

Friday, April 9, 2021

MINUTES OF THE AD HOC DISTRICTWIDE BRANDING INITIATIVE COMMITTEE OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held April 9, 2021, by video conference call, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 5:33 p.m.

Committee members present were Chair Bobbi Brown and Albert Benejan. Board member John Weldon was present.

Supt. Michael J. Testani was in attendance.

Mr. Benejan moved to approve the committee's minutes of March 5, 2021. The motion was seconded by Ms. Brown and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on the district's prior and present logos.

Supt. Testani said the district's logo has been in place since 2018. He said since he became superintendent he initiated the use of the phrase, "Every Kid, Every Day," as the motto. The city's logo was also displayed on the screen, along with the finalists from the contest to choose a logo in 2018.

The superintendent said he was not a huge fan of the current logo because of its emphasis on graduation, while the district is more than just graduation.

Mr. Benejan said he agreed with Supt. Testani. He suggested the students in the district make the logo working with Ms. Robinson.

Mr. Weldon said the 2018 logo was not officially ratified, but the board voted who the winner of a contest was going to be. He said it was generally agreed to replace the use of the city seal with the contest winner. He said the Every Kid, Every Day logo is more colorful, but it also includes clip art which would have to be modified to avoid the use of proprietary imagery. He said he disagreed with the use of students to create the logo because branding includes more than just a logo. Specialists in this area can give advice on the way designs can be incorporated into branding. He said professional resources should be used to get to where we want to be.

Ms. Brown said she does this kind of all the time. She said one possibility was to do a campaign every year to allow students to participate in the marketing process, while having an official logo outsourced. Students would have the ability to see their artwork on things that are school-related.

Mr. Benejan said the district would be able to point to what a student did in creating the artwork to be used.

Supt. Testani said his only ask was that the campaign and logo keep the Every Kid, Every Day motto. He said students could come up with creative ways of working with the motto.

Mr. Weldon said he agreed with using students for campaigns or offshoots from the overall branding. Professionals will be knowledgeable about how brandmarks can be reproduced on things like signs. He said he liked the current motto.

Supt. Testani said the logo with the current motto had been successfully reproduced on shirts. He noted the cost of a professional in this area could range from high to low, but

the district has connections with people and he did not believe it would be overly costly. Mr. Benejan questioned the use of something that would cost money while the district had amazing high school students and a department with knowledge. He said he was opposed to spending money.

Mr. Weldon said what would be needed might be someone with a professional background in his area, who might already be in the district or elsewhere.

Mr. Benejan said he believed there were people in the district who could do this work for free.

Supt. Testani said there is a teacher at Harding who was previously a television producer. He said students in his class could participate in bringing a proposal to the board.

The superintendent said he would speak to the teacher, Mr. Stout, after the break about getting started. He said he agreed with involving students and Ms. Robinson in the campaign.

Ms. Brown suggested the Every Day, Every Kid phrase should be checked for copyright or other considerations.

The next agenda item was on constructing a policy for unified message for board members on in-house e-mails.

The superintendents said he believed the request was for a generic response board members could give to inquiries from the public.

Mr. Weldon said he did not believe board members should be answering any questions because 99.9 percent of the questions received are related to district operations. He said

board members run the risk of misspeaking or saying something in contradiction to the response. He said the answers should come from the superintendent's office and he informs correspondents that he has forwarded the inquiry to the district office.

Supt. Testani said he liked the idea of a unified message, which gives the public the sense that they are being heard and that they will get a response from the administration.

Mr. Weldon suggested there be a policy that indicates when board members are contacted by staff or the public they will not directly address the issue being raised, but will refer such matters to the superintendent. He suggested the board member copy the superintendent on the request so as to elevate the importance of the communication.

Ms. Brown moved "*to forward this to the full board concerning a unified message coming from the Bridgeport Board of Education.*" The motion was seconded by Mr. Benejan and unanimously approved.

The superintendent suggested the message include that the inquiry will receive a response within one business day.

The next agenda item was on creating or constructing a communications strategy to improve messaging for parents using the messaging system provided by the district.

Ms. Brown said Mr. Postolowski described how the current messaging system works at the last meeting. She noted the current messaging leads to frustration for parents with kids in multiple schools.

Supt. Testani said he meets regularly this year with a

technology team, which includes Mr. Postolowski, Mr. Karaffa and Dr. Black. He said we're exploring a few options for messaging that are better suited to a large district like Bridgeport. He said the main device being used by most parents are smart phones and the use of an app is being looked at, along with a notification display to check for messages. Teachers would also be able to access the system to message parents.

Ms. Brown said a lot of parents have told her that they just want a one-stop shop for messages from the district. She said the approach should include the ability to get messaging out ahead of news reports.

The superintendent said the ultimate proposal will be brought to the committee, the Contracts Committee, and then the full board.

Ms. Brown suggested there be language options for non-English speakers. The superintendent said that would have to be the case.

Ms. Brown said this item would be on the agenda next month.

The next agenda item was on a summary sheet for action items.

Mr. Weldon said he referred this item. He said he believed some oral presentations to the board almost sound like they are being presented on the fly, with a lot of information for board members to absorb at once. He suggested written material be included in presentations by staff members to the board or committees. He said he formulated a possible sample for consideration using Mr. Postolowski's E-Rate

presentation as a model.

Mr. Weldon said if the written presentations are presented prior to the meetings, the board members can study it in advance of the meeting and the oral presentations to the board can also be briefer and focused on questions answers. He said the superintendent could establish deadlines for when the documents have to be presented to his office to be placed on an agenda, such as 30 days in advance of a meeting.

Ms. Brown said she was in favor because of the sometimes overwhelming amount of reading that board members have to do before meetings.

Mr. Weldon said he believed the staff summaries could be limited to one page. He said this would be helpful in the nutrition bids, which involve large spreadsheets that have to be looked at.

Ms. Brown and Mr. Benejan said they liked the sample presented by Mr. Weldon.

Mr. Benejan and Ms. Brown agreed the proposal should be sent to the full board.

The superintendent said a 30-day advance submission would be preferable, but there are occasions when the time is of the essence such as with grants.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 6:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

DRAFT