Board sees the value and lifesaving effect it has on the students in that program. Mr. Tencza reiterated that he has asked Superintendent Benigni, on behalf of the Board, to look at the current state of the district following the hiring of all positions and also to evaluate the Open Choice funding and the needs of the district to see if some of the positions can be reinstated.

Dr. Sassu commented that the nine people that comprise the Board of Education are here for the collective community. Sometimes the Board makes decisions that Board members do not endorse individually but, as an elected member, are made in accordance with the wishes of the majority of the constituents. The Board is charged with listening to all voices and are put in difficult positions where the Board cannot please all the people all the time but tries to through a collective and concerted effort to address the overarching needs to support students' best interests overall.

Superintendent Benigni responded if the ESS Program was able to be funded with end of the year funds, it would have allowed for \$280,000 in the operating budget to be used for staffing the school counselor position at Griswold and Willard elementary schools, the assistant principal position at McGee School and the technology integration specialist position. Once that was not an option, the remainder was used for sports and stipends as there was an outcry for those as well. Since the \$280,000 cannot be rolled over for staff, these funds will now be used for Capital and Site and Building.

Mr. Michael Urrunaga, 1075 Orchard Road, Berlin, Connecticut, addressed the Board concerning how the ESS Program will be funded for the 2019-2020 school year as he was under the impression that the funds restored to the Board's Operating Budget would be used to reinstate staffing positions.

Mr. John Richards, 239 Hawthorne Drive, Berlin, Connecticut, requested what the Board's plans are with the restoration of the \$500,000 to the Operational Budget. Mr. Richards indicated the budget, for the Board of Education, is a year-long process, and it is the actualization of the goals and aspirations that this Board of Education has for the educational system. Unfortunately, the way bonding is in town and the pressure for the mill rate, there are competing interests for limited resources. Mr. Richards indicated there needs to be a dialog that includes the Board of Education, Town Council and Board of Finance to discuss the future of the town. Mr. Richards discussed the Board of Education having a contingency fund, not only on the operational side but also to allow extra funds to flow into the non-lapsing account. Mr. Richards indicated it is his pledge to the Board of Education to continue with those discussions to improve the Board of Education and Town. Mr. Richards believes a three percent increase, plus a catch up, has to be the thought. Mr. Richards indicated the definition of Capital needs to change and more items will need to be placed in the Operational Budget, with any items above the threshold realized within the ten year Capital Plan.

Mr. Tencza commented that at no point in this process has the Board of Education been invited to participate together in Town Council meetings. The Board has had multiple meetings with the Board of Finance, and Mr. Richards has been to all of the Board's meetings relative to the budget. The Town Council has yet to take part in one of the Board of Education's meetings and the Board has not been invited to any of their discussions until a day or so before a referendum. Mr. Tencza indicated the Board of Education is happy to meet with the Town Council in order to move forward and gain an agreement or alignment with the Board's agenda.

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Minutes – Regular Meeting of May 28, 2019
- B. Monthly Budget Report – Period ending May 31, 2019
- C. Request to Extend Leave of Absence – Hubbard School – Teacher of Music

At the Board meeting on April 22, 2019, a leave of absence, for childrearing purposes, was approved for Shelby Ryan, teacher of music at Richard D. Hubbard School, to begin immediately following her maternity leave through January 31, 2020. Ms. Ryan asked to extend her leave of absence through June 2020.

Moved by Ms. Miller, seconded by Ms. Dennis, to accept the consent agenda as presented.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 7:0; including President Tencza

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Appointment of Director of School Security, Safety and Residency

Superintendent Benigni recommended that the Board of Education appoint John Schmaltz as Director of School Security, Safety and Residency, effective July 1, 2019.

Moved by Mr. Aroian, seconded by Dr. Sassu, that the Board of Education appoint John Schmaltz to the position of Director of School Security, Safety and Residency, effective July 1, 2019.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 7:0; including President Tencza

B. Facilities Related Updates

Director of Business Operation Jeffrey Cugno reported he did not have anything further to add from what was reported by the Educational Resources Committee earlier in the evening.

C. State Healthy Food Certification Statement for July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020

Section 10-215f of the Connecticut General Statutes requires that all Connecticut public school districts that are eligible to participate in the healthy food certification take action to certify whether all food items sold to students will or will not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published pursuant to Section 10-21e of the Connecticut General Statutes for the period of July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020 and whether to allow food and beverage exemptions.

Moved by Ms. Dennis, seconded by Ms. Miller, that the Berlin Board of Education will participate in the optional Healthy Foods Certification Program, under Section 10-215f of the Connecticut General Statutes, for the 2019-2020 school year, and certify that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under our jurisdiction will meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published pursuant to Section 10-215e of the Connecticut General Statutes. The Board will exclude from certification food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards, provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the food items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. The Board will allow the sale to students of beverages not listed in Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the beverages are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An “event” is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly

scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. The “regular school day” is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. “Location” means where the event is being held.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 7:0; including President Tencza

- D. Berlin Visiting Nurse Association Service Agreement with the Board of Education for July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020

Board members were provided with the annual agreement between the Berlin Board of Education and the Berlin Visiting Nurse Association.

Moved by Ms. Dennis, seconded by Dr. Sassu, to approve the agreement between the Berlin Board of Education and the Berlin Visiting Nurse Association for 2019-2020.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 7:0; including President Tencza

- E. Setting of the 2019-2020 Budget

The Town Council has approved the level of funding for the Board of Education’s operating budget for 2019-2020 in the amount of \$44,977,844.

Moved by Dr. Sassu, seconded by Mr. Aroian, that the Board of Education adopt an operating budget for 2019-2020, in the amount of \$44,977,844, as set by the Town Council.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 7:0; including President Tencza

- F. Deposit into the Non-Lapsing Account

The recommendation of the administration and the Educational Resources Committee is that an amount, not to exceed \$355,000 in uncommitted funds, be deposited into the Board’s Non-Lapsing Fund to be used for renovations for the Blast classroom at McGee, repair and maintenance of the gym floors at all schools, and painting of the McGee Main Gym.

Moved by Dr. Sassu, seconded by Ms. Miller, that the Town Council deposit an amount not to exceed \$355,000 from account 001-35-3560-0-51000-00000 Board of Education Program 60 into account 500-35-3561-0-54000-01733 Unexpended Education Funds for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2019.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 7:0; including President Tencza

G. Policy Review/Revision – First Reading – New Policy 3281.1 – Advertising and Promotional Activities on School Property

A new policy has been created to work with community partners to support the creation and expansion of learning experiences for students through the donation of funds. The new policy was reviewed by the Ad-Hoc Committee for Policy Review/Revision at its meeting earlier this evening. Since this is a first reading, no action is required; the second reading/approval will take place at the August 12 Board meeting.

H. Update – Healthy Foods

The language in Sample 1 that was discussed at the May 28 Board of Education meeting has been sent to Shipman & Goodwin to be incorporated into the Management Plan and Guidelines for Students with Food Allergies (5141.25-R, administrative regulations). In addition, the Board asked that milk, eggs, fish, crustacean shellfish, wheat, soybean and sesame be identified as additional allergens. Since this language will be incorporated into the district's administrative regulations (no change to the policy – 5141.25) it will not need Board approval. Upon finalization, the administration will communicate the change to parents of children in Grades PK-5.

I. Unaffiliated Administrators' Contracts (executive session anticipated)

1. Director of Business Operations
2. Director of Human Resources
3. Director of Pupil Personnel Services
4. Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction

J. Personnel Not Covered by Collective Bargaining (executive session anticipated)

At 9:19 p.m., a motion was made by Dr. Sassu, seconded by Ms. Sisti, to go into Executive Session to discuss unaffiliated administrators' contracts and personnel not covered by collective bargaining and to invite Superintendent Benigni.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 7:0; including President Tencza

At 10:37 p.m., the Board returned to Open Session.

The Board was presented with a proposal for the continuation of employment for 2019-2020 for personnel not covered by collective bargaining. The Educational Resources Committee reviewed and discussed the proposal at its meeting on June 5, 2019.

Moved by Ms. Dennis, seconded by Mr. Fisher, to approve the proposed salaries for personnel not covered by collective bargaining and issue them contracts for the 2019-2020 school year.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 7:0; including President Tencza

VI. ADJOURNMENT

At 10:39 p.m., a motion was made by Mr. Aroian, seconded by Ms. Miller, to adjourn.

**FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED: 7:0; including President Tencza**

Respectfully submitted,

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