

Monday, April 1, 2019

MINUTES OF THE FACILITIES COMMITTEE OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held at Bridgeport City Hall, 45 Lyon Terrace, Bridgeport, Connecticut, on April 1, 2019, at Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 6:40 p.m.

Committee members present were Chair Hernan Illingworth, Maria Pereira and John Weldon. Board member Joe Sokolovic arrived subsequently as noted.

Ms. Pereira moved to approve the committee's minutes of March 6, 2019. The motion was seconded by Mr. Weldon and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was the bullying prevention committee update.

Asst. Superintendent Janet Brown-Clayton said she provided the committee with a bullying report broken down by school and an allegation report. She said the number of allegations had risen from 70 last year to 327 this year.

Dementred Young, director of social work, and Ca'Tisha Howard from the committee were present. Ms. Brown-Clayton said professional development had been provided to principals on how to use Power School's allegation page.

In response to question, Ms. Brown-Clayton said the state's definition of bullying involves repeated acts.

Mr. Young said there is an ongoing student poster contest on bullying prevention. Ms. Howard said all the submissions

will be displayed.

Ms. Pereira said this was a huge improvement after four years of frustration on her part.

Ms. Brown-Clayton said the committee's concern about bullying coincided with the rollout of social-emotional learning training and restorative practices.

Ms. Pereira said she did not believe that Wilbur Cross School has only had one incident of bullying. In response to a question, Ms. Brown-Clayton said the school had a new principal and the climate in the school is much improved, however, she will use the data for further inquiries into the situation.

Mr. Young said there was a \$500 award offered to all schools to do a campaign on bullying. He said he asked principals to report back on what they did with the money and what was successful. He said the committee wants to know why some schools report low numbers of bullying.

Ms. Howard said Dr. Johnson gave each school the opportunity to compete for money by responding with proposals. She described some of the activities schools engaged in, including those with the theme of Be Kind.

Ms. Howard described the use of buddy benches for students.

Ms. Howard said information for parents and students on bullying will be added to the district website.

Mr. Young described the appeals process in bullying. He said it works similarly to an appeal from an PPT or a similar

determination. Ms. Howard displayed a bullying report form which a student can submit. She said it is key to have uniform paperwork at every school. There will also be information for parents and how they can approach their children if they believe they are being bullied. Mr. Young said cyber-bullying could be added to the information.

Mr. Illingworth said he appreciated the effort the entire committee made. He said he did not want to see high numbers of bullying, but he wanted to see real numbers.

Mr. Young said students identified as bullying are reported to the state. He said he was glad people are taking time to review the allegations and investigate. Ms. Pereira said because of the FERPA the student's name would not be made public if they were reported to the state.

Ms. Pereira said children who are bullied will not come to school, which leads to dropouts.

In reference to a concern about Cross School, Ms. Brown-Clayton said the questions the board members are asking the questions that are asked at the committee meetings.

Ms. Howard said she was very happy Dr. Johnson made her co-chair of the committee.

Ms. Pereira requested the committee receive an end-of-year report on bullying.

The next agenda item was an update on Bassick High.

Alan Wallack said he has been meeting with the architect and the principal every other week. The state has been petitioned to increase the enrollment from 911 to 1006. He

said there should be an answer to the request by the end of the day tomorrow.

Mr. Wallack said the building needed to accommodate all the current programs, plus new programs, into the square footage. He said 186 feet square feet per student is allowed. There are 850 students in the school right now.

Ms. Pereira said Rep. Ezequiel Santiago spoke to her a few days before he passed away about drafting the letter about Bassick from the delegation. She said there was probably never a letter submitted.

Ms. Pereira suggested reaching out to the delegation. Mr. Wallack said requests to increase the size of schools are often granted. If it is rejected, he suggested going to the delegation. Ms. Pereira said every time a new school opens there is a huge influx of students.

Mr. Sokolovic arrived at the meeting.

Mr. Illingworth said a plan was needed for where the Bassick students will go when construction begins.

Mr. Wallack said he believed the state would approve the Bassick project in June.

Ms. Pereira said she spoke with Governor Lamont recently and he did not know Bassick was on the list. Mr. Wallack said there are only three schools in the whole state on the priority list for school construction.

John Ricci, director of public facilities, said the cost to outfit the former Harding High to accommodate Bassick students went from \$700,000 to \$2 million. He said Mr. Wallack and

the construction manager documented the improvements needed and it started to approach \$2 million. Mr. Ricci said the \$700,000 would come out of capital money.

In response to a question, Mr. Ricci said the city was trying to get reimbursed for school projects from the state in the range of \$30 million. He said Roosevelt, Fairchild Wheeler, Columbus, Cross, Discovery and Longfellow have not been closed out. He said the review of change orders complicates the issue. Step one was to bundle all the change orders to the state as part of the closeout.

In response to a question, Mr. Ricci said he did not have an answer yet as to where money for the Harding remedial work would be found.

In response to a question, Mr. Wallack said he received real estate listings and looked at other options. Mr. Ricci said the old Housatonic Community College is not a viable option. Mr. Wallack said he looked at St. Vincent's School of Nursing and a hall at Bridgeport Hospital.

Ms. Pereira said the board would have a huge busing expense for Bassick students.

Ms. Pereira said the school buildings are owned by the city and the board acts as tenants that don't pay rent.

Mr. Wallack said if the \$2 million was spent on the old Harding, perhaps the board would find another use for it and not turn it over to the city. Ms. Pereira described how it would be appropriate for Bridgeport Military Academy.

In response to a question, Mr. Ricci said recouping the \$30 million would not happen in time to rehabilitate the old

Harding High.

In response to a question, Mr. Wallack said the issues with the old Harding include the roof in the main gym, pipes in closets, damage to the exterior walls of the building, plumbing and plaster crumbling. Mr. Hammond said there were radiators hanging off the wall. Mr. Ricci said there may be mold issues as well.

Mr. Ricci said it looked like the old Harding would be the only option and we have to look at where the money would come from to make it habitable for the students.

Jeff Postolowski, director of ITS, said there are also technology issues with the old Harding, including cameras, phones, and the PA system.

Ms. Pereira asked if the state would be willing to provide money if board intended to keep the old Harding in use going forward. Mr. Wallack said a plan would have to be presented to the state.

Mr. Wallack said the state was now requiring that boards submit letters stating they have enough custodial staff and tradesmen to keep new buildings up.

Mr. Ricci said we were lucky getting on the priority list this year for Bassick and it might be difficult to get another project approved. He said the Bassick students had to be relocated for at least two years. Ms. Pereira said the need for a building would be a reasonable argument to make to the state through the delegation.

Mr. Ricci said it was Rep. Stafstrom's district. Ms. Pereira said it was Mr. Bradley's and Ms. Moore's district as well.

She said Senator Moore's relationship with Governor Lamont could be helpful.

Mr. Wallack said every building OPM has recommended as a possible place for Bassick students has proven unusable. He said he did not believe there was an available large school in surrounding communities.

In response to a question, Mr. Ricci he had could have more definitive answers in a couple of months.

In response to a question, Mr. Hammond said he could report back next month on repairs to Fairchild Wheeler.

The next agenda item was on the permanent location for Classical Studies Magnet Academy.

Mr. Wallack said OPM told him the former Madison Avenue Stop & Shop would be rebuilt as retail with apartments on top. He said there is another building that he is going to visit with Mr. Ricci in the next two weeks.

The next agenda item was discussion and possible action on school gardens.

Angela Bhushan, director of science, said she was filling in for Dr. Otuwa. Ms. Bhushan said there have been meetings with Robert Halstead from the Bridgeport Community Land Trust and representatives of Green Village Initiative(GVI).

Ms. Bhushan said the focus of the meeting was how to set up gardens at every school. She said it was decided to offer different options to schools.

One option is a school leadership; the school personnel

being the lead, with GVI supporting with maintenance.

Cristina Sandolo of GVI passed out a draft agreement for schools that choose this model, which will include a garden champion who will lead the process, professional development, lesson plans and field visits to community farms.

Ms. Bhushan said the second option is community growers. Farmers for profit, who work with GVI, will plant and maintain the gardens. The farmers may donate some of what is grown to the school, but most of it is sold for profit.

Ms. Sandolo said right now there are about 25 school gardens and not all will function in the same way. The proposal is to create a menu of four options for schools. She said Batalla and Columbus, Black Rock and Discovery Magnet are all considered for the first school leadership model.

