

Monday, October 5, 2020

MINUTES OF THE FACILITIES COMMITTEE OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held October 5, 2020, by video call, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

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

Committee members present were Chair Hernan Illingworth, and Albert Benejan. Board member Joe Sokolovic was present. Board chair John Weldon joined subsequently as noted.

Superintendent Michael J. