

Thursday, July 23, 2020

MINUTES OF THE FACILITIES COMMITTEE OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held July 23, 2020, at Bridgeport Regional Aquaculture Science & Technology Education Center, 60 St. Stephens Road, Bridgeport, Connecticut Bridgeport, Connecticut, and by audio conference.

The meeting was called to order at 5:04 p.m.

Committee members present were Chair Hernan Illingworth and Albert Benejan. Committee member Sybil Allen arrived subsequently as noted. Board members John Weldon, Joe Sokolovic, Bobbi Brown, and Joseph Lombard arrived subsequently as noted.

Superintendent Michael L. Testani was present.

Mr. Weldon moved approval of the minutes of the meeting of June 1, 2020. The motion was seconded by Mr. Benejan and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was a facilities report/ reopening preparedness plan.

Robert Hammond described the acquisition of signs to be posted in buildings, sanitizer stations, and the availability of PPE. He said the biggest challenge may be staffing due to requirements such as cleaning restrooms twice daily. He said there are 850 bathrooms throughout the district, with schools containing anywhere from six to thirty-five each. He said bringing in a person early from the nightshift may be an option at schools.

Mr. Sokolovic joined the meeting.

In response to a question, Mr. Hammond said there were about 2 million masks right now and enough sanitizing solution, but there will have to be subsequent orders.

Mr. Illingworth said he believed we should plan for a hundred percent capacity in each school. Mr. Hammond said that was the current planning.

Supt. Testani said there is a steady supply chain to alert us if the supplies become depleted. He said he believed the district was ahead of almost everybody in the state in purchases of PPE and supplies. He said if a student comes to school without a mask one will be provided, but the expectation is for teachers that one or two masks a week would be sufficient. Donations of child-sized masks are being looked at.

Alan Wallack said three thousand plastic sneeze protectors have been ordered. Supt. Testani said four thousand face shields have been purchased.

Mr. Benejan said parents wanted to be sure that schools are clean. Mr. Testani said the sanitizer stations will be at points of entrance and in bathrooms. There will be sanitizing wipes in all classrooms. He said workstations were the responsibility of the employees using them.

Ms. Allen joined the meeting.

Mr. Sokolovic said he has done some building walk-throughs and the staff seemed to be taking every necessary step. He said the public perception that nothing was happening was wrong.

In response to a question, Supt. Testani said he could not stress enough that it was not going to be school like on March 12th due to the need to sanitize rooms and or get students outside in good weather. He described how teachers are being asked to remove unneeded objects from classrooms.

Mr. Illingworth said board members had received communications from custodians claiming there are not enough cleaning supplies. Mr. Hammond said there was a meeting with all head custodians and he would meet with all custodians before school is opened. He said he would always tell the truth about the availability of supplies. Mr. Testani said custodians complaining should do more themselves. He said summer cleaning is proceeding as it does every year except there is no Lighthouse and there has been more time devoted to it.

Mr. Wallack said requests for supplies are filled by the next day at the latest. Mr. Illingworth said it was important before school starts that the district send out a communication about the extraordinary efforts the administration has done throughout the pandemic to reassure the community. He said, if we don't say anything, people will believe the negativity.

Mr. Wallack said his staff would give a personal tour to any parent of schools to help understand the measures to ensure a safe environment.

Mr. Illingworth said he was not completely confident current staff levels are sufficient to do the extra cleaning. He noted the facilities department has been cut year after year. He urged there be a meeting of all custodians where their

concerns could be heard.

Mr. Hammond said there will be meetings, they will be able to express their concerns, and they will get answers, which they may or may not like.

In response to a question, Supt. Testani said principals will have to do walk-throughs of classrooms before school opens.

Mr. Benejan said sometimes custodians are afraid to report issues to their superiors for fear of termination. Supt. Testani said terminating is not an easy process. Mr. Wallack said asking for supplies is not a termination event. Mr. Benejan said it was not only fear of being fired that employees complain to board members.

Mr. Sokolovic said it was not feasible to hear every voice, which is why there is a chain of command. He added that he believed that we had to watch where negative comments were coming from, one of which was from a think tank designed to reinvent schools away from public schools.

Ms. Brown arrived at the meeting.

Mr. Weldon said often people who are not productive in their work and get called on it they make the excuse of not having everything they need to do their job. He said in the current circumstance statements like this scare parents who are concerned about their children.

Mr. Illingworth said if Mr. Hammond went to four schools a day it could be completed in two weeks. He said he did not believe that was impossible.

The next item was on the construction documents for partial roof replacement at Marin School.

Mr. Wallack said board approval was needed for the construction documents to submit to the state so the bidding process can begin.

Mr. Weldon moved *“to refer this item with recommendation to approve at the full board level.”* The motion was seconded by Mr. Benejan and unanimously approved.

Mr. Lombard arrived at the meeting.

The next item was on removal of underground storage tanks at the JFK Campus, Read School, John Winthrop, Wilbur Cross, Park City Magnet, and Columbus School.

Mr. Wallack said the approval of the education specification was needed to apply for reimbursement for the project.

Mr. Weldon moved *“to refer to the full board, with a recommendation to approve the education specifications of the removal of underground storage tanks for John F. Kennedy Campus, Read School, John Winthrop School, Wilbur Cross School, Park City Magnet School, and Columbus School. Such oil tank removal projects, Project number 21054 for \$315,000 in revenue; 44122, \$80,000 in line 41006; total revenue: \$395,000 as approved in the BOE budget.”*

The motion was seconded by Mr. Benejan.

Mr. Sokolovic noted these are usually covered in capital expenditure, but the board is on the hook for this one.

Mr. Wallack said the state would pay approximately 80 percent. He said the board was requested to pay by the state because the city honored its request to replace the air-conditioning at Tisdale School. He said Ms. Siegel and Ken Flatto made this agreement.

The motion was unanimously approved.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 5:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

Approved by the committee on September 3, 2020