

BERLIN BOARD OF EDUCATION

November 22, 2021

MINUTES

ANNUAL 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 Human Resources Denise Parsons; Director of Mathematics and Science Kara Watson; Principal of Berlin High School Eileen Eustis; Assistance Principal of Berlin High School Barbara Ventura; Assistant Principal of McGee Middle School Tim Chiaverini; Lead Teacher of McGee Middle School Karen Despres; 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 6:02 p.m. in the Berlin High School Auditorium at 139 Patterson Way, Berlin, Connecticut. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Ms. Dennis congratulated re-elected Board members Adam Salina and Tracy Sisti and welcomed newly-elected Board members Melissa Gibbons, Gina Nappi and Matthew Tencza.

II. STUDENT PRESENTATION – BERLIN HIGH SCHOOL

Madrigals Kylie Bacon, Adelaide Crisler, Max Ding, Nathaniel Elmani, Meredith Gendreau, Emily Lamoureux, Thomas Morisse-Corsetti, Laura Munch, Brynn Nogiec, Emily Roche, Sara Rogan, Laura Sarrazin, Greg Swan, Angelica Szczygla, and David Wadstrup performed the “National Anthem” and “America The Beautiful.” Prelude music was provided by the Berlin High School sax quartet featuring Colleen Clark, Jethro Grumo, Joseph Manzi, and Julia Wanke.

III. SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

A. Berlin Lions Club

Berlin Lions Club Fair President Gary Schmidt and members Ken Scheer, Dan Daigle and Gary Bienkowski, presented the Board of Education with a check for \$3,900. This money was raised in a tip jar at the Lions Club booth at the Berlin Fair. The Lions Club generously donated the money to the Berlin Board of Education in the form of a gift card for each elementary school teacher, including preschool teachers, to purchase classroom supplies.

- B. Certificate of Appreciation Awards to Former Board Members Steven Jenkins, Mark Pruzin and Stephen Weber

Superintendent Benigni and President Dennis recognized and thanked former Board members Steven Jenkins, Mark Pruzin and Stephen Weber for their service to the Board of Education.

- C. Recognition of Ten Years of Service to the Board of Education – Timothy Oakes

Superintendent Benigni and President Dennis recognized Mr. Oakes' ten-year anniversary and thanked him for his ten years of service to the Board of Education.

IV. COMMITTEE REPORTS/CORRESPONDENCE TO THE BOARD

- A. Report of Student Representatives

Miss Leary reported on Thursday, November 18, 2021, the National Honor Society inducted fourteen new members; tomorrow evening, Berlin High School will host the Powder Puff Football Game with proceeds going towards Berlin Helping Berlin, the T-Cop Fund and the Nick Zuk Foundation; the National Honor Society will host Pajama Day on December 10, 2021 to support the Connecticut Children's Medical Center; the Interact Club raised over \$250 through fundraising with proceeds going directly to families in the Berlin community who need help with holiday meals and other dues; and the Interact Club is partnering with the Salvation Army to provide children in need with holiday gifts through the Angel Tree Program.

Miss Negrao provided Board members with an end-of-season recap for fall sports. Miss Negrao reported the winter choral concert date has been changed from December 7, 2021 to December 14, 2021, and the annual Upbeat Christmas tree sales will be held November 26, 2021 through December 10, 2021 at the Berlin VFW with proceeds going back to Upbeat to help with future fundraisers and projects.

- B. Committee Reports

Dr. Sassu reported on the Curriculum Committee meeting held prior to tonight's meeting and the discussion concerning the 2022-2023 Berlin High School Program of Studies.

- C. CREC Report

There was no report this evening.

- D. Correspondence to the Board

Superintendent Benigni shared thank you notes received from Joy Cooper and Karen Coughlin.

