

BERLIN BOARD OF EDUCATION

September 13, 2021

MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING

Attendance: Julia Dennis
Steven Jenkins - Absent
Jaymee Miller - Absent
Timothy Oakes
Mark Pruzin
Adam Salina - Absent
Kari Sassu, Ph.D.
Tracy Sisti
Stephen Weber
Student Representatives: Lindsey Leary
Samantha Negrao - Absent

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 Literacy and Social Studies Laurie Gjerpen; Director of Mathematics and Science Kara Watson; Principal of Berlin High School Eileen Eustis; Principal of McGee Middle School Salvatore Urso; Assistant Principal of McGee Middle School Tim Chiaverini; Principal of Griswold School David Kitzman; Lead Teacher of Griswold School Cara Quinn; and Principal of Willard School Megan Sirois.

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.

Add Item to the Consent Agenda

Moved by Ms. Dennis, seconded by Mr. Pruzin, to add Item D. Overnight Field Trip Request – BHS – Upbeat for October 16-17, 2021 – Camp Woodstock to be added to the Consent Agenda.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 6:0; including President Dennis

II. STUDENT PRESENTATION – MARY E. GRISWOLD SCHOOL

Ms. Beaudet and members of her class presented a math number talk. A number talk is a mental math warm-up routine used to encourage students to explore various strategies, compare and contrast their thinking, make and learn from mistakes in a safe environment, and teach communication skills. Students explained what the activity entails and engaged Board members in a number talk.

At this time, Item IV. was moved up in the agenda. Hearing no objection, this item was addressed.

IV. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Jesse Ede, 72 Worthington Point Road, Berlin, Connecticut thanked the Board for the McGee Middle School and Willard School Open Houses he and his wife attended. Mr. Ede addressed the Board concerning diversity in the Berlin educational system and town.

Rachel Rochette, 61 Ellsworth Boulevard, Berlin, Connecticut encouraged the Board and hiring departments to recruit new teachers in the areas of diversity, stating it would be impactful for students to be taught by people that are not the same as them.

III. COMMITTEE REPORTS/CORRESPONDENCE TO THE BOARD

A. Report of Student Representatives

Miss Leary reported many of the Berlin High School clubs are back and running, with the two most popular ones, Upbeat and The Interact Club, having many volunteer opportunities compared to last year when there was not a lot of in-person activity. Miss Leary reported on the fall sports season to date; the Berlin Fair will be held on Friday; the freshman orientation; and the freshman welcome night. Miss Leary stated that she, along with student representative Samantha, notice the overall positive vibe throughout the school and that everyone is excited to be back, especially the seniors, and if students have to wear masks to be together, that is what will be done so they can continue with some of their normal traditions.

B. Committee Reports

There were no Committee reports this evening.

C. CREC Report

Ms. Sisti reported the Capital Region Education Council will meet Thursday for the first time.

D. Correspondence to the Board

Superintendent Benigni shared a thank you note from Megan Sirois.

V. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Minutes – Special Meeting of August 25, 2021

B. Monthly Budget Report – Period ending August 31, 2021

C. Request for Leave of Absence – Paraprofessional – Mary E. Griswold School

Daniela Sznaj, paraprofessional at Mary E. Griswold School, requested a one-year unpaid leave of absence, from January 2022 through December 2022, to participate in an internship opportunity at Mary E. Griswold School through Sacred Heart University.

D. Overnight Field Trip Request – BHS – Upbeat – October 16-17, 2021 –
Camp Woodstock

Berlin High School Principal Eileen Eustis requested permission for approximately 60 -75 students to travel to Camp Woodstock, on October 16-17, 2021, to attend the Freshman/Sophomore Leadership Weekend. This trip introduces the freshmen and sophomore members to Upbeat team-building and project planning opportunities. Students will be able to plan and lead a service project to be completed after returning to BHS.

Moved by Mr. Oakes, seconded by Mr. Pruzin, to approve the consent agenda as presented.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 6:0; including President Dennis

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Facilities Related Updates

Director of Operations Jeffrey Cugno stated on August 23, 2021 he reported on the ongoing projects sponsored by the Board of Education, being done in concert with the town facilities department, independent architects, engineers and contractors. Mr. Cugno stated design contracts for two projects, one at Griswold School and one at Hubbard School, were put in place today. Mr. Cugno stated, for this budget season, the Town Manager has requested the Board's submissions by October 15, 2021. Within the next few weeks, representatives from the Business Office, along with the building principal, head custodian and the town Facilities Department, will be touring each facility to develop the Board's priority list for upcoming projects. Mr. Cugno stated the key objective is to be realistic in the requests, giving the anticipated budget constraints, but not to lose sight of preserving and maintaining the schools in a manner that best benefits the students.

B. Summer Program Update
1. Special Education

Director of Pupil Personnel Services Linda Holian thanked Michelle Zeuschner, Cindy Martin, JoAnn Walicki and Sue McNally for putting together the successful ESY summer program. Ms. Holian reported on the ESY program offered to students qualifying for these services. Ms. Holian stated two sessions ran, a five week program for students in the BLAST program and a four week program for preschool through Grade 12 students. Ms. Holian reported a total of 132 students actually participated in the summer school program, and there were an additional 39 students recommended, but families chose not to have their children participate. Ms. Holian stated the State Department of Education gave every school district a Special Education stipend. These funds allowed 19 students the opportunity to experience a typical camp program, after the summer program ended, for two weeks at the Berlin YMCA. In addition, these funds allowed for 15 paraprofessionals to assist these students in having a typical camp experience.

