

Thursday, April 22, 2021

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CONTRACTS COMMITTEE OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held April 22, 2021, by video conference, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 6:07 p.m. Present were members Chair John Weldon, and Joseph Lombard. Board member Albert Benejan joined the meeting subsequently as noted.

Supt. Michael J. Testani was present.

Mr. Lombard moved to approve the committee's minutes of February 25, 2021. The motion was seconded by Mr. Weldon and unanimously approved.

Mr. Benejan joined the meeting.

The first agenda item was on the contract for absence management and substitute staffing services with Kelly Services, Inc., doing business as Kelly Education, for the period of July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2024.

Marlene Siegel, chief financial officer, said there were four bidders in response to the RFP. Kelly Education ranked number one.

Ms. Siegel said the contract calls for the company to make good-faith efforts to achieve at least a 90 percent fill rate. If 90 percent is not achieved, there are three upfront concessions. Ms. Siegel described the concessions. She

said it is in everyone's best interests to achieve the highest possible fill rate.

Ms. Siegel said the minimum wage will rise to \$13 an hour in the state in 2021-22, and so the pay rates for substitutes are adjusted accordingly to sustain a competitive position in relation to other districts. The occasional sub pay rate will rise to \$105 a day, which is equivalent to \$16.15 an hour. Building sub rates are ten dollars higher, or \$115 per day.

Ms. Siegel said there are changes in long-term sub rates to strengthen our capacity to recruit and retain long-term subs through Kelly. There are three tiers, depending on the length of tenure of the long-term subs. The highest rate is \$200 at Day 21. She said the current top rate of \$180 has been in place for over ten years. If a position were held by a long-term sub for an entire year the cost would be about \$46,058. She noted this was equivalent to entry-level, BEA step 3, without any benefits.

Ms. Siegel said the contract is financed by the plans in the budget plan.

Ms. Siegel said automatic substitute coverage for pre-K paras in general education classes is being introduced for the first time. The hourly pay rate is \$13.75 per hour. She said Kelly will maintain two floater paras daily, which is the same arrangement that existed with Delta-T.

Automatic sub coverage is being introduced for one category of special ed para: individual one-to-one para. The hourly rate is \$18 per hour with a markup for additional training. She said there are 39 one-to-one paras, of which 18 are temporary supplemental services covered by subs.

Ms. Siegel noted the provisions which allow her to contact Delta-T to request a sub para in the event Kelly is unable to fill a vacancy.

In response to a question, Ms. Siegel said the contract includes a provision that gives employment opportunities to candidates from Bridgeport.

In response to a question, Ms. Siegel clarified that she was coming to the committee with a recommendation to award with this set of terms and conditions.

Mr. Lombard moved “*to recommend this matter to the full board or approval.*” The motion was seconded by Mr. Weldon and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on the disposal of U.S. Coast Guard documented vessel number 1025959, also known as the *Catherine Moore*.

Mr. Weldon requested the specific fair market value of the vessel not to be disclosed because of a possible sale.

Supt. Testani said the district was awaiting the delivery of the floating classroom vessel for the Aquaculture School. Delivery is anticipated sometime in early August. An event will be planned to celebrate and christen the new vessel.

The superintendent said the current vessel, the *Catherine Moore*, will no longer be needed. He said after consultation with the state Department of Education there are a few options. It could be offered to another program in the state, which is effectively a giveaway. Another option is an attempt to sell it to a vendor. He reported that Mr. Curtis, the former principal of Aquaculture, said the funds raised could be used

to cover hidden maintenance costs of the new vessel as opposed covering such costs in the operating budget.

The superintendent said his recommendation is to pursue a sale to other programs in the state and if not sold there, advertise it for a private sale, and if that is not successful, return to the giveaway option.

Mr. Weldon said he believed we should attempt to monetize it as best we can. He said the board should try to get the maximum value, with an attempt to sell it at the appraised value. He said he would be hesitant to sell it to the other district for a significant discount. Supt. Testani said he agreed. He noted the district that expressed interest in the vessel was in line to receive significant Covid funds.

In response to a question, the superintendent said he believed any funds realized from the sale could be used for other aspects of the Aquaculture School program, not merely for costs of the new vessel.

Mr. Weldon suggested an auction be considered. The superintendent said that was a possibility, particularly with boating activity going on in the Steel Point area of Bridgeport. Mr. Weldon suggested the board establish a parameter, but not tie the superintendent's hands in the actual method of sale. He said the board could designate a percentage of the appraised cost for which it could be sold.

Mr. Lombard noted the paperwork mentioned coming up with an comparable appraised value is complicated because the vessel is configured as a classroom.

Supt. Testani noted boat sales are seasonal and trying to sell in September might be too late.

In response to a question, the superintendent suggested being able to accept up to 25 percent from the appraised value.

Mr. Lombard said he liked offering it to the other school district, but not for the proposed price. He said he believed there was room to go below the 25 percent figure for the other district.

The superintendent said he would like to return to the board for approval of the final offer.

Mr. Weldon suggested recommending that the superintendent offer it to a like program, and contingent on that, that he then put it out on the open market. If the offer is not within the range discussed, the superintendent can take the next step to the open market. Mr. Lombard suggested taking it one step at a time.

Mr. Benejan asked the information about the boat be sent in advance of the meeting. Mr. Lombard said the information was previously posted.

Mr. Lombard moved *“to recommend to the full board that the superintendent engage a like program to Aquaculture to try to sell the boat to them and have him report back with the results of that for a final decision.”* The motion was seconded by Mr. Weldon and unanimously approved.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 6:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

DRAFT