

# **BERLIN BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**May 26, 2020**

## **MINUTES**

### **REGULAR MEETING**

Attendance: Richard Aroian  
Julia Dennis  
Mary Ellen Maloney – Arrived at 6:09 p.m.  
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; and Director of Pupil Personnel Services Linda Holian.

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

Mr. Aroian called the virtual meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. A moment of silence was held in remembrance of Memorial Day and to recognize the Berlin citizens that have passed away from the COVID-19 virus. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

#### **II. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS**

Lucy Micacci-Bantle, 1510 Chamberlain Highway, Berlin, Connecticut, addressed the Board as a concerned parent of a spring athlete and as the Vice President of the Berlin High School Athletic Boosters as it has come to her attention spring season coaches are not being paid for the spring season. She requested the Board of Education reconsider its decision. Mr. Aroian replied the Board of Education did not come to a unilateral decision to not compensate the coaches. The Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), which was drafted before the spring season began, set the parameters. Mr. Aroian shared the specific clauses contained in the MOA that are appropriate and apply to this issue. Mr. Aroian stated the Board has requested Superintendent Benigni reach out to the union representation to determine whether or not the MOA is valid and fair and whether the conditions that set it apart have evolved and changes need to be made.

Joann Beeny, 288 Newton Street, Kensington, Connecticut, inquired as to why there are not daily Zoom meetings with teachers and students as she believes most children need a classroom setting. Superintendent Benigni replied it is important to note that, as the district phased in distance learning and moved into Zoom meetings, there is also a level of understanding that takes place in a home with multiple children that being online for Zoom meetings all day long would not work. In addition, it is not best educational practice to have a student at a screen all day long. Superintendent Benigni stated, as the district moves forward, it would like to provide additional Zoom meetings; however, there needs to be flexibility in allowing all students to have equitable access. Current Zoom meetings are recorded, and students that cannot participate in the live session can view at a later time.

Kyle Alger, 56 Fox Hill Lane, Berlin, Connecticut inquired as to how the Board of Education will address the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) COVID-19 recommendations for school

in the fall and what community engagement is planned to create dialog and solicit contributions from parents.

Nikki Sambitsky, 947 Chamberlain Highway, Berlin, Connecticut, inquired with the draconian measures the CDC and Connecticut State Department of Education has laid out for schools, what can parents expect when school does reopen and how can the district ensure that students will go back to the normal they knew before this whole situation started. She inquired if students will need to be six feet apart from friends and teachers with tape on the floors, will there be smaller classrooms, facemasks, recess, eating in the cafeteria and will students need to be tested regularly for COVID-19 every time they enter the schools.

Superintendent Benigni responded a taskforce team has been formed, consisting of community members, nurses, administrators, Board of Education members, parents, and students concerning the reopening of schools. The taskforce met today, for the first time, and will meet again tomorrow with the Connecticut Center for School Change and school districts around the state. The district will follow the guidelines put forth by the CDC to ensure the safety of all students, staff, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, etc. Superintendent Benigni stated the guidelines for summer school have been released, and the district intends to have a live summer school in session and will follow the guidelines and parameters the CDC has put forward and required by the State Department of Education to provide a safe environment.

Dr. McGurk stated both she and Superintendent Benigni have been networking with other districts and keeping track of what is happening on the state and national level as well as the international schools that have started to reopen. There are a number of issues from basic operations, feeding students, moving students within the buildings, in addition to taking care of the social emotional wellness of the students and academics. The Committee does have a broad based membership and will solicit their ideas on how to best move forward.

### **III. COMMITTEE REPORT – Finance and Operations Committee**

With regard to the Curriculum Committee, Dr. McGurk reported, in speaking with Principal Eustis today, all courses proposed for the Honors Challenge have sufficient enrollment to run sections in the fall. Curriculum funds have been set aside for teachers to work in collaboration this summer to further develop the guidelines developed during the February professional learning day and to ensure guidelines exist whether in distance learning or face-to-face learning.

Mr. Tencza reported the Finance and Operations Committee met on May 20, 2020 to discuss transportation negotiations; the end-of-year 2019-2020 budget status; and the Food Service Program and its impact to the district. With regard to transportation, Mr. Tencza stated the Committee is very close to a final number with New Britain Transportation and the savings to the district. With regard to the end-of-year budget status, Mr. Tencza stated, as the numbers literally change every day and every day brings new information relative to technology needs, equipment needs and additional expenditures, the Committee will provide final numbers at the next Board meeting. In the event, there are significant savings, the Committee considers it important to return funds to the town and tax payers and also set aside funds in the two percent account for unforeseen events. Mr. Tencza stated the Food Service Program is running at a deficit and will have an impact on the Operational Budget; however, every week meals are provided to the community that provides an opportunity to close the gap.

**IV. PERSONNEL**

Administrative Resignations

1. Assistant Principal – Berlin High School

Kelly Maio, assistant principal at Berlin High School, submitted her letter of resignation effective June 30, 2020.

**Moved by Mr. Oakes, seconded by Mr. Salina, to accept the resignation of Kelly Maio, assistant principal at Berlin High School, effective June 30, 2020, and to wish her well in the next step in her career.**

**FAVOR: ALL**

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

2. Athletic Director

Jeff Mauri, athletic director for the district, submitted his letter of resignation effective June 30, 2020.

**Moved by Mr. Oakes, seconded by Mr. Salina, to accept the resignation of Jeff Mauri, athletic director for the district, effective June 30, 2020, and to wish him well in his future endeavors.**

**FAVOR: ALL**

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

**V. NEW BUSINESS**

Revision to the 2020-21 School Calendar

Superintendent Benigni requested that, due to the cancellation of the Berlin Fair on September 18, 2020, the 2020-21 School Calendar be revised to make September 18, 2020 a student day and change the last day of school to June 11, 2021. Board members were provided with the revised calendar.

**Moved by Ms. Dennis, seconded by Ms. Sisti, to adopt the revised 2020-21 School Calendar, as presented.**

**FAVOR: ALL**

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

**VI. BOARD WORKSHOP**

Revision of the Board of Education Member Handbook

The Community Engagement Committee and Curriculum Committee presented the goal each Committee set, which will be placed in the Board of Education Member Handbook. The Finance and Operations Committee will provide its goal to Mr. Aroian.

The Board reviewed the core values stated in Policy 0100, adopted November 25, 2019, a copy which was provided to Board members. The Mission of the Berlin Board of Education, the core values and practices supporting the core values will be included in the Board of Education Member Handbook.

**VII. ADJOURNMENT**

**At 6:43 p.m., a motion was made by Mr. Salina, seconded by Mr. Oakes, to adjourn.**

**FAVOR: ALL**

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

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Dennis, Secretary, Berlin Board of Education