

BERLIN BOARD OF EDUCATION
January 13, 2020
MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING

Attendance: Richard Aroian
Julia Dennis
Jaymee Miller – Departed at 8:00 p.m.
Timothy Oakes
Adam Salina
Kari Sassu, Ph.D.
Tracy Sisti
Matthew Tencza
Student Representatives: Jenna Smalley - Absent
Ryan McGowan

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 – Elementary Michelle Zeuschner; Supervisor of Special Education – Secondary Cindy Martin; Director of Human Resources Denise Parsons; Director of Literacy and Social Studies Laurie Gjerpen; Director of Mathematics and Science Kara Watson; Principal of Berlin High School Eileen Eustis; Principal of McGee Middle School Salvatore Urso; Principal of Griswold School David Kitzman; Principal of Hubbard School Alfred Souza; and Principal of Willard School Megan Sirois.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Aroian called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. in the Board of Education (“the Board”) meeting room at 238 Kensington Road, Berlin, Connecticut. A moment of silence was observed in memory of former student Spencer Tracy. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

II. NEW BUSINESS – PART I

A. Appointment of New Board Member

After the November election, there was an unfilled seat on the Board. The Board solicited residents interested in serving on the Board and selected a new member from interested residents who were interviewed on January 2, 2020. The new member will serve until the next election.

Moved by Mr. Salina, seconded by Mr. Oakes, to appoint Mary Ellen Maloney to fill the vacancy on the Board of Education until the next election.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 8:0; including President Aroian

III. SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Mr. Aroian thanked Mr. Tencza for his service, dedication, time and energy, serving as the Board President the past three years. Superintendent Benigni personally thanked Mr. Tencza for the conversations and help he provided when he was appointed Superintendent of Schools.

IV. COMMITTEE REPORTS/CORRESPONDENCE TO THE BOARD

A. Report of Student Representatives

Mr. McGowan reported mid-terms begin Tuesday, January 21, 2020; the Capstone Day was held Thursday, January 9, 2020, with the Capstone Expo in the evening; winter sports are going great; the Youth and Government Club participated in the pre-state conference on Sunday, January 12, 2020; alumni from Berlin High School met with seniors, concerning post-secondary education, on Friday, January 10, 2020; the winter band concert is tomorrow evening; and today, the NBC snow monster came to Berlin High School to report on the school cancellation contest, and that story will air Thursday on NBC.

B. Committee Reports

Mr. Aroian reported the Curriculum Committee met prior to tonight's meeting with Dr. McGurk and Superintendent Benigni and discussed the school calendar, which appears later in the agenda.

Mr. Tencza reported the Finance and Operational Committee met twice, prior to tonight's meeting, to discuss the Superintendent's proposed budget, which Superintendent Benigni will present later in the agenda. Mr. Tencza reported on his attendance at the Capstone Expo on Thursday, January 9, 2020.

C. CREC Report

There was no report this evening.

D. Correspondence to the Board

Mr. Aroian shared with Board members a letter from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) to Principal Eustis.

Ms. Miller reported the UpBeat Program, along with Berlin Social Services and in conjunction with the towns of Rocky Hill, Wethersfield and Newington, will sponsor the Central Connecticut Adult Workshop on February 21 and 22, 2020. This year's topic is youth mental health. Ms. Miller encouraged all Board members to attend.

V. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Nothing to report.

VI. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Minutes
 - 1. Special Meeting of December 9, 2019
 - 2. Special Meeting of January 2, 2020

B. Monthly Budget Report – Period ending December 31, 2019

Moved by Mr. Salina, seconded by Ms. Sisti, to approve the consent agenda as presented.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 8:0; including President Aroian

VII. NEW BUSINESS – PART II

A. Facilities Related Updates

Director of Business Operations Jeffrey Cugno reported the Town has agreed to fund and move forward with the installation of new cameras at Griswold School.

B. Establishment of Berlin High School Graduation Date for 2020

Public Act 19-195, which took effect on July 1, 2019, now allows boards of education to establish a firm graduation date for students in Grade 12 for that school year which, at the time of establishment, provides for at least 180 days of school. In accordance with this Public Act, Superintendent Benigni recommended that the Board set the date of the Berlin High School graduation for Sunday, June 21, 2020. The ceremony will be held at Central Connecticut State University, beginning at 1:30 p.m.

Moved by Ms. Dennis, seconded by Ms. Sisti, to set the Berlin High School graduation date for Sunday, June 21, 2020.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 8:0; including President Aroian

In response to Mr. Salina's question concerning changing the graduation ceremony to a Friday evening, Mr. Aroian reported the Board is not looking to make any changes to the 2020 graduation ceremony; however, the Board is actively contemplating moving the 2021 graduation ceremony to a Friday evening. The Board will allow plenty of time for conversation and parent input as well as an article in the *Berlin Citizen* explaining the rationale.

Mr. Aroian reported currently the final day (#181) is on June 17, 2020. There is a recommendation that the Board of Education consider day #180 an early dismissal, last day for students and day #181 a full-day professional development day for teachers. The last student day would be June 16, 2020.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction McGurk explained that each year the district is required to provide mandated trainings set by legislation. Since the calendar was originally set, several additional trainings have been added. In the past, there were as many as twelve (12) half-days across the year, which allowed for professional development. That was changed in the current year's calendar to

having three (3) half-days; however, there remains a need for additional training throughout the year. This additional time would provide for that opportunity.

Moved by Mr. Salina, seconded by Mr. Oakes to add to the agenda a discussion with regard to the 2019-2020 school calendar.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 8:0; including President Aroian

Moved by Mr. Salina, seconded by Mr. Oakes, that we make the 180th day a half-day for students and the 181st day a full-day for professional development for the teachers.

The Board discussed how this change will take away instructional time from students. Dr. McGurk shared the professional development that occurred last year at the end of the school year.

Mr. Aroian indicated the Board could go forward and hold a vote this evening or can table this item to a later meeting to allow for more information.

Moved by Mr. Oakes, seconded by Mr. Salina, to lay this on the table for a future meeting.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 8:0; including President Aroian

VIII. 2020-2021 SUPERINTENDENT'S PROPOSED BUDGET PRESENTATION

Superintendent Benigni presented his proposed 2020-2021 budget to the Board. The presentation was guided by the budget priorities that were identified by the Board and Administrative Council. Board members were provided with a copy of the presentation.

Superintendent Benigni thanked the Finance and Operational Committee, John Richards, Board of Education and staff in preparing the proposed 2020-2021 budget. Superintendent Benigni indicated his goal this evening is to provide an overview of a budget that will keep the district moving forward as well as maintaining course offerings and class sizes.

Superintendent Benigni provided a comparison of the five-year average increases of adopted education budgets of surrounding towns.

With regard to Berlin's per pupil expenditure, Superintendent Benigni indicated the gap in spending per pupil is widening when compared to the state average.

The proposed budget has an overall increase of \$2,909,656 or 6.47%, and of the 6.47% increase, 2.3% is to meet contractual obligations.

In terms of Administrative Salaries, there is an increase of \$69,192 or 2.59%, which is driven by contractual obligations. There are no new administrative positions in this budget.

In terms of Certified Salaries, there is an increase of \$812,386 or 4.01%, which is based on contractual obligations, step increase, the addition of a 1.00 World Language teacher at the high school, a 1.00 Math Interventionist/Lead Teacher at the middle school, a 0.50 Technology Integration Specialist at Willard School, a 0.50 Technology Integration Specialist at Griswold School and a 1.00 Pre-K teacher at Willard School.

In terms of Non-Certified Salaries, there is an increase of \$641,976 or 9.07%, which is based on an increase due to contractual obligations, anticipated wage increases, the requests for 5.00 kindergarten paraprofessionals, 1.50 duty paraprofessionals, Information Technology staff, and \$165,000 for substitute teachers.

In terms of Employee Benefits, there is an increase of \$306,676 or 4.86%, which is based on a 10% increase projected for new employees.

In terms of Contracted Services, there is an increase of \$491,799 or 27.91%, which is based on the Effective School Solutions program for the middle school and evaluations, infrastructure hardware, operational systems, school hardware and meeting and conferences.

In terms of Utilities, there is an increase of \$22,019 or 5.73%, which represents an increase due to rising costs/utilization.

In terms of Transportation, there is an increase of \$127,848 or 4.13%, which represents contractual costs with New Britain Transportation, mandates to transport and van repairs for aging fleet.

In terms of Tuition, there is an increase of \$82,496 or 3.98%. There is a decrease in students participating in Vocational Agriculture and public in-state Special Education. There is an increase for private in-state special education and magnet school tuition. Superintendent Benigni is requesting an additional \$200,000 be set aside should the district see additional outplacements and \$15,000 for one expulsion.

In terms of Supplies, Textbooks and Materials, there is a decrease of \$10,915 or -0.97%. Textbooks are contingent upon the needs of the schools.

In terms of Equipment, there is an increase of \$337,707 or 221.60% which is related to classroom technology, Chromebooks and infrastructure. In addition, only items with an estimated cost greater than \$25,000 and non-technology items are included in the Town's Capital Plan and anything not meeting this criteria is to be funded in the Board's Operating Budget.

In terms of Other Expenditures, there is an increase of \$28,471 or 44.68%, which is related to dues and fees for professional organizations.

A. Elementary Principals' Budget Presentation

Principals Kitzman, Souza and Sirois presented the Elementary Schools budget presentation.

Elementary Budget Goals: Create learning experiences that promote a sense of purpose, ignite passion and foster a sense of pride; support the academic, social/emotional and developmental needs of the Pre-

K to Grade 5 student; provide the instructional resources necessary to meet and challenge all students to fulfill their potential; and building safety for students and staff.

Elementary Staffing: Included in the Superintendent's proposed budget are Kindergarten Paraprofessionals; a Technology Integration Specialist; and Lunch/Recess Duty Professionals. Although not included in the Superintendent's proposed budget, the elementary teachers requested a Reading Teacher; Math Interventionist; Writing Interventionist; Art Teacher; and Social Worker.

Elementary Equipment and Facility: Included in the Superintendent's proposed budget is office millwork and general building equipment at each school; ceiling tiles and stairs to portables at Griswold; a library skylight and student seating, painting and recess area mulch at Hubbard; and painting at Willard. Although not included in the Superintendent's proposed budget, the elementary teachers requested lavatory upgrades and hallway floor tiles at each of the schools; a band classroom, an outdoor classroom and exterior landscaping for Griswold School; a lighting system and the renovation of the media center for Hubbard School; and cafeteria tables, parking lot lighting and playground upgrades for Willard School.

Operation/Instruction Budget: The Operation/Instruction Budget consists of instructional supplies; non-instructional supplies/equipment; textbooks; software/technology; and maintenance and repair.

B. Secondary Principals' Budget Presentations

Principal Urso presented the McGee Middle School budget presentation.

McGee Middle School Budget Goals: Create learning experiences that promote a sense of purpose, ignite passion and foster a sense of pride; support the academic, social/emotional and developmental needs of the 6-8 grade student; provide the instructional supplies necessary to meet and challenge all students to fulfill their potential; and building safety and security.

McGee Middle School Staffing: Included in the Superintendent's proposed budget is a Lead Teacher/Interventionist. Although not included in the Superintendent's proposed budget, Principal Urso requested a school counselor; 0.50 Office Assistant; 0.40 Physical Education/Health/Wellness Teacher; and 0.40 World Language Teacher.

McGee Middle School Equipment and Facility: Included in the Superintendent's proposed budget is office millwork; flooring, paint/cabinets and a 3-D laser printer/vent for STEAM classrooms; general building equipment; and digital sound/lighting equipment for the auditorium. Although not included in the Superintendent's proposed budget, Principal Urso requested a television studio; furniture and fixtures for four classrooms; and the conversion of a fixed computer lab to a classroom.

