

Monday, November 22, 2021

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held November 22, 2021, at Bridgeport Regional Aquaculture Science and Technology Educational Center, St Stephens Road, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m. Present were members Chair John Weldon, Vice Chair Bobbi Brown, Secretary Joseph Lombard, Joseph Sokolovic, and Chris Taylor. Albert Benejan arrived subsequently as noted.

Superintendent Michael J. Testani was present.

Mr. Weldon noted the passing of Councilwoman Mary Evette Brantley. There was a moment of silence in her memory.

Mr. Sokolovic moved *"to lower district staff to half-staff for the remainder of the week."* The motion was seconded by Ms. Brown.

Mr. Taylor said he loved Ms. Brantley and she was a special lady, but he asked whether the board had the authority to do so. Mr. Weldon said that was possible within the school district.

The motion was unanimously approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

JoAnn Kennedy said she believed the public should be able to comment on any matter and not just agenda items. She said she was disappointed that at the last meeting the student representatives did not get a chance to speak. She

objected to the board members not looking at her while she was speaking. She said the agenda made it look like the board was not doing much.

APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES:

Ms. Brown moved to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of November 8, 2021. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic. The motion was approved by a 4-0 vote. Voting in favor were members Weldon, Brown, Sokolovic, and Lombard. Mr. Taylor abstained.

Mr. Sokolovic moved to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of October 25, 2021. The motion was seconded by Ms. Brown. The motion was approved by a 4-0 vote. Voting in favor were members Weldon, Brown, Sokolovic, and Lombard. Mr. Taylor abstained.

Mr. Taylor said Ms. Kennedy brought up an issue that he previously mentioned. He said this was his last meeting and he believed people had the right to speak on something other than the agenda items. He thanked the board members for being his colleagues. He said he had learned an awful lot from the members.

Mr. Taylor said he believed the superintendent was doing a wonderful job, therefore there was not a need for a full agenda and the meetings were streamlined due to his efficiency and dedication. He thanked Ms. Rita Valle for her work. He said he apologized for the moments when he inserted his foot in his mouth. He said he believed the district has an excellent and dedicated team.

Mr. Taylor said it had been an absolute privilege to serve. He added that Linda Lambeck did a wonderful job reporting on the board.

COMMITTEE REPORTS/REFERRALS:

Ms. Brown said the Ad Hoc Districtwide Branding Initiative Committee met on November 17th and new district logo was discussed. Submissions will be opened to elementary students as well as high school students. She thanked Dr. Henry, the arts director, for her work. There was also discussion of the new Parent Square communications system.

Mr. Weldon said the Contracts Committee, the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee, the Facilities Committee, the Personnel Committee, and the Governance Committee would meet once new committee chairs are established.

Mr. Taylor noted he referred the issue about public comment to the Governance Committee. Mr. Weldon said he referred two items to the committee at the last meeting, including that one.

Mr. Sokolovic said the Finance Committee met and discussed scheduling of community forums on the budget and the budget timeline. Strategies for advocacy were also discussed.

Mr. Sokolovic said the Teaching & Learning Committee met and the agenda includes one item handled in the meeting. There was also a special education update and the department reported that we are caught up on all special education IEPs.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT/AGENDA:

The superintendent said there will be Thanksgiving community event at Central High School tomorrow. Five hundred coats will be distributed, in conjunction with the Bridgeport Public Education Fund, along with meal boxes and other items. The families receiving the items have been identified by schools. There is also a turkey giveaway tomorrow at Vazzy's Restaurant.

Supt. Testani said it has been a challenging and difficulty transition back to classes this year. He wished staff, students and families a happy Thanksgiving.

NEW BUSINESS:

The next agenda item was on an agreement between Xerox Corporation and the school district.

Mr. Benejan joined the meeting.

Marlene Siegel, chief financial officer, said the key elements of the proposal include a new five-year term, beginning January 1, 2022, and will include maintaining all existing Xerox services already in place and will upgrade 187 of 253 Xerox devices. She said in many cases the upgrade will be a new device. All school main offices will have a color MFD device.

Ms. Siegel said during the pandemic the volume of copies dropped significantly. She said going forward we do not want to pay for copies unless we use them.

Ms. Siegel said Xerox has included a Covid-19 credit in the new contract, which is \$45,000 for Bridgeport. The monthly

cost of the new agreement is \$2,750 per month, or \$32,581 per year. However, there will potentially be payments for copies in excess of allowances in the contract.

Ms. Siegel said as in the past we do not have to go out to bid since we were utilizing pricing in state-sponsored contracts.

Mr. Taylor moved *“to approve the agreement with Xerox.”* The motion was seconded by Mr. Lombard and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on an agreement between Education Rising and Bridgeport Public Schools.

Mr. Weldon said the item had been approved by the Teaching & Learning Committee.

Jay Lipp, principal of the Aerospace School at Fairchild Wheeler, and Dr. Nancy DeJohnette of the University of Bridgeport were present.

Mr. Lipp said the proposal is to offer courses for students interested in teaching at Bridgeport Military Academy and Fairchild Wheeler. Students can earn college credits towards an undergraduate degree.

Dr. DeJarnette said Education Rising is a nationwide program. The state offers a grant to pay for the early college experience. She said the credits could be used at any college, as well as at the University of Bridgeport for an education minor.

Mr. Taylor said the program sounded too good to be true and he wished it was around ten years ago.

Mr. Taylor moved “*to approve this.*” Mr. Sokolovic seconded the motion.

Mr. Sokolovic said he wanted to reiterate because the program was starting at two magnet schools, he wants to be sure we were serving mostly district students.

Ms. Brown asked that the results of the program be tracked.

The student representative asked several questions. Mr. Lipp said the program could be offered at other high schools if it is approved by the principals. Supt. Testani noted Central High School has a collaboration with Sacred Heart University.

The motion was unanimously approved.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 7:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod