

Wednesday, May 19, 2021

MINUTES OF THE AD HOC DISTRICTWIDE BRANDING INITIATIVE COMMITTEE OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held May 19, 2021, by video conference call, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 6:07 p.m.

Committee members present were Chair Bobbi Brown and Albert Benejan.

Supt. Michael J. Testani was in attendance.

Mr. Benejan moved to approve the committee's minutes of April 9, 2021. The motion was seconded by Ms. Brown and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on a new logo for the district. The superintendent noted there was a discussion of what can be done legally. He said he agreed with involving children in the process as suggested by Mr. Benejan. He said some of the work could be done during upcoming summer programs, perhaps with groups of kids and parents talking about an overall design.

Mr. Benejan said he would like to see a process of picking the best logo. He added he wanted to make the students whose logos were not selected feel appreciated.

The superintendent said perhaps different components from different submissions could be given to a professional to put it together. Ms. Brown said the committee had discussed involving students in campaigns around the logo that had been constructed by a professional. Supt. Testani said the

teacher in the district who worked on several television shows could be involved. He said next month there will be a social-emotional calendar created where student artwork could be used.

Mr. Benejan said there were professionals in the district staff who can help us and there would not be a need to spend money on an outside professional.

The superintendent said he would try to get some drafts for the next meeting.

The next agenda item was an update on the new communications system for the district.

Supt. Testani said the technology team in the district saw a presentation on ParentSquare. He said we were able to negotiate a contract that will be brought to the board. The plan is to pilot the platform for the first two months of school at six schools, which will be followed by another six schools, with the full rollout occurring after January 1.

The superintendent said it will streamline communications; there will be a feature allowing teachers to communicate with parents individually or with the entire class. The district will have the same capability.

In response to a question, Supt. Testani said there will be a cost for the new system, but the district will get the best deal with a five-year contract. The dollars spent on School Messenger will be reallocated for ParentSquare, which is a more expensive but more useful product.

In response to a question, the superintendent said currently some schools and teachers are using free apps that the

district cannot control or monitor. He said this would eliminate any liability from that type of use.

In response to a question, Jeff Postolowski, director of ITS, said the cost is roughly about \$86,000 for a year on the multi-year contract. There is also a discount on the onboarding. He said Norwalk, Naugatuck, and other school districts around us use the same product. The superintendent said it comes down to less than \$5.00 per student per year.

Ms. Brown noted the importance of communicating with families post-Covid, as well as the generational divide among the parents. She said the district has to do a better job at communicating on all platforms.

The superintendent said it is estimated that the new product will cost about an additional \$30,000 per year compared to School Messenger, which is no longer the effective tool it was when it was introduced ten years ago. He noted the ability in the new system to deliver report cards, which historically had to be printed and handed to folks.

In response to a question, Supt. Testani said ParentSquare works with any device, including phones, tablets and computers, with parents able to make choices. He added it translates the material into an abundance of languages. He said Ms. Brown brought the communications issue to his attention and the more it was looked into it was understood we were utilizing a ten year-old platform that did not allow access to teachers.

Mr. Benejan said it sounded like it would be better for parents. He said he had heard complaints about too many phone blasts. Ms. Brown said it might also be a way of

notifying parents about board meetings. The superintendent said it allows the parents to initiate communications to teachers or schools.

Ms., Brown urged Supt. Testani incorporate Alicia Robinson in the arts piece and the communications piece. The superintendent said he had been working with Ms. Robinson on a lot of things to do with the arts, to include some amazing programming. An arts academy will be created so students do not have to go to an outside program.

In response to a question, Supt. Testani said the state had removed the mandatory remote option at the end of this school year. There has to be a plan of action as part of the ESSER-3 grant. He said the plan will likely to be simple, but with the ability to adjust if circumstances change. He said he would like to show the board the plan before it is put up on the website to get an extra set of eyes on it.

Ms. Brown said it was important that the message hit all the platforms at the same time and that it all says the same message. She said she would like to see press releases from the district to give the media an idea of exactly how the full reopening is going. The superintendent said a possible event could be organized at a backpack giveaway to include students for messaging.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 6:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
John McLeod