

# **BERLIN BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**February 10, 2020**

## **MINUTES**

### **SPECIAL MEETING**

Attendance: Richard Aroian  
Julia Dennis  
Mary Ellen Maloney  
Jaymee Miller – Absent  
Timothy Oakes  
Adam Salina  
Kari Sassu, Ph.D.  
Tracy Sisti  
Matthew Tencza  
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; 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; Assistant Principals of Berlin High School Kelly Maio and Barbara Ventura; 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**

The meeting was called to order at 5:50 p.m. in the Berlin High School Auditorium at 139 Patterson Way, Berlin, Connecticut.

#### **II. 2020-2021 BUDGET OVERVIEW TO THE PUBLIC**

The Board held an informational meeting for the public so community members could provide input on the budget prior to approval. Superintendent Benigni provided a slideshow of the Proposed Operating Budget for 2020-2021. Superintendent Benigni indicated his goals for the 2020-2021 budget are to continue to provide quality education to all students at the standard that Berlin parents expect; expand the Preschool program from a half-day to a full-day program; provide all students with an education that provides them with multiple options and opportunities upon graduation; continue to expand support for social/emotional learning (SEL) programming and practice; ensure that appropriate course, structures and staff are available for new graduation requirements; and provide adequate security staff, systems and cameras to ensure that all students and staff are in a safe learning environment. Superintendent Benigni commented that a school district's budget reflects the commitment of the community to invest in the future of the children and that the erosion of funding for education challenges the sustainability of Berlin as a competitive school district with rich educational and extracurricular opportunities for students.

The slideshow presentation consisted of a summary of the reductions from the Superintendent's Budget proposed on January 13, 2020; the 2020-2021 proposed budget (as of February 10, 2020) overview; new staff requests, which also included those requests that did not make it to the

budget; five year FTE comparisons for teachers/certified staff; five-year average of Berlin's adopted budgets and mill rate increase/decrease compared to surrounding towns; budget funding history; net current expenditure per pupil; Berlin and State per pupil expenditure; federal funding; state funding; Hartford Open Choice Enrollment; student enrollment; and elementary projected enrollments.

Sam Lomaglio, 78 Hickory Hill Road, Berlin, Connecticut thanked Mr. Tencza for his three years of service as President of the Board of Education and for his professional working relationship with the Board of Finance and congratulated Mr. Aroian as Board President. Mr. Lomaglio commented he believes, without an excellent school system, businesses will not be encouraged to move into town. He has done research and found that teacher salaries in Berlin are in the middle of the road on a state level, and that it is a myth that taxes are higher because of teacher salaries. Mr. Lomaglio commented that when students graduate from Berlin High School and continue on to college, military service or trade school, they excel because of the educational system in Berlin. He reflected on the impact to the educational system and town structure in 2001 when the town government lowered the mill rate; reviewed the financial position of the Town since the Board of Finance was formed; and provided an overview of the process from the time the Board of Education adopts its budget to when the Town Council receives the budget.

Brenda Wall, 85 Four Rod Road, Berlin, Connecticut, addressed the Board, representing the ice hockey players from Berlin High School. Ms. Wall indicated ice hockey is the only sport at the high school that is 100% player paid, there is no contribution currently in the proposed budget and currently the out-of-pocket cost per player is approximately \$2,000. Ms. Wall requested that going forward current and future consideration be included in the Budget as these athletes represent the town and are worth the investment.

### **III. ADJOURNMENT**

**At 6:35 p.m., a motion was made by Mr. Oakes, seconded by Mr. Tencza, to adjourn.**

**FAVOR: ALL**

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

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Dennis, Secretary, Berlin Board of Education