2. General Education

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Erin McGurk, Ed.D. provided an overview of the summer academy programs, both to support academics and to expand the arts programming. Dr. McGurk thanked Laurie Gjerpen, Kara Watson, Tyler Boyle and Ross Hanson for their help expanding the program. Dr. McGurk stated the district used ESSER funds to support some of the summer learning programs designed to target students identified in need of additional support and to expand arts access for students. Dr. McGurk stated the district ran a Summer Academy for approximately 75 rising first, second, and third grade students who were identified by their teachers as in need of additional support in literacy and math. Students also had the opportunity to participate in creative movement. In addition, through coordination with the YMCA, the district offered a camp program as an add on to the Summer Academy.

Dr. McGurk stated the district provided additional opportunities for English Language Learners. ESSER funds were used to provide students the opportunity to participate in the Summer Academy and stay for the summer camp.

Dr. McGurk stated two different summer programs ran at the middle school and the high school to provide mathematics support.

In addition, Dr. McGurk stated the district expanded the music offerings, which incorporated singing, rhythm activities and ukulele instruction. In addition, the district subsidized 69 students who participated in the Beginning Band Program.

C. Summer Curriculum Work Update

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Erin McGurk, Ed.D., provided a brief overview of the process for summer curriculum work proposals and the work that was done in the summer of 2021 to update the district's curriculum at the elementary, middle school and high school levels. Dr. McGurk stated 56 proposals were received, and teachers completed approximately 1,500 hours of summer curriculum work.

In response to Ms. Dennis's question did any of the curriculum change over the summer as a result of the Equity and Social Justice Committee, Dr. McGurk stated there are no new courses, no new textbooks and no significant changes based on the result of the work of the Equity and Social Justice Committee.

D. Central Connecticut Transition Academy

Director of Pupil Personnel Services Linda Holian announced the partnership between Cromwell and Berlin Public Schools. This partnership will provide transition services for students ages 18 to 22 in both communities. The Berlin Transition Academy is now called the Central Connecticut Transition Academy. The program will continue to run out of the Berlin YMCA on Main Street. Many of the students have been with each other since preschool or kindergarten, and this partnership allows students to develop and foster new relationships and broaden their social circles. When the Berlin Transition Academy moved to the YMCA six years ago, the program began with four students. Last year, the program had 10 students, and this year 20 students are participating in the program. It is the

goal of both Berlin and Cromwell to continue to grow the program by offering tuition spots for students in surrounding towns. An Open House for the families and students will be held on Wednesday, September 22, at 6:30 p.m. Board members are invited to attend.

- E. Policy Review/Revision – Second Reading/Adoption
 - 1. New Policy 3324.1 – Code of Conduct Governing Procurements Under A Federal Award

Federal law requires non-Federal entities, including school districts, that receive Federal funds to develop and implement a written code of conduct covering conflicts of interest and governing the actions of its employees engaged in the selection, award and/or administration of federally funded contracts. This means that, in all applicable cases, property and/or services purchased with Federal awards, including Connecticut School Nutrition Program funds, must be purchased in accordance with a written code of conduct. Federal law also requires that the school district's code of conduct provide for disciplinary actions to be taken for violating the standards set forth in its code of conduct. This policy complies with 2 C.F.R. § 200.318 and outlines proper practices for procuring property and services under a Federal award with fairness and integrity. This policy was reviewed by the Ad-Hoc Committee for Policy Review/Revision at its meeting on August 23, 2021 and a first reading of this policy took place at the August 25, 2021 special Board meeting. The second reading/adoption took place this evening.

- 2. Revised Policy 3323 - Purchasing

Shipman & Goodwin LLP recommended revisions to the Purchasing policy to include language regarding the procurement of property and services under a Federal award and Appendix A – Procurement Standards for the Acquisition of Property or Services Under a Federal Award. Posting legal notices, inviting sealed bids/proposals, on the Board's website was also added to this policy. The revisions to this policy were reviewed by the Ad-Hoc Committee for Policy Review/Revision at its meeting on August 23, 2021, and a first reading of this policy took place at the August 25, 2021 special Board meeting. The second reading/adoption took place this evening.

Moved by Mr. Oakes, seconded by Dr. Sassu, that the Board adopt New Policy 3324.1 – Code of Conduct Governing Procurements Under A Federal Award and Revised Policy 3323 – Purchasing, as presented.

Mr. Oakes stated these polices address the federal grants, awards and stipends the district has received and are a good step forward in making sure these funds are handled appropriately, properly and in full visibility with the community.

FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED: 6:0; including President Dennis

- F. Report on Equity and Social Justice Committee

At the August 25, 2021 special meeting, Board President Julia Dennis requested that Superintendent Benigni look at the committee's structure, effectiveness, the positives and negatives that have come out

of the meetings, and determine a way to ensure transparency and report back to the Board at its next meeting. Superintendent Benigni provided his report, which was provided to Board members in Schoology, and responded to the Board's questions. Superintendent Benigni reported on the proposed changes in the Committee structure and operating procedures and stated the Committee will meet quarterly and meetings will include opportunities for new learning. Dr. McGurk clarified the way in which the Parent/Family/Community Outreach Subcommittee; Curriculum Audit and Anti-Bias/Anti-Racist Efforts for Students Subcommittee; Professional Learning for Educators and Other Members of the School Staff Subcommittee; Recruitment and Retention of a Diverse Workforce Subcommittee; and School Culture and Student Opportunities Subcommittee will work and how oversight will be provided to the subcommittees.

Superintendent Benigni reviewed the goals for the 2021-2022 school year.

G. Negotiations (executive session anticipated)

There was no Executive Session this evening.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

At 7:15 p.m., a motion was made by Dr. Sassu, seconded by Mr. Pruzin, to adjourn.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 6:0, including President Dennis

Respectfully submitted,

Tracy Sisti, Secretary, Berlin Board of Education