

BERLIN BOARD OF EDUCATION

July 29, 2019

MINUTES

SPECIAL MEETING

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

Also in attendance: Superintendent of Schools Brian J. Benigni; Director of Business Operations Jeffrey Cugno; Director of Human Resources Denise Parsons; Director of Pupil Personnel Services Linda Holian; Supervisor of Special Education – Elementary Michelle Zeuschner; and Director of School Security, Safety and Residency John Schmaltz.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Tencza called the meeting to order at 5:40 p.m. in the Board of Education (“the Board”) meeting room at 238 Kensington Road, Berlin, CT. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

II. INTERVIEW CANDIDATE FOR WILLARD SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

At 5:41 p.m., a motion was made by Mr. Oakes, seconded by Ms. Miller, to enter into Executive Session, to discuss a personnel matter and to invite Superintendent Benigni.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 9:0; including President Tencza

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

At 6:30 p.m., the Board returned to Open Session.

III. COMMITTEE REPORTS/CORRESPONDENCE TO THE BOARD

A. Communications Committee

Ms. Dennis reported the Communications Committee has met twice since June to discuss the Committee’s next steps. The Committee has developed an eight week plan for the weekly columns for the first eight weeks of school. The Committee also discussed posting the weekly columns on the website and Facebook page. Another meeting is scheduled for August.

B. Correspondence to the Board

Superintendent Benigni shared a thank you note received from Kelly Maio and Family.

Mr. Tencza reported former Berlin High School Principal George Synnott passed away last week.

IV. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Nothing to report.

V. PERSONNEL

A. Administrative Resignation – Willard School Principal

Matthew Correia, Principal at Emma Hart Willard School, has submitted his letter of resignation effective August 3, 2019.

Moved by Ms. Dennis, seconded by Mr. Oakes, to accept the resignation of Matthew Correia, Principal at Emma Hart Willard School, effective August 3, 2019, and to wish him the best in his new position with the Newtown Public Schools.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 9:0; including President Tencza

B. Appointment of Willard School Principal

Superintendent Benigni recommended that the Board of Education appoint Megan F. Sirois as Principal at Emma Hart Willard School, effective July 29, 2019.

Moved by Dr. Sassu, seconded by Ms. Dennis, that the Board of Education appoint Megan F. Sirois to the position of Principal at Emma Hart Willard School, effective July 29, 2019.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 9:0; including President Tencza

A short recess was taken from 6:35 p.m. until 6:39 p.m.

VI. CONSENT AGENDA

Approval of Minutes

1. Regular Meeting of July 8, 2019

2. Special Meeting of June 5, 2019

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

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 9:0; including President Tencza

VII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Final Financial Report – 2018-2019 Fiscal Year

Director of Business Operations Jeffrey Cugno reported the unaudited balance for the 2018-2019 fiscal year is \$2,939.16. Mr. Cugno noted the total funds returned to the Town from the Berlin Board of Education fiscal year 2018-2019 General Fund is \$382,939.16 as the Board of Education requested and the Town Board of Finance approved the transfer of \$380,000 of the returned funds to the Town's Capital Nonrecurring Fund for certain Board of Education projects and expenditures noted in the request. The remaining \$2,939.16 represents unexpended surplus funds in the Budget at year's end.

Mr. Cugno summarized the monthly Budget and End of Year Report as of June 30, 2019 and the Board's fiscal year 2018-2019 end of year purchases, copies of which were provided to Board members.

B. Motion to Return Balance of 2018-2019 Fiscal Year to the Town's General Fund

Director of Business Operations Jeffrey Cugno indicated that the unaudited balance of the 2018-2019 fiscal year is \$2,939.16. A motion is in order to return this amount to the Town of Berlin General Fund.

Moved by Dr. Sassu, seconded by Mr. Salina, that the unaudited balance of the 2018-2019 fiscal year Board of Education budget, in the amount of \$2,939.16, be returned to the Town of Berlin General Fund.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 9:0; including President Tencza

C. Staffing Update

Superintendent Benigni provided Board members with a status report on hiring and vacant positions within the district. He reported the teacher leadership position at Willard is now vacant, and there is a secretarial vacancy to fill at McGee Middle School. In terms of teacher vacancies, there is a 1.00 FTE Science teacher at Berlin High School, a fourth grade position and a long-term substitute position at Willard.

In response to Mr. Tencza's question concerning the school counselor position at Griswold and Willard Schools, Superintendent Benigni reported, in August, he will look to see if CHOICE funds are available to supplement that position. Superintendent Benigni reported a position was added at Hubbard School because of class sizes.

D. Security Update

Director of School Security, Safety and Residency John Schmaltz reported he has contacted other districts to inquire of their policy procedures, best practices and staffing levels and is reviewing the district's all hazard plan to make sure the district is in compliance. Mr. Schmaltz discussed the style of the uniform. Mr. Schmaltz reported he has met with the Police Chief and Assistant Police Chief concerning their radios, staff and training and has met with a majority of the principals to review

emergency plans and to have an understanding of the buildings. He has also met with office staff, custodial staff and teachers, all who have been very helpful and have provided a wealth of information.

In terms of the hiring process, the draft of the job description has been put together; however, some details need to be finalized. Mr. Schmaltz reported all personnel may not be in place for the start of school.

Mr. Tencza reported the bollards are in place at the high school, which have become a major topic within the Town, and he believes it is appropriate to have a public conversation regarding them. The first column for the school year, which will appear in the *Berlin Citizen* the first week of August, will deal with security and will address Facebook posts concerning the bollards as well as the school security vestibules.

Mr. Cugno reported the school security vestibules are on schedule to be done by the opening of school.

E. Discuss Daily Rate for Substitute Teachers

Superintendent of Schools Brian Benigni reported he received two letters from current substitutes that have been in the district for years informing him that other towns have increased their substitute rate. Superintendent Benigni requested an increase in the substitute rate. Mr. Tencza requested that, before there is any movement, Superintendent Benigni determine what the substitute rate for surrounding towns is and Berlin's substitute placement rate. From an educational standpoint, Superintendent Benigni noted that when a substitute is not filled, remedial teachers are pulled from the classroom.

F. Follow-up from Board Retreat

Board members were provided with the notes from the Board's retreat, held January 11, 2019. Mr. Tencza indicated that the last time everyone met they were in favor of getting back together to reengage and also expressed unhappiness in not having a follow up. Mr. Tencza indicated this will require additional meetings. The Board discussed having one business meeting and one workshop meeting each month. The Board will hold a workshop meeting on September 23, 2019, beginning at 5:30 p.m. at Timberland Golf Course.

G. Superintendent's Evaluation/Contract

At 7:59 p.m., a motion was made by Mr. Oakes, seconded by Ms. Dennis, to go into Executive Session to discuss the Superintendent's contract, a personnel matter.

**FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED: 9:0; including President Tencza**

In attendance for Executive Session were Board members Aroian, Dennis, Fisher, Miller, Oakes, Salina, Sassu, Sisti and Tencza.

At 8:04 p.m., the Board returned to Open Session.

Moved by Dr. Sassu, seconded by Ms. Dennis, to authorize the President of the Board to execute the superintendent's contract.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 9:0; including President Tencza

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

At 8:05 p.m., a motion was made by Ms. Dennis, seconded by Mr. Salina, to adjourn.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 9:0; including President Tencza

Respectfully submitted,

Kari Sassu, Ph.D., Secretary, Berlin Board of Education