

BERLIN BOARD OF EDUCATION
January 27, 2020
MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING

Attendance: Richard Aroian
Julia Dennis
Mary Ellen Maloney
Jaymee Miller
Timothy Oakes
Adam Salina
Kari Sassu, Ph.D.
Tracy Sisti – Absent
Matthew Tencza – Departed at 7:45 p.m.
Student Representatives: Jenna Smalley - Absent
Ryan McGowan - Absent

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; Director of Human Resources Denise Parsons; 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; Principal of Willard School Megan Sirois; and Director of Athletics Jeff Mauri.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Aroian called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. in the Board of Education (“the Board”) meeting room at 238 Kensington Road, Berlin, Connecticut. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

II. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Nothing to report.

III. BOARD WORKSHOP

A. Discussion of Board Meet & Greet at Local Businesses

The Board discussed hosting a Meet & Greet at local businesses, which would provide an opportunity for the community to talk in a casual, warm environment and support local businesses. The Community Engagement Committee will meet Thursday to discuss further and will report back to the Board the Committee’s recommendation at the February 10, 2020 meeting.

B. Discussion of Graduation for 2021 and Beyond

Superintendent Benigni reported that 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. The Board discussed, beginning 2021 and beyond, moving the graduation ceremony to the Friday evening following the 180th day of school. Looking at 2021, currently, the 181st day is Monday, June 14, 2021. Superintendent Benigni recommended the Board of Education look to set the 2021 graduation ceremony for Friday, June 11, 2021. The ceremony would be held at Central Connecticut State University in the Welte Auditorium with the hope of having the all-night graduation party that Friday evening following graduation. The Board discussed communicating this change to parents; having an article appear in the

Berlin Citizen; sending a survey to families; and meeting with the all-night graduation leadership for this graduation year. Superintendent Benigni will provide the Board with a draft survey for approval prior to sending to families of freshman, sophomore and junior students.

C. Discussion of Memorandum of Understanding Regarding Armed School Security Program

The Board discussed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Board of Education and the town of Berlin regarding the Armed School Security Program. A redlined copy of the MOU was provided to Board members. Superintendent Benigni inquired whether the Board would like action on this item at the next Board meeting. It was the consensus of the Board that there is no need for the Board to take action, and Superintendent Benigni was authorized to sign the MOU.

D. Discussion of the Superintendent's Proposed Budget for 2020-2021

The Board discussed the Superintendent's Proposed Budget for 2020-2021, which was presented to the Board at meetings on January 13 and 15.

With regard to the Athletics Budget, Mr. Mauri provided Board members with a corrected dollar difference for Berlin High School, which is \$8,533 less than that presented on January 15, 2020. Mr. Mauri provided further information for the use of HUDL and the increase for officials.

With regard to the Pupil Personnel Services Budget, Ms. Holian provided Board members with a Budget Summary containing the budgeted and actual budget for 2018-2019; the 2019-2020 revised budget as of December 31, 2019; and the 2020-2021 proposed budget. With regard to the ESS Program (\$100,000), Ms. Holian and Principal Urso provided further rationale for the one additional clinician at McGee.

With regard to Administrative Salaries, there is a 2.59% increase. In response to Mr. Tencza's question, Mr. Cugno confirmed that annuities were moved into the Administrative Salaries line from the Benefits line.

With regard to Certified Salaries, there is a 4.01% increase. Superintendent Benigni reported this includes 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 (approximately \$246,000) in addition to contractual obligations (3%). Ms. Holian and Dr. McGurk responded to additional questions regarding the proposed full-day Pre-K program, including Pre-K programs in surrounding towns.

With regard to Non-Certified Salaries, there is a 9.07% increase. The Board discussed the request for seven paraprofessionals, five of which are kindergarten paraprofessionals currently funded with the CHOICE grant. The Board discussed the use of CHOICE funds and continuing to fund some of these paraprofessional positions with the CHOICE grant.

With regard to Employee Benefits, there is a 4.86% increase. Superintendent Benigni reported there may be room for cuts; however, at this time, this is based on the current staff and forecasting for next year. Currently, three retirements have been announced.

With regard to Contracted Services, there is a 27.91% increase. Mr. Aroian acknowledged that \$100,000 represents the Effective School Solutions program for the middle school. With regard to the increases for security, infrastructure, operational systems and school hardware, Mr. Salina questioned, compared to previous years, can the district do with less. Superintendent Benigni responded the Informational Technology budget has always been a target and requests are prioritized, within the budget, with the hope to offset with end of the year funds. The Board discussed moving forward with a \$200,000 reduction.

With regard to Utilities, there is an increase of 5.73% due to rate increases.

With regard to Transportation and Tuition, there is an increase of 4.13% and 3.98% respectively, with limited flexibility for reductions.

With regard to Supplies, Textbooks and Materials, there is a decrease of 0.97%.

With regard to All Other Expenditures, there is an increase of 44.68% (\$28,471).

In response to the Board's recommendation to reduce the Superintendent's Proposed Budget for 2020-2021 by \$500,000, Superintendent Benigni provided his recommendations to meet the Board's request: a \$150,000 cut to Non-Certified Salaries; a \$200,000 cut to Contracted Services; and \$150,000 cut to Equipment.

Prior to February 10, 2020, the Finance and Operations Committee will meet to discuss the impact of these reductions and report back to the Board.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

At 7:54 p.m., a motion was made by Mr. Salina, seconded by Dr. Sassu, to adjourn.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 7:0; including President Aroian

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Dennis, Secretary Berlin Board of Education