

# **BERLIN BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**November 25, 2019**

## **MINUTES**

### **ANNUAL MEETING**

Attendance: Richard Aroian  
Julia Dennis  
Jaymee Miller  
Timothy Oakes  
Adam Salina  
Kari Sassu, Ph.D.  
Tracy Sisti  
Matthew Tencza

Student Representatives: Jenna Smalley – Departed at 6:13 p.m.  
Ryan McGowan – Departed at 6:13 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 Pupil Personnel Services Linda Holian; Supervisor of Special Education – Secondary Cindy Martin; Supervisor of Special Education – Elementary Michelle Zeuschner; Director of Literacy and Social Studies Laurie Gjerpen; Director of Mathematics and Science Kara Watson; Director of School Security, Safety and Residency John Schmaltz; Principal of Berlin High School Eileen Eustis; Assistant Principal of Berlin High School Barbara Ventura; Principal of McGee Middle School Salvatore Urso; Assistant Principal of McGee Middle School Tim Chiaverini; Principal of Griswold School David Kitzman; Principal of Hubbard School Alfred Souza; and Principal of Willard School Megan Sirois.

#### **I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Tencza called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. in the Dr. Robert P. Long auditorium at Berlin High School, 139 Patterson Way, Berlin, Connecticut. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

#### **II. STUDENT PRESENTATION – BERLIN HIGH SCHOOL**

Choral students Abby Ferland, Ryan McGowan, Emily Roche, and Dawson Trotman performed the “National Anthem” and Abby Ferland, Daniel Lamoureux, Greg Wadinger, and Kenny Wadinger performed “Fortunate Son,” by Creedence Clearwater Revival. Prelude music was performed by Greg Wadinger, Kenny Wadinger, and Daniel Lamoureux.

#### **III. COMMITTEE REPORTS/CORRESPONDENCE TO THE BOARD**

##### **A. Report of Student Representatives**

Mr. McGowan reported callbacks for the school musical *Les Miserables* were held today after school, and the cast list will be announced Wednesday; fall sports are winding down with football still competing; and tryouts for winter sports begin soon. Mr. McGowan provided a listing of new clubs at the high school.

Ms. Smalley reported the National Honor Society induction ceremony was held last week with an additional thirteen senior members inducted; tonight the Powder Puff Football game will be held at Sage Park in memory of Tyler Cop and Nick Zuk and to support Berlin Helping Berlin; and the Upbeat fall weekend was held this past weekend at Camp Woodstock, in Woodstock, Connecticut with approximately eighty students attending.

B. Committee Reports

Mr. Aroian reported the Student Achievement Committee met prior to tonight's meeting with Assistant Superintendent McGurk and Principal Eustis and discussed proposals for the Program of Studies.

Mr. Tencza reported the Ad-Hoc Committee for Policy Review/Revision met prior to tonight's meeting concerning New Policy #1161 – Armed Security Officers and Revised Policy #9085 – Time, Place and Notice of Meetings.

C. Correspondence to the Board

Superintendent Benigni shared thank you notes received from Paula O'Rourke and Family and Carl, Dawn and Cole Primo.

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

A. Certificate of Appreciation Award to Former Board Member Jake Fisher

Mr. Tencza recognized and thanked former Board member Jake Fisher for his service to the Berlin Board of Education.

B. 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 Benigni presented the CAPSS awards this year to fifth graders Michelle Liu and Owen Holland from Griswold School; Monika Burbula and Landon Sassu-Martin from Hubbard School; and Julia Solek and Joshua Ahlquist from Willard School. Also recognized were eighth graders Alliana Wicik and Elijah Burgos from McGee School; and seniors Monica Padykula and Adam Kajzer.

C. Introduction of the 2020 Building Teachers of the Year and the District Teacher of the Year

Superintendent Benigni recognized the following Building Teachers of the Year for 2020: Erica Tardiff from Griswold School; Shelby Ryan from Hubbard School; Barbara Theriault from Willard School; Abby Rogers from McGee School; and Adam Leonard from Berlin High School. Adam Leonard went on to become the 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.

D. Introduction of the 2020 Paraprofessional of the Year

Superintendent Benigni recognized Donna Van Dam, from Emma Hart Willard School, as the 2020 Paraprofessional of the Year. Donna has been a paraprofessional in Berlin for the past 14 years. Her endless dedication to her students makes an impact each and every day. Donna makes every student feel accepted and special. She has a wonderful rapport with all students and works hard to guide and instruct them. She is kind, passionate and empathetic. She makes sure all students know that they can be successful and are important. She goes out of her way each day to make sure all of her students are succeeding and feel accomplished. Donna was honored for her dedication and excellence at the Statewide Paraeducators as Partners Conference and was nominated for the 2020 Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year award. She was presented with a certificate of recognition and a book store gift card.

E. Support Staff Recognition Awards

Assistant Superintendent McGurk 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 Jodie Konowski, Griswold School; Ruth Bilinsky, Hubbard School; Lynn Cantafi, Willard School; Tyler Savage, McGee School; Nancy Kennure, Berlin High School; and Amy Brace 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.

