

Wednesday, March 6, 2019

MINUTES OF THE FACILITIES COMMITTEE OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held March 6, 2019, at Bridgeport City Hall, 45 Lyon Terrace, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 6:45 p.m.

Committee members present were Chair Hernan Illingworth, Maria Pereira and John Weldon. Board member Joseph Sokolovic was present.

Mr. Weldon moved approval of the committee's minutes of February 4, 2019. The motion was seconded by Ms. Pereira. The motion was approved by a 2-0 vote. Voting in favor were members Weldon and Illingworth. Ms. Pereira abstained.

The next agenda item was the security update, including suspension and expulsion data.

Asst. Superintendent Dr. Christiana Otuwa said the data covered the last three years. She noted restorative practices and the mood meter had been integrated into the district.

Ms. Pereira pointed out some formatting issues with the documents that should be corrected. She requested the ethnic percentages of students in each school be added as well.

Ms. Pereira said she was stunned by the amount of in-school suspensions at Hooker School. She said the current amount was 95, compared to 27 for the previous year. She also questioned why there were 150 in-school suspensions at Batalla School.

Dr. Otuwa said in-school suspension(ISS) is utilized so students are in school, instead of being suspended out of school.

Ms. Pereira said she was shocked at the large number of suspensions at Fairchild Wheeler. She said the data on ethnicity was needed since the number of minorities suspended exceeded the amount of white students.

Ms. Pereira noted 200 different students at Bassick received out-of-school suspensions(OSS). She said the numbers seemed high because state law was strict on suspensions. She said she was concerned about the numbers at Central High as well, where 346 separate students received OSS.

Central principal Eric Graf said reasons for OSS would include threats, serious verbal altercations and physical altercations. He said OSS could be given for Level 2 or 3 offenses, especially if the student is a repeat offender.

Mr. Sokolovic said he would expect to see an inverse relationship between OSS and ISS from year to year due to efforts to reduce OSS. He said that was not the case in quite a few schools.

Dr. Otuwa said although the Code of Conduct is the same, principals are different, and new administrators often want to set a tone for parents and students.

In response to a question, Mr. Graf said drugs or weapons situations would lead to a referral for suspension. Dr. Otuwa said the hearing officer would then listen to the case. She said she believed most of the expulsions in the data involved drugs or weapons. Mr. Sokolovic asked that that data be

provided. Ms. Pereira suggested the data be provided with category of the offenses broken down by school. She said she wanted to think about what happens to families when students are suspended out of school and the potential problems it creates when the child is home all day.

Ms. Pereira asked that the data include a breakdown by gender. Jeffrey Postolowski, IT director, said the data report could be created as requested if larger-sized paper was used.

Ms. Pereira said schools nationwide using reverse suspensions as an option, where parents attend school with their suspended child, have been successful in reducing suspensions. Asst. Superintendent Janet Brown-Clayton said the school at which she was a principal in 2010 to 2012 in Georgia successfully used reverse suspensions.

The next agenda item was on the repairs at Fairchild Wheeler. Nicholas Masiangelo, director of construction services for the public facilities department, said he had been dealing with the items with Mr. Hammond and Mr. Hedman. Several items have been addressed already; with the balance due to be completed by May 1st.

Mr. Masiangelo said there are some pitch issues with the roof that he is working with the architect on resolving. He said he did not believe the city or the board should have to pay for that. Tear issues would fall under the warranty.

Mr. Masiangelo said the custodians have taken care of the weep holes. He said trees have been trimmed and less water is going into those areas. He said warmer weather is needed to repair the guardrails at the entrance.

Mr. Masiangelo said there is an aesthetic issue with tiles

around a steel column that will be addressed.

Mr. Masiangelo said regarding the settlement cracks that all buildings get those, particularly in the first few years, until it reaches its settlement point. He said those were caulked and painted over. He said he did not believe there was a bigger, underlying problem, although they will be watched.

Mr. Masiangelo discussed the IT closet and HVAC units. The units are set next to each other and the appropriate temperature is not being maintained. He said he believed this is a design flaw; the board HVAC's technician is looking at the situation. He said he has been in communication with the HVAC company that provided the units, and a meeting with everyone involved is needed and will be held soon.

In response to a question, Mr. Postolowski said he participated in the walk-through and is happy with the efforts being undertaken. He said they're going to have to find a way to make it work with what's already there.

Mr. Hammond noted the city committed \$20,000 to pay for repairs.

Ms. Pereira said the school opened in 2013 and the issue had never been brought to the board.

In response to a question, Mr. Postolowski said the equipment in the room in question can handle the high temperature, but it cuts into its longevity. He said servers are supposed to last about ten years and the issue is going to cost a year or two on the life of the equipment. He said the replacement costs are about a million dollars.

In response to a question, Mr. Masiangelo said bathrooms

off the cafeteria had some cracking due to settlement and they should only get minimally worse, if at all.

The next agenda item was on a permanent location for Classical Studies.

Ms. Pereira said John Ricci reported there were issues around elderly housing being closed on Bond Street. She asked about the vacant Stop & Shop building on Madison Avenue. Mr. Masiangelo said he would present the idea to Mr. Ricci tomorrow. Ms. Pereira noted the school would need to be sized for about 500 students.

Ms. Pereira said the board's five-year master plan should have been done months ago. Mr. Illingworth said the master plan is one of the goals of the committee.

Mr. Postolowski said the Madison Avenue property was recently purchased by a commercial real estate company. He said the internet information indicated the value of the property is \$5 million and the building is worth \$8 million.

Mr. Masciageno said he would be meeting with Mr. Costa in Hartford next week and trying to get approval for 1,006 students at the new Bassick.

Mr. Weldon moved to recess the meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Pereira and unanimously approved.

The meeting was recessed at 7:39 p.m.

The meeting resumed at 7:52 p.m., in Room 305.

The next agenda item was on school gardens. Mr. Illingworth said a community collaboration was needed to make this

happen due to the lack of resources in schools. He said any help from the community would be much appreciated. He said he was amazed how many schools did have school gardens, but many had been neglected.

Dr. Otuwa said she has been working with Angela Bhushan, science director, on the gardens. Ms. Bhushan said she has spoken to Bob Halstead about the issues and there are plans to create a pizza garden at Bassick. She said she also spoke to Ms. Sandolo about the work of the Green Village Initiative.

Mr. Illingworth noted Harding had a culinary program, but not a garden.

Christina Sandolo, executive director of Green Village Initiative(GVI), said the organization was based in Bridgeport and was a food justice organization. She said the founder of the Green Village Initiative in the 2011 timeframe built a lot of gardens in the district. She said her long-term goal was to work to get school gardens integrated into the curriculum. Lesson plans created with Sacred Heart for Grades K to 6 are available to teachers on the GVI website. The plans are tied to the math, ELA, science and social-emotional curriculum.

Ms. Sandolo said GVI can provide soil, seeds, seedlings, a volunteer day once per year and skill-building opportunities for teachers. She said events have been held at Batalla and Hallen School. Ms. Pereira suggested the events be publicized through the superintendent's office.

Dr. Otuwa said the objective is to create a program that is systematic for all the schools. She said a lot of the gardens are overgrown.

Ms. Sandolo said some schools such as Waltersville are in good shape and other schools have community members helping to maintain the gardens with the permission of the principals. She said there was an opportunity to use gardens for in-school suspension or other social-emotional programming. She said she was hopeful that the facilities department could help with maintaining the pathways between the garden beds.

Mr. Illingworth said a major issue develops with the gardens when school is out of session. Ms. Sandolo said in some cases teachers, security guards and parents get engaged in the summer, but clearing the pathways becomes a problem. She said another issue is the lack of convenient access to water.

Ms. Pereira said she became engaged in this issue after a conversation with Sean, a young man from her neighborhood. She suggested looking at offering students credits for working on gardens over the summer.

In response to a question, Ms. Sandolo said all the school gardens are in raised beds.

There was a discussion of the weeding process and the challenges presented by weeding.

In response to a question, Ms. Bhushan said the point person listed for each school is still active as of yesterday.

In response to a question, Ms. Sandolo said GVI conducts background checks. Dr. Otuwa said background checks would be discussed in a meeting with all the parties. She requested two months to create a structure and report back

on the program. Sean said now would be the time to purchase seeds. Dr. Otuwa said she would report back at the next meeting.

Robert Halstead said the Bridgeport Community Land Trust had a community garden across from Bassick High, among others in the city. He said they were started in 1980 and he had done over fifty gardens. He said a security guard at Bassick volunteered to steward the Bassick garden over the summer. He said he was working with a professor and four of his students at Fairfield University to work with the teachers at Bassick and give presentations to classes about seeds and planting.