V. AWARDS & PRESENTATIONS IN CONJUNCTION WITH AMERICAN EDUCATION WEEK

A. Superintendent's CAPSS (Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents) Student Awards

The administration and staff have selected ten students to receive the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) Superintendent/Student Award Recognition Program, "Certificate of Excellence" award. Students are selected for this prestigious annual award based upon criteria such as demonstrated leadership to the school community, community service and service to others, and academic prowess relative to ability. Building Principals, Lead Teacher Karen Despres and Superintendent Benigni presented the CAPSS awards this year to fifth graders Callie Szymanski and Liam Sullivan from Griswold School; Lila Ricupero and Kevin Karwowski from Hubbard School; and Sarah Savi and Quran Leon from Willard School. Also recognized were eighth graders Meghan Snyder and Ryan Lavender from McGee Middle School; and seniors Olivia Salina and Michael Vignone from Berlin High School.

B. Introduction of the 2022 Building Teachers of the Year and the District Teacher of the Year

Superintendent Benigni recognized the following Building Teachers of the Year for 2022: Lori Donovan from Griswold School; Michele Prior from Hubbard School; Cheyanne Valinsky from Willard School; Joy Cooper from McGee Middle School; and Patricia Pires from Berlin High School. Patricia Pires went on to become the Berlin School District's Teacher of the Year. They each received a certificate of recognition, a book store gift card, and a copy of Parker J. Palmer's book, The Courage To Teach.

C. Introduction of the 2022 Paraprofessional of the Year

Director of Pupil Personnel Services Linda Holian recognized Christy Ketley, from Mary E. Griswold School, as the 2022 Paraprofessional of the Year. Ms. Holian stated Christy is a dedicated and diligent staff member in the SNAP program. She is the go to person when a student may need additional behavioral support and is able to think on her feet in challenging situations in order to help a child achieve success. She is firm, fair and consistent with her expectations and always has the student's best interests in mind. She embraces her role as a paraprofessional with enthusiasm, purpose, professionalism and commitment. Christy has been nominated for the 2022 Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year award. She was presented with a certificate of recognition and a book store gift card.

D. Support Staff Recognition Awards

Assistant Superintendent McGurk recognized support staff members for their outstanding performance and dedication to the students, staff, and parents of the Berlin Public Schools. This year's recipients were Rosanna Zup, Griswold School; Nazario Figueroa, Hubbard School; Joanne Addamo, Willard School; Tracy Smith, McGee Middle School; Leah Carbonell, Berlin High School; and Nicole Damiata for the Board of Education Central Office. They each were presented with a certificate of appreciation and recognition along with a book store gift card.

E. "Friend of Berlin Schools" Awards

The "Friend of Berlin Schools" awards are awarded annually to those volunteers nominated by each school's administration, PTO or community, and selected by the Board of Education for their outstanding contributions as a volunteer who has devoted time and energy to helping the children and schools of the Berlin Public Schools. Superintendent Benigni recognized this year's recipients: Jon and Amy Peyton, Griswold School; Shelley Haley, Hubbard School; Melissa Urrunaga, Willard School; Tracy Sisti, McGee Middle School; and Missy Ferland for Berlin High School. They each were presented with a certificate of appreciation and recognition along with a book store gift card.

From 7:17 p.m. until 7:29 p.m., a short recess was held for refreshments and to informally meet the award recipients, their family and friends.

VI. REORGANIZATION

A. Annual Election of Officers

Ms. Dennis reconvened the meeting. The election of officers was conducted in accordance with State Statute 10-218. Elections shall be in open session. Board of Education past practice has been that elections are carried out using signed ballots. Also, according to Policy 9050, officers shall be elected from the Board, "...by majority vote of those Board members present and voting."

1. President: Ms. Sisti nominated Ms. Dennis. Mr. Oakes seconded the nomination.

Superintendent Benigni collected the signed ballots and announced that Ms. Dennis was unanimously affirmed, 8:0.

2. Secretary: Dr. Sassu nominated Ms. Sisti. Ms. Dennis seconded the nomination.

Superintendent Benigni collected the signed ballots and announced that Ms. Sisti was unanimously affirmed, 8:0.

B. MOTION for Annual Schedule of Regular Meetings

Board members were provided with a memo regarding proposed Board of Education meeting dates, in accordance with Policy 9085.

Moved by Mr. Salina, seconded by Dr. Sassu, to approve the Annual Schedule of Regular Meetings, in accordance with Policy 9085, as presented.