Ms. Sandolo said GVI was training urban farmers, who are trying to create a local food system. The farmers need space to grow. She distributed a proposed agreement for those type of gardens. The farmers might engage a class once a month. She said not all of the schools have the ability to get their students out to the gardens. She noted a lot of the gardens have been around since 2012, but are not being maintained.

Ms. Pereira said she did not like the idea of people coming onto school grounds to grow things for profit. Ms. Sandolo said there would be food safety and good agriculture practices training, as well as background checks. She said it was a creative way of getting the gardens utilized and the students inspired by farming at the school if the school itself

is unable to keep the garden going this year. She said the students would learn a lot by meeting young urban farmers and understanding the importance of a local food system. Mr. Weldon said the schools would be able to take over such gardens in the following years.

Mr. Sokolovic said he was not opposed to a public-private partnership as long as the students get something out of it. He said there have often been partnerships between farmers and landowners where both have benefitted from unused land.

Ms. Sandolo said the farmers who attended last month's meeting – Sean, Richard and Rosalind – are awesome at working with kids.

Mr. Sokolovic said he supported all the options as it is something we need in the system.

Mr. Sokolovic left the meeting,

Mr. Bhushan said the Community Land Trust would like to work with Bassick. Students from Fairfield University will work in the classroom with a teacher and then in doing the work to create a pizza garden. Mr. Halstead said there would be a planting day with BuildOn to plant vegetables, with the harvest to take place in the fall. He said the use of what is grown for the pizza garden will give the students the full cycle of growing, picking, cooking and eating.

Mr. Halstead said Dr. Raiola, the principal at Bassick, is on board with it. Ms. Bhushan said BuildOn is scheduled to do the cleanup of the garden space in April. She said giving the students academic credit is also under discussion.

Ms. Bhushan said aquaponics is currently being done at the Aquaculture School, and it is being considered for Harding and Discovery Magnet, although there are startup costs. She said Mr. Brown, the Harding principal, preferred to go with Mr. Halstead's suggestion of a herb garden. She said there is fencing on three sides of the garden, but more fencing of about 50 feet is needed to prevent vandalism.

Ms. Pereira suggested Mr. Schilling and Mr. Wallack ask the contactor if they would be willing to donate the fence. She said she has learned it never hurts to ask. She said she would reach out to Mr. Wallack and Mr. Ricci.

In response to a question, Mr. Halstead said there is a four-foot fence around the Bassick garden.

Ms. Bhushan said there was also a meeting with representatives of Food Corps. Ms. Sandolo said it was a service organization like Americorps. Ms. Bhushan said right now Food Corps is working with Batalla, Read and Hallen. Ms. Sandolo said they will probably be working at Multicultural, Read and Marin going forward.

Ms. Sandolo said the garden is being rebuilt at Beardsley on Wednesday. They are using option one with the garden champion. She said Dunbar would probably be a good fit for Park City Harvest or another community group.

Ms. Bhushan said the principals will report back to her with which option they want to pick and the timeframe for beginning.

Ms. Sandolo said it is a twofold approach: getting the school gardens into the curriculum and getting the existing school

gardens in operation.

In response to a question, Ms. Sandolo said the curriculum has been developed for K to 6 with about eight lesson plans per grade.

In response to a question, Ms. Bhushan said there is a gardening club at Fairchild Wheeler. Mr. Illingworth said Mr. Hammond indicated he will get the growth in the Fairchild Wheeler garden cleared away. Mr. Sandolo said there are challenges at some schools where there are no water spigots on the outside of the building. She said rain barrels have to be put on the end of a gutter system to be usable.

Mr. Illingworth said he sees the work being done in two phases. After the committee sets the gardens up and going, the Teaching & learning Committee can work on creating curriculum for students that will include credits.

Ms. Bhushan said she would create a list of the schools that are active for the next meeting that she will send Mr. Illingworth.

In response to a question, Ms. Bhushan said she was in support of the project because environmental science and ecology are important to Next Generation Science Standards. She said the gardens make it real for students.

Ms. Sandolo said it was the most coordinated approach that we've had. Mr. Halstead and Ms. Bhushan said the major challenge is upkeep during the summer when school is not in session.

Ms. Pereira moved the meeting be adjourned. The motion was seconded by Mr. Weldon and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

Approved by the committee on October 7, 2019