

Friday, June 12, 2020

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CONTRACTS COMMITTEE OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held June 12, 2020, by video and audio conference, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 4:48 p.m. Present were members Chair John Weldon, Joseph Sokolovic, and Joseph Lombard. Board member Albert Benejan was present.

Acting Superintendent Michael J. Testani was present.

The first agenda item was on the issuance of an RFP for transitional services for students of special education age 18 to 21.

Tony Pires, operations manager, and Robert Arnold, director of specialized instruction, described the RFP.

Mr. Arnold described the limitations with the current program, Opportunities for Discovery, particularly the inability to place subs in the program and transportation issues. He said the program includes training on travel, job applications, DMV issues, and academics.

Mr. Arnold said he was looking to go to the marketplace to find a provider.

In response to a question, Mr. Arnold said the district was responsible for educating students until they are age 21. He said he preferred the district running its program as opposed

to how Medicaid would do so. He said Medicaid reimbursement was not available except for social work or speech and language services.

Mr. Pires described the Medicaid billing requirements.

Mr. Sokolovic moved *“to refer this to the full board with a recommendation that they provide authorization for staff to issue this solicitation.”* The motion was seconded by Mr. Lombard and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on participation in joint Board of Education/City of Bridgeport RFP for Medicare supplement and Medicare prescription contracts.

Ulysses Rogers, director of payroll benefits, said normally the process has been done by the city because retiree Medicare and Medicare prescription drug plans are commonly shared with the board.

Mr. Rogers said there was previously an RFP process for Medicare plans, and it was agreed to switch to Anthem/Blue Cross to save costs, including several hundred thousand dollars saved by the board. He said he was requesting approval of the RFP process to move on to the next contract cycle. He added a member of the City Council suggested this matter be brought to the board for its approval of the process.

Mr. Weldon said it sounds like we’re just re-upping the process used two years ago to see if a better deal is available.

In response to a question, Christine Walsh Mitchell said currently the board is self-funded so the board is responsible

for claims of its retirees through the Internal Service Fund. She said whoever was awarded the contract would administer the plan for the board and city.

In response to a question, Ms. Mitchell said she did not know what portion of the fees to be paid were allocated to the board.

Mr. Weldon recommended that whoever presents the matter to the full board be able to answer that question.

Mr. Weldon moved that *“we refer this item to the full board with a recommendation that we participate in this joint solicitation.”* The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on vacation-day buyouts for Mr. Testani for the year ending June 30, 2020.

Mr. Weldon said this related to vacation time Mr. Testani accumulated under his collective bargaining agreement prior to becoming acting superintendent. He said there are 25 vacation days, ten of which were eligible to be bought out because they were allowed by a prior superintendent to be carried over. He said the issue concerns the 15 days Mr. Testani was provided with that he has been unable to take for various reasons, including the pandemic.

Mr. Testani said every administrator in the district receives 25 vacation days in the year, five of which are used for the winter break, five of which are usually taken in the April break, and fifteen in the summer. He said he used time during Christmas, but was unable to use the days during April due to the COVID and distance learning. He said he would be able to use a few days before July 1st and would

lose most of his days. He said he was requesting that he receive a payout for five days.

In response to a question, Mr. Testani said ten days are eligible to be paid out at his prior rate of pay. He said he was willing to discuss with the board whether the five days would be paid at his prior rate or the rate of the acting superintendent position.

Mr. Lombard said Mr. Testani's ask of five days was very reasonable, and seems a little low. He noted it was almost impossible for Mr. Testani to take the vacation days before July 1st.

Mr. Sokolovic said he had no problem with the request. He suggested an addendum to Mr. Testani's contract in the area of vacation days.

Mr. Weldon said this issue dealt with days given him under the BCAS contract, where Mr. Testani would get bought out of some days and also lose some days, and then he would get a slate of days in accordance with his contract as superintendent.

Mr. Testani said he would be in favor of discussing a contract provision that dealt with unforeseen circumstances.

Mr. Sokolovic moved "*recommending that this item be placed on the June 22nd agenda.*" The motion was seconded by Mr. Lombard and unanimously approved.

Mr. Testani thanked the board members for recognizing the hard work and everything that's occurred, and said it means a lot of him. He thanked the board members for their commitment.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 5:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

*Approved by the committee on July 21, 2020*