

Monday, March 2, 2020

MINUTES OF THE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held March 2, 2020, at Bridgeport Regional Aquaculture Science & Technology Education Center, 60 St. Stephens Road, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 5:02 p.m. Present were Chair Hernan Illingworth, John Weldon, and Jessica Martinez. Board members Albert Benejan and Joseph Sokolovic were present.

Acting Superintendent Michael J. Testani was present.

Mr. Weldon moved approval of the minutes of the meeting of February 3, 2020. The motion was seconded by Ms. Martinez.

The motion was approved by a 1-0. Mr. Illingworth voted to approve. Mr. Weldon and Ms. Martinez abstained.

The next agenda item was on Policy 6201, field trips. Mr. Testani said there seemed to be several field trip packets floating throughout the district; he said he would like to see a streamlined policy.

Mr. Testani suggested in-state and out-of-state trips have different deadlines of notice: five days on a local trip; ten days out-of-state, approved by the principal and the executive staff member; overnight and international, thirty days with board approval. He suggested only overnight trips or international trips come to the board for approval.

Mr. Testani suggested easing up on the requirement that all trips be strictly linked to educational purposes. He said other districts send students on trips such as to Holiday Hill at the end of an 8th grade that he described as something is more oriented towards fun and socializing. He said he would not recommend trips to amusement parks or water parks that present liability concerns.

Mr. Sokolovic with the advent of social-emotional learning it is a learning experience to meet peers from other districts on such trips.

Mr. Testani suggested adding social-emotional learning to the policies on trips.

There was a discussion of whether the overnight trips should be vetted at the committee level or with the full board. Mr. Illingworth said he would like to see the administration create a checklist of requirements for the trips.

Mr. Illingworth suggested 60 days be required for international trips.

Mr. Benejan said he was more worried about trips out of the country and issues like the coronavirus.

There was a discussion of a requirement for trip cancellation insurance. It was suggested the policies specify that trip insurance will be offered to each family to voluntarily accept or deny if available.

Mr. Illingworth asked that Mr. Testani send him the revised proposed policies, which he would forward to the board.

Mr. Weldon moved *“to revise the current policy per the discussion we just had and for it to go to the full board if the committee chair is in concurrence that he’s made all the changes.”* The motion was seconded by Ms. Martinez.

The motion was unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on Series 1000 on community relations.

Mr. Illingworth noted the Shipman & Goodwin manual is used by a lot of districts for their policies, with tweaks made for specific local needs. Mr. Testani said the Shipman & Goodwin’s policies in the 1000 Series are much briefer than the board’s version.

Mr. Benejan said although policies are created many people do not follow them. Mr. Illingworth said he knew policies often are not followed or are interpreted in many different ways.

Mr. Testani said there was a danger of creating too many policies that no one can police. He said there was a difference between policies and procedures.

Mr. Sokolovic said there was a clear line of responsibility; the board makes policies and the superintendent carries out policies. He said it was up to the superintendent to inform the board if a policy is not able to be enforced. Mr. Testani said he agreed, so policies must be kept simple and to the point.

Ms. Martinez noted the 1000 Series had not been reviewed since John Ramose was superintendent. She said she

believed the board needed training or a retreat after the policies are revised.

Mr. Illingworth said he would like to see the administration do workshops with principals when the policies are revised. It was suggested those informed of new policies be required to sign off acknowledging receipt.

Mr. Benejan said he was very concerned about policies that some people are not allowed to communicate with the board members. Mr. Illingworth said this was a tricky situation because board members should not be able to bombard staff members with requests as was done in the past. He said this should not prevent informal conversations.

Mr. Benejan said he likes to work together with everyone as team, but he has encountered difficulties in visits to schools.

Ms. Martinez asked that there be patience with the parent leaders on the board because they were used to partnerships with teachers and principals.

Mr. Benejan said he believed staff were afraid to invite board members to schools because previous board members went to schools to make drama.

Mr. Testani said he believed we are making progress at opening lines of communication.

Mr. Weldon said he believed the prohibition on contacts empowers staff if they feel uncomfortable in speaking with board members.

Mr. Weldon moved “*to postpone 1000 Series to a later date in March.*” The motion was seconded by Ms. Martinez and unanimously approved.

Ms. Martinez moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Weldon and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

*Approved by the committee on June 1, 2020*