Operation/Instruction Budget: The Operation/Instruction Budget consists of instructional supplies to support the ability to implement curriculum and provide meaningful, relevant learning experiences; non-instructional supplies/equipment to serve as tools and resources to structure, document, support and organize learning; textbooks to provide a guide for teaching and learning of identified curriculum; software/technology to increase learner engagement, efficiency, latest available resources; and maintenance and repair to maximize the life of learning equipment and tools.

Principal Eustis presented the Berlin High School budget presentation.

Berlin High School Budget Goals: Maintain the breadth of course offerings in order to meet the individual needs and interests of the students and grow programs appropriately; maintain the current staffing to provide students with social-emotional supports, post-secondary planning supports and appropriate class sizes; provide a safe and secure environment for students to do their best learning; and continue to support the work developing and implementing innovative practices with new resources, including technology and unique modern classroom spaces that support learning.

Berlin High School Staffing: Included in the Superintendent's proposed budget is a 1.00 World Language Teacher and 2.00 Security Officers. Although not included in the Superintendent's proposed budget, Principal Eustis requested a 1.00 Computer Science/STEM Teacher/Curriculum Developer and a 1.00 Tier II Intervention Teacher.

Berlin High School Equipment and Facility: Included in the Superintendent's proposed budget is flexible classroom seating; cafeteria seating as benches need replacement; radio station equipment and upgrades – portable live streaming equipment, replacement transmitter, virtual reality headset cleaning system; and miscellaneous instructional equipment for the auditorium, TV studio and virtual reality.

Berlin High School Building Operation/Instruction Budget: The Operation/Instruction Budget consists of instructional materials and software to support a rigorous and relevant curriculum to meet all student learning needs – book club novels, CSP instructional software, LMC materials, online text subscriptions; increased cost of supplies and consumables for Art, Family Consumer Science, Science and office supplies; and budgeting for equipment maintenance and repairs for Art, Family Consumer Science, etc.

C. Curriculum & Instruction Budget

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Erin McGurk presented the Curriculum and Instruction Budget for 2020-2021. Board members were provided with a handout containing the curriculum program budget summary, which included the 2018-2019, current actual and the proposed 2020-2021 budgets. Dr. McGurk indicated she views the Curriculum and Instruction Budget as the research and development and the district's investment in staff members and programs.

Instructional Supplies: Dr. McGurk is requesting \$100,000 for supplies and materials for summer curriculum revision and writing. Instructional supplies also provide flexibility as needs arise.

Other Certified Salaries: Dr. McGurk is requesting \$67,000 to support summer stipends for summer curriculum writing projects. The increase of 3% from the current year reflects the change in salary with the new contract.

Professional Education Services: Dr. McGurk is requesting \$102,927 for software subscriptions for individual buildings.

In-service: Dr. McGurk is requesting \$103,950 for contracts for outside presenters.

Meetings and Conferences: Dr. McGurk is requesting \$43,030 for meetings and conferences. Although there is a significant increase, it is related to the movement of funds requested at the high school under meetings and conferences.

Staff Travel: Dr. McGurk is requesting \$3,100 for staff who travel across buildings who are paid the IRS mileage rate.

Non –Instructional Supplies: Dr. McGurk is requesting \$4,500. There is no change from the current budget.

Administration Supplies: Dr. McGurk is requesting \$20,000. There is no change from the current budget.

Textbooks: Dr. McGurk is requesting \$34,389 (an increase of 41%) for textbook purchases for AP and UCONN Early College Experience Calculus; AP Environmental Science; ALEKS class codes required for UCONN Early College Experience Chemistry; and renewal of eTextbook licenses for 100 Physics students.

Due and Fees: Dr. McGurk is requesting \$1,000 for enrollment in state organizations.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

At 8:16 p.m., a motion was made by Mr. Salina, seconded by Mr. Tencza, to adjourn.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Dennis, Secretary, Berlin Board of Education