Mr. Halstead said someone donated a \$6,000 pizza oven and it is planned to incorporate that with the garden at Bassick. He said there would be a demonstration in April of pizza baking and the use of vegetables from the garden. He said the garden idea gets the students to start thinking about eating better.

Mr. Illingworth said he would love to hear at least ten to fifteen identified gardens that are going to be utilized. He said he would do everything to facilitate the organizations to use our facilities and better educate our students.

Dr. Otuwa said we need to be strategic about moving forward on the gardens. Mr. Weldon said Dr. Otuwa was saying she didn't want to be overly ambitious and wind up doing something we regret.

Mr. Illingworth said he agreed and asked Dr. Otuwa to report back on what is doable. He said he would drive around and look at some of the gardens this Friday. He said a message from Dr. Johnson and the administration to principals, who



may not all be enthusiastic about the gardens, would be helpful.

Ms. Sandoro said she would like to visit some of the gardens with Mr. Illingworth.

The next agenda item was on schoolwide IT concerns. Mr. Illingworth said there was an issue regarding the PA system at the Harding football field.

Mr. Postolowski said construction services told him it was one hundred percent completed. He said he would visit the site and validate that.

Ms. Pereira said she was glad Mr. Postolowski is now on the School Building Committee.

In response to a question, Mr. Postolowski said he was still in the process of remediating after the cyber attack. Safeguards have been put in place and a host protection system is being evaluated from four different vendors. He said the vendors are already on state contracts, which provides the best pricing. He said he was working within the budget to rotate funds for this purpose.

Mr. Postolowski said he does the best he can with limited money. He said he gets a lot of donations from universities.

Mr. Postolowski said the department only had four techs for 44,000 devices. He said Norwalk has twenty people for a district that is one-third the size of Bridgeport. He said he believed Hartford had an IT department of 45 people.

In response to a question, Mr. Postolowski said the lead time for tickets was about two months. He said if multiple persons

report the same problem they are combined into one parent ticket. He said the department has stronger organization to manage the tickets by triage and tiering. He said there are currently 1,960 tickets open compared to the peak of about 23,000 when he joined the district.

Ms. Pereira said Mr. Postolowski had been an amazing asset to the board. Mr. Illingworth said the IT reports to the committee were a way for Mr. Postolowski to express his concerns and help the committee find out what they can do to help the IT department. He said he was thinking of having Mr. Postolowski report quarterly.

Mr. Postolowski said the Samsung Chrome Books are no longer supported for SBAC testing. He said he is setting up a system where the students can log on to a terminal server for SBAC testing. He said Google Chrome devices have planned obsolescence.

Ms. Pereira said all the Chrome Books were bought under Supt. Villas and nobody thought of the planned obsolescence. Mr. Postolowski said the life of district PCs was almost twelve years. He said new devices in the district now have Office built into them.

The next agenda item was on naming the Central High School gymnasium basketball court. Mr. Illingworth said there was some miscommunication and the court was named, but has now been referred to the committee. He said all the committee could do would be to recommend to the full board that Dr. Johnson create a naming committee.

Ms. Pereira said Neil Kavey, the former athletic director, came to the board and said they wanted to dedicate the court. She said the board said as long as it did not cost

anything it would be in favor. She said she believed the naming policies only apply to new construction and major renovations.

Mr. Graf said Central put together a committee consisting of parents, students, teachers and an administrator. The topic was noticed on the school's website and two community forums were held last year. He said there was much support for naming the court after Coach Barry McLeod. He said cost of the naming was being funded by the family.

Mr. Weldon said it sounded like the naming was never formalized, but it was done the way it would be done under the policy. Ms. Pereira noted there was never a naming committee for Geraldine Claytor School.

Ms. Brown-Clayton said she spoke to Mr. Graf about the issue last spring and the procedure to create the committee at Central was set up. Mr. Graf said a ceremony was not held, but the court was engraved with the name.

Ms. Pereira read the naming policy from the board's policies. Mr. Graf noted the gymnasium was already named.

Ms. Pereira said she could understand the confusion and since the money was raised she was not upset about it.

Ms. Pereira moved *"to suspend Policy number 7550, naming of school facilities or a portion of school facilities, and allowing the Central High School court to be named the Barry McLeod Court."* Mr. Weldon seconded the motion.

Mr. Illingworth noted that would be the recommendation to the full board and be placed on the next regular meeting agenda. The motion was unanimously approved.

Ms. Pereira moved the meeting be adjourned. The motion was seconded by Mr. Weldon and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

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