Mr. Salina commented the Annual Schedule of Regular Meetings reflects one Board meeting per month and does not reflect any Committee or Budget meetings. Ms. Dennis stated Board meetings are typically held on the second Monday of the month; however, Board members are asked to keep the fourth Monday open in the event there is a need for a second meeting.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 8:0; including President Dennis

C. MOTION for Fiscal Management

Approval of designees for the purpose of signing checks for the General Fund and Grants, Berlin High School Enterprise Fund, Berlin Public Schools Activity Fund, Cafeteria Fund, and the BOE Programs is necessary, in accordance with Policy 9046.

1. **Moved by Mr. Oakes, seconded by Mr. Salina, that Kevin Delaney and the Board of Education president be designated signers of the General Fund and Grants.**

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 8:0; including President Dennis

2. **Moved by Mr. Oakes, seconded by Mr. Salina, that Barbara Ventura and Doreen Guy be designated signers of the Berlin High School Enterprise Fund.**

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 8:0; including President Dennis

3. **Moved by Mr. Oakes, seconded by Mr. Salina, that each principal and Doreen Guy be designated signers of the Berlin Public Schools Activity Fund.**

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 8:0; including President Dennis

4. **Moved by Mr. Oakes, seconded by Mr. Salina, that Brian Benigni and Doreen Guy be designated signers of the Cafeteria Fund.**

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 8:0; including President Dennis

5. **Moved by Mr. Oakes, seconded by Mr. Salina, that Ashley Dorsey and Doreen Guy be designated signers of the BOE Programs.**

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 8:0; including President Dennis

D. Appointment of Board Legal Counsel for 2021-2022

In accordance with Board Policy 9055, the legal counsel to represent the Board of Education for the next year, 2021-2022, should be selected at this time.

Moved by Dr. Sassu, seconded by Mr. Oakes, that the law firm of Shipman & Goodwin of Hartford be appointed to continue as the Board of Education counsel for the 2021-2022 year and that they should be so informed.

In response to Ms. Gibbons' question how satisfied is the Board of Education and the district with the services of Shipman & Goodwin, Board members Dennis, Salina, Sassu and Superintendent Benigni

commented on Shipman & Goodwin's experience, knowledge, expertise, responsiveness and the degree to which they are equipped to answer and address any challenges that may come before the Board.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 8:0; including President Dennis

VII. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Nothing to report.

VIII. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Minutes
 - 1. Regular Meeting of October 12, 2021
 - 2. Special Meeting of November 1, 2021
- B. Monthly Budget Report – Period ending October 31, 2021
- C. Request for Leave of Absence – Emma Hart Willard School – Teacher of Grade 1

Dara Flom Lesse, teacher of Grade 1 at Willard 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 Dr. Sassu, seconded by Mr. Salina, to approve the consent agenda as presented.

FAVOR: 6 in favor; 2 abstained

MOTION CARRIED: 6:0:2; Mr. Tencza and Ms. Nappi abstained

IX. NEW BUSINESS

Facilities Related Updates

Director of Operations Jeffrey Cugno reported the following:

The Town Council awarded the contract for the lighting upgrades within the McGee Middle School Library/Media Center, which includes a twenty percent project contingency, and construction will occur during the summer.

The classroom storage units at Hubbard School, and the new band room at Griswold School are in the schematic design and planning stage and will be put out to bid in December, with construction planned over April vacation.

The contract for the Willard School fire alarm upgrades has been awarded, and it is anticipated the upgrades will be completed the summer of 2022.

The Willard School HVAC system project will be completed in two stages. The first stage will be completed this summer, and the second stage the following summer. Mr. Cugno stated summer programs that occur at Willard School will need to be relocated.

The McGee Middle School roof top units, which were funded last year, are planned to be completed the summer of 2022.

With regard to the YMCA project, a walk through is planned on Thursday, December 2, 2021, at the McGee Middle School and Hubbard School. The bids will be opened on December 21, 2021 and construction is planned for the winter and spring.

New boilers were installed at the Transition Academy.

With regard to the Capital Plan, Mr. Cugno stated, at this point, there have been no final negotiations or conversations.

In response to Mr. Salina's question regarding the wrapping of the ductwork at Berlin High School, Mr. Cugno stated the ductwork is generally complete.

X. ADJOURNMENT

At 7:54 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