

BERLIN BOARD OF EDUCATION
February 23, 2022 – 7:00 p.m.
MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING

Attendance: Julia Dennis
Melissa Gibbons
Jaymee Miller - Absent
Gina Nappi
Timothy Oakes
Adam Salina
Kari Sassu, Ph.D.
Tracy Sisti
Matthew Tencza
Student Representatives: Lindsey Leary
Samantha Negrao

Also in attendance: Superintendent of Schools Brian J. Benigni; Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Erin McGurk; Director of Business Operations Jeffrey Cugno; Finance Director Ashley Dorsey; Director of Pupil Personnel Services Linda Holian; Supervisor of Special Education – Elementary Michelle Zeuschner; Supervisor of Special Education – Secondary Cindy Martin; Director of Literacy and Social Studies Laurie Gjerpen; Director of Mathematics and Science Kara Watson; Director of School Security, Safety and Residency John Schmaltz; Principal of Berlin High School Eileen Eustis; Assistant Principals of Berlin High School Barbara Ventura and Katie Amenta; Principal of McGee Middle School Salvatore Urso; Assistant Principal of McGee Middle School Tim Chiaverini; Principal of Griswold School David Kitzman; Principal of Willard School Megan Sirois; and Principal of Hubbard School Alfred Souza.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. Dennis called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. in the Berlin High School Auditorium at 139 Patterson Way, Berlin, Connecticut. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

II. STUDENT PRESENTATION – BERLIN HIGH SCHOOL

Berlin High School Senior Shree Patel presented her Capstone Project – “How does the stock market work and why are stocks a good investment?”

III. COMMITTEE REPORTS/CORRESPONDENCE TO THE BOARD

A. Report of Student Representatives

Miss Leary reported the Berlin High School musical production *Into the Woods* will be performed March 3 – 6, 2022; eighth grade students were invited to the high school on February 15, 2022 for a tour, led by Upbeat members, to meet their future teachers and learn about possible courses they can take next year; and sophomore students enrolled in the AP Government and Politics class visited D.C. this past weekend with the organization Close Up.

Miss Negrao reported students in grades 8 through 11 are currently in the process of registering for courses for next year; this past weekend Upbeat hosted a trip to Mount Snow; the Upbeat pancake breakfast will be held on March 5, 2022 at Berlin High School; and the Upbeat March Leadership

Training weekend will be held March 11-13, 2022 at Camp Woodstock. Ms. Negrao provided Board members with an update on Winter athletics.

B. Committee Reports

Mr. Oakes reported the Ad-Hoc Committee for Policy Review/Revision met on February 15, 2022 to review the policies appearing on tonight's agenda for a first reading.

Ms. Sisti reported the Community Engagement Committee met on February 3, 2022 and prepared a draft policy, incorporating language from model policies, which was shared with Shipman & Goodwin for review.

C. CREC Report

There was no report this evening.

D. Correspondence to the Board

Superintendent Benigni shared correspondences received from Laurie and Tim Oakes; Jennifer Pawelczyk; Jen DiMaio and family; and Linda Delano.

IV. NEW BUSINESS – PART I

A. Revised 2021-2022 Re-opening Plan

Superintendent Benigni presented, for the Board's approval, the revised 2021-2022 re-opening plan, which incorporates many of the changes that have taken place in recent weeks and months regarding the mitigation strategies for students and staff. A copy of the 2021-2022 Opening of School and COVID-19 Mitigation Measures was provided to Board members. Superintendent Benigni stated this is the third iteration of the opening plan, updated today, and only the yellow highlighted sections are being recommended tonight for approval. The updated highlighted mitigation measures were as follows: any student or staff member has the option to wear a mask in school settings; masks are required when students are riding district buses and vans, which are public transportation and fall under federal guidelines; assigned seating may be required on buses and vans; and school-wide events may be modified to allow for social distancing and mitigation practices.

Moved by Mr. Salina, seconded by Mr. Oakes, to approve the revised 2021-2022 re-opening plan as presented.

Mr. Salina stated, based on the science and the numbers at the state level, he is comfortable with students and staff having the option to wear a mask in school settings.

In response to Dr. Sassu's question does the district have jurisdiction over revising the requirement of masks on district buses and vans, Superintendent Benigni stated not at this time.

In response to Ms. Dennis's question, is the option to wear a mask in school settings tied to a vaccination status, Superintendent Benigni stated there is no distinction between the two. Optional mask wearing is for everyone vaccinated or not vaccinated.

Mr. Tencza stated it is his understanding that the Connecticut Department of Education and the Connecticut Department of Health has the authority to implement a mask mandate regionally, if necessary, based on spikes. In response to Mr. Tencza's question how is this authority built into the revised reopening plan, Superintendent Benigni stated authority has been given, by legislation, for the State Department of Education to put a mask requirement back into place should the metrics require.

FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED: 8:0; including President Dennis

B. Review and Possible Adoption of the Proposed Board of Education Budget for 2022-2023

The Board of Education reviewed and discussed the Superintendent's Proposed Budget for 2022-2023. The Board met on January 24 to review the budget details, including information from presentations by central office administration. Earlier this evening, the Board held an informational meeting for the public so community members could provide input on the budget prior to approval. Ms. Dennis provided highlights from that presentation. The Board of Education and the Board of Finance will hold a joint meeting on March 2 to discuss the adopted budget.

Moved by Mr. Salina, seconded by Dr. Sassu, to adopt the Board of Education Operating Budget for the 2022-2023 year in the amount of \$50,122,596.

FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED: 8:0; including President Dennis

V. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Aurora Corteville, 19 Timberwood Road, Berlin, Connecticut; Sarah Patel 65 Sbona Road, Berlin, Connecticut; Tyler Ciaffaglione (student); Rachel Rochette, 61 Ellsworth Boulevard, Berlin, Connecticut; Bill Uliasz, 25 Gateway Drive, Berlin, Connecticut; Nikki Sambitsky, 947 Chamberlain Highway, Berlin, Connecticut; Laurie Schoenfield, 300 Savage Hill Road, Berlin, Connecticut; Mary Kathryn LaRose, 26 Woodruff Lane, Berlin, Connecticut; Peter Zarabozo, 158 Ellwood Road, Berlin, Connecticut; Rylee Hannifan (student); Tony Derito, 35 Vivian Drive, Berlin, Connecticut; Juliann Collazo, 801 Worthington Ridge, Berlin, Connecticut; Jackson Currao (student); Joanne Stetson, 188 Stony Mill Lane, Berlin, Connecticut; Chris Barlow, 15 Overhill Drive, Berlin, Connecticut; Twanette Price, 15 Overhill Drive, Berlin, Connecticut; Jessica Patraw, 420 Lower Lane, Berlin, Connecticut; Evelisa Mayette, 178 Lower Lane, Berlin, Connecticut; Barbara Szparkowski, 15 Fairview Place, Berlin, Connecticut; Cornel Boudria, 115 Skinner Road, Berlin, Connecticut; Sara Mortensen, 56 Madison Drive, Berlin, Connecticut; Julie Erickson, 85 Hickory Hill Road, Berlin, Connecticut; Corey Whiteside, 386 Main Street, East Berlin, Connecticut; Alan Verrastro, 535 Lower Lane, Berlin, Connecticut; and John Patrow, 420 Lower Lane, Berlin, Connecticut addressed the Board concerning the requirement of

mask wearing in school settings; providing extra-curricular activities in the schools now that mask wearing in school settings is optional; and/or the Equity and Social Justice Committee.

VI. PERSONNEL

Retirement – Teacher of Science – Berlin High School

Superintendent Benigni presented David DelGiudice’s letter of intent to retire as teacher of science at Berlin High School at the end of the 2021-2022 school year.

Moved by Mr. Salina, seconded by Dr. Sassu, to accept the retirement of David DelGiudice, teacher of science at Berlin High School, effective June 30, 2022. Also to thank him for the 38 years of service he has provided to the youth of Berlin and wish him good health and happiness in his retirement years.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 8:0; including President Dennis

VII. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Minutes
 - 1. Regular Meeting of January 10, 2022
 - 2. Special Meeting of January 12, 2022
 - 3. Special Meeting of January 24, 2022
- B. Monthly Budget Report – Period ending January 31, 2022
- C. Overnight Field Trip Request – YMCA Camp Woodstock – Upbeat March Leadership Training – March 11-13, 2022

Berlin High School Principal Eileen Eustis and Upbeat Director Sheel Patel requested permission for Berlin High School students to travel to Woodstock, CT, to participate in the March Leadership Training at Camp Woodstock on Friday, March 11, 2022 through Sunday, March 13, 2022. The purpose of the trip is to provide students with the opportunity to develop leadership skills, build relationships with peers and building staff members and plan and facilitate a service project for a group in need in the community.

- D. Request for Leave of Absence – Berlin High School – Teacher of Family and Consumer Science

Danielle Jurich, teacher of Family and Consumer Science at Berlin High School, requested an unpaid leave of absence, for childrearing purposes, to begin immediately following her maternity leave through the 2021-2022 school year.

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

FAVOR: 7 in favor; 1 abstained
MOTION CARRIED: 7:0:1; Mr. Oakes abstained

VIII. NEW BUSINESS – PART II

C. Equity and Social Justice Committee

This evening, during Audience of Citizens, the Board heard from members of the community on this topic. Ms. Dennis stated the Board will re-evaluate the structure of the Equity and Social Justice Committee moving forward at its retreat on March 13, 2022.

D. Facilities Related Updates

Director of Business Operations Jeffrey Cugno reported the stage lighting project at McGee Middle School will begin next month; the new band room at Griswold School, the classroom storage units at Hubbard School and the sky light at Hubbard School will be completed during April break; and the McGee library/media center lighting project, computer infrastructure and health suite will be completed during the summer of 2022.

Mr. Cugno stated the Willard School HVAC system project will not begin this summer. Mr. Cugno stated that on March 1, the Town Council will moved forward with appropriations; the plans and specifications are complete; and a Request for Proposal (RFP) will be put out for a construction manager. It is anticipated that this project will begin in the summer of 2023.

E. Open Choice Program Participation for 2022-2023

Superintendent Brian Benigni reported on the current number of Open Choice Program students in the Berlin schools and presented a recommendation to the Board regarding the level of participation for the 2022-2023 school year.

Superintendent Benigni provided Board members with a document reflecting, by grade, his recommended number of Open Choice students for 2022-2023. Superintendent Benigni reported the projected maintained seats for 2022-2023 are ninety-three (93) students. Superintendent Benigni recommended the district accommodate an additional twenty (20) students for the 2022-2023 school year and provided the Board with his recommendation for placement of these students within grade kindergarten (10) and first grade (10). Superintendent Benigni stated, if the district maintains the

ninety-three (93) students and fills the addition twenty (20) seats, the level of participation will be at 4.25%. If the district does not maintain the 4% level of participation, the amount of funding received from the state drops \$2,000 per student.

Moved by Dr. Sassu, seconded by Mr. Salina, to approve the superintendent's recommendation regarding the level of participation in the Open Choice Program for the 2022-2023 school year as presented.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 8:0; including President Dennis

F. Discussion of Graduation Site for 2022

Superintendent Benigni stated Central Connecticut State University has stated they would not be renting Welte Hall to any outside groups until at least the fall of 2022. Berlin High School Principal Eileen Eustis provided two options for the Board's consideration to hold commencement for the Class of 2022 at Sage Park this June if there is inclement weather on Friday, June 10. Board members were provided with the two options and a report of the graduation expenses for 2021 versus 2022.

Moved by Mr. Salina, seconded by Dr. Sassu, to hold commencement for the Class of 2022 at Sage Park.

Board members entered into a discussion, and Principal Eustis responded to the Board's questions regarding the two options. It was the consensus of the Board to move forward with Option Two.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 8:0; including President Dennis

G. Policy Review/Revision – First Reading

1. Policy 1010 – Policy Regarding Green Cleaning Programs
2. Policy 1250 – Policy Regarding Visitors and Observations in Schools
3. Policy 1300.2 – Policy Regarding Possession of Deadly Weapons or Firearms
4. Policy 4118.112 – Policy Regarding Prohibition of Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment in the Workplace (Personnel)
5. Policy 4118.232 – Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug-Free Workplace
6. Policy 5125 – Confidentiality and Access to Education Records
7. Policy 5131.6 – Drug and Alcohol Use by Students
8. Policy 5131.61 – Chemical Health Policy for Student Athletes
9. Policy 5132 – Student Dress
10. Policy 5144 – Student Discipline
11. Policy 5145.4 – Non-Discrimination (Students)
12. Policy 5145.5 – Policy Regarding Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 – Prohibition of Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment (Students)
13. Policy 6135 – Parent-Teacher Communication
14. Policy 6146 – High School Graduation Requirements
15. Bylaw 9001 – Committees

16. Bylaw 9005 – Conflict of Interest
17. Bylaw 9010 – Construction and Posting of Agenda
18. Bylaw 9015 – Filling Vacancies on the Board
19. Bylaw 9025 – Formulation, Adoption, Amendment or Deletion of Bylaws
20. Bylaw 9030 – Formulation, Adoption, Amendment or Deletion of Policies
21. Bylaw 9033 – Code of Conduct for Board Members
22. Bylaw 9040 – Minutes
23. Bylaw 9045 – Oath of Office
24. Bylaw 9050 – Officers
25. Bylaw 9050.1 – Official Duties – President
26. Bylaw 9050.2 – Official Duties – Secretary
27. Bylaw 9060 – Public Meetings and Executive Session
28. Bylaw 9065 – Quorum and Voting Procedures
29. Bylaw 9070 – Removal of Board Officers
30. Bylaw 9075 – Role of Board and Members
31. Bylaw 9080 – Suspension of Policies, Bylaws or Administrative Regulations
32. Bylaw 9085 – Time, Place and Notice of Meetings
33. Bylaw 9090 – Transaction of Business

Shipman & Goodwin, LLP recommended revisions to the above policies and bylaws as noted on the summary sheet provided to Board members. The Ad-Hoc Committee for Policy Review/Revision met on February 15, 2022, to review the recommended revisions. Since this is a first reading, no action is required; the second reading/adoption will take place at the March 14, 2022 Board meeting.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:22 p.m., a motion was made by Mr. Salina, seconded by Dr. Sassu, to adjourn.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 8:0; including President Dennis

Respectfully submitted,

Tracy Sisti, Secretary, Berlin Board of Education