F. "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 Benigni recognized this year's recipients: Imelda Mongillo, Griswold School; Danielle Morisse-Corsetti, Hubbard School; Maria Carminati, Willard School; Beverly Manzi, McGee School; and Sheel Patel for Berlin High School. They each were presented with a certificate of appreciation and recognition along with a book store gift card.

From 7:09 p.m. until 7:26 p.m., a short recess was held for refreshments and to informally meet the award recipients, their family and friends.

**V. REORGANIZATION**

A. Annual Election of Officers

The election of officers was conducted in accordance with State Statute 10-218. 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, officers shall be elected from the Board, "...by majority vote of those Board members present and voting."

1. President: Ms. Dennis nominated Mr. Aroian. Ms. Sisti seconded the nomination.

Superintendent Benigni collected the signed ballots and announced that Mr. Aroian was unanimously affirmed, 8-0. Superintendent Benigni presented the new gavel with stand to Mr. Aroian, and Mr. Aroian presided over the remainder of the meeting.

2. Secretary: Dr. Sassu nominated Ms. Dennis. Mr. Tencza seconded the nomination.

Superintendent Benigni collected the signed ballots and announced that Ms. Dennis was unanimously affirmed, 8-0.

**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 Mr. Oakes, to approve the Annual Schedule of Regular Meetings in accordance with Policy 9085.**

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

**C. MOTION for Fiscal Management**

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

1. **Moved by Mr. Salina, seconded by Dr. Sassu, that Jeffrey Cugno be designated treasurer of the Berlin High School Enterprise Fund, the Berlin Public Schools Activity Fund, and the Cafeteria Fund.**

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

2. **Moved by Mr. Salina, seconded by Mr. Oakes, that Ashley Dorsey, Deborah Batista and Doreen Guy be designated assistant treasurers of the Cafeteria Fund.**

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

3. **Moved by Ms. Dennis, seconded by Mr. Salina, that each principal and the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction be designated assistant treasurers of the Berlin Public Schools Activity Fund.**

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

4. **Moved by Mr. Oakes, seconded by Mr. Tencza, that Eileen Eustis, Barbara Ventura, Kelly Maio, and Denise Parsons be appointed assistant treasurers of the Berlin High School Enterprise Fund.**

**FAVOR: ALL**

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

- D. Appointment of Board Legal Counsel for 2019-2020

In accordance with Board Policy 9055, the legal counsel to represent the Board of Education for the next year, 2019-2020, should be selected at this time.

**Moved by Mr. Tencza, seconded by Ms. Dennis, that the law firm of Shipman & Goodwin of Hartford be appointed to continue as the Board of Education counsel for the 2019-2020 year and that they should be so informed.**

In response to Mr. Salina's question whether Shipman & Goodwin bills at a flat rate or an hourly rate, Superintendent Benigni responded, Shipman & Goodwin bills at an hourly rate, and there was no rate increase for this year.

**FAVOR: ALL**

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

## **VI. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS**

Mr. John Richards, 239 Hawthorne Drive, Berlin, Connecticut requested the Berlin High School Renovation Project – Closeout Status Report be moved up in the agenda to follow Facilities Related Updates.

## **VII. CONSENT AGENDA**

- A. Approval of Minutes – Regular Meeting of October 15, 2019
- B. Monthly Budget Report – Period ending October 31, 2019
- C. Request for Leave of Absence – Mary E. Griswold School – Teacher of Special Education

Kara McCourt, teacher of special education at Griswold School, requested an unpaid leave of absence, for childrearing purposes, to begin immediately following her maternity leave and continue through April 3, 2020.

- D. Request to Extend Leave of Absence – Berlin High School – Teacher of Science

Sarah Grillo, teacher of science at Berlin High School, requested to extend her current leave of absence, for childrearing purposes, through June 2020.

- E. Overnight Field Trip Request – Berlin High School – Dominican Republic – June 24-July 1, 2020

Berlin High School Principal Eileen Eustis requested permission for students to travel to the Dominican Republic on June 24-July 1, 2020. This trip will provide students with international civic engagement. They will participate in meaningful service, cultural immersion, and leadership development.

**Moved by Mr. Tencza, seconded by Dr. Sassu, to approve the consent agenda as presented.**

In response to Ms. Miller's question concerning the number of students and staff attending the Dominican Republic field trip, Mr. Rudy responded twenty students and four staff members will be attending.

**FAVOR: ALL**

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

### **VIII. NEW BUSINESS**

#### **A. Facilities Related Updates**

Director of Business Operations Jeffrey Cugno reported the third round of the security grant has been revised as the needs of the district have changed since the application was made two and one half years ago. There is approximately \$400,000 remaining, which will be used for cameras, communications, access card readers, window film and police responders. Mr. Cugno reported he met with a Director of the Security Program for the State of Connecticut this past week and reviewed these plans with him. Mr. Cugno indicated the Director was very receptive, and he anticipates approval to move forward. Mr. Cugno reported the BLAST classroom is moving forward and funds remain for furniture. Mr. Cugno reported the McGee gym will be painted and the Willard gym floor will be refinished over the Christmas break.

At this time Item VIII.E. was moved up in the agenda. Hearing no objection, this item was addressed.

#### **E. Berlin High School Renovation Project – Closeout Status Report**

Director of Business Operations Jeffrey Cugno reported he met with Finance Director Kevin Delaney, Tom Smith from Gilbane Building Company, along with the construction manager, architect and engineer, and all issues that were unsettled for a number of months are now settled. Mr. Cugno reported there appears to be in excess of \$1 million remaining from the project, and at this point, the Public Building Commission seems comfortable with the fact that they have completed the project and are ready to return the excess money to the Town. In order to close out the entire project, the Board of Education has to accept it. Mr. Cugno recommended the Board of Education meet with the Town Council to discuss its plans.

Mr. Tencza questioned whether the issue, relative to the ductwork, has been address. Mr. Cugno responded the best information he has is, other than the duct work being painted with a paint sealer that was done after the initial construction was put in place, nothing else has been done. Mr. Cugno

indicated this should not be accepted as there are concerns the duct work will continue to leak and not be able to withstand the weather. The cost to rewrap the duct work, in a manner that has been designed already, is estimated to be \$1.3 to \$1.4 million. This would not be reimbursable from the State of Connecticut.

Mr. Salina suggested, if anything is to be done legislatively next year, the Public Building Commission, in conjunction with Mr. Cugno, should put together a list of all close out items and punch list items that need to be resolved in order to close out the project.

In response to Mr. Aroian's question if the Public Building Commission has made any statement that they believe the project should be closed out, Mr. Cugno responded he is not aware.

Mr. Cugno recommended the Board get involved now to publicly support its expectations and recommended the Board authorize Superintendent Benigni to speak with the Town Council to discuss procedures.

- B. Policy Review/Revision – First Reading
  - 1. New Policy #1161 – Armed Security Officers

Pursuant to the Board, in support of the hiring of armed security officers for the schools, a new policy has been developed and is proposed for adoption regarding the officers providing support to the administration and staff in maintaining a safe school environment, as well as carrying of firearms on school grounds in the performance of their duties. Since this is a first reading, no action is required; the second reading/adoption will take place at the December 9, 2019 Board meeting.

- 2. Revised Policy #9085 – Time, Place and Notice of Meetings

This policy needs to be revised to reflect the change in the time that Board of Education meetings begin. Since this is a first reading, no action is required; the second reading/adoption will take place at the December 9, 2019 Board meeting.

- C. Policy Review/Revision – Second Reading/Adoption
  - 1. New Policy #0100 – BOE Mission Statement/Purpose
  - 2. Revised Policy #9001 – Committees

A second reading of new Policy #0100 and revised Policy #9001 took place. At the September 23, 2019 special meeting, the BOE Mission Statement/Purpose was revised and changes were made to Policy #9001 – Committees. A first reading took place at the Board meeting on October 15, 2019.

Ms. Dennis inquired, before the Board makes a motion to adopt new Policy #0100, are there time constraints and does the policy have to be adopted tonight. Ms. Dennis believes the policy is very wordy, and she does not like how the mission statement reads with the words broad opportunities and freedom. She would also like to include the new Board member once appointed.

**Moved by Mr. Oakes, seconded by Mr. Tencza, that the Board adopt new Policy #0100 – BOE Mission Statement/Purpose, and revised Policy #9001 – Committees, as presented.**

The Board entered into a discussion concerning the readability of the policy and the inclusion of the new Board member when he/she is appointed.

**FAVOR: 6 in favor; 2 opposed**

**MOTION CARRIED: 6:2; including President Aroian and with Ms. Dennis and Ms. Sisti opposing**

D. Authorization to Apply and Sign for Credit Cards through the CTDAS P-Card Program

The P-Card Program is a credit card program co-sponsored by the Department of Administrative Services Procurement Division and the Office of the State Comptroller Accounts Payable Division. The P-Card is a commercial MasterCard issued by JPMorgan Chase Bank. It works just like a personal credit card, but it has custom designed features and built-in controls to meet the specific needs of the cardholder and state agency, municipality, public school or non-profit organization.

**Moved by Mr. Salina, seconded by Mr. Oakes, to authorize the superintendent of schools to apply and sign for credit cards through the CTDAS P-Card Program.**

In response to Mr. Salina's question as to how many credit cards will be issued, Superintendent Benigni responded there will be one card for each school and for cabinet members of the Board, and there will be oversight.

**FAVOR: ALL**

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

F. Personnel Items – Executive Session Anticipated

**At 8:12 p.m., a motion was made by Mr. Oakes, seconded by Mr. Tencza, to enter into Executive Session to discuss a personnel matter and to invite the Superintendent.**

**FAVOR: ALL**

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

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

At 9:06 p.m., the Board returned to Open Session.



**IX. ADJOURNMENT**

**At 9:07 p.m., a motion was made by Mr. Tencza, seconded by Mr. Salina, to adjourn.**

**FAVOR: ALL**

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

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Dennis, Secretary, Berlin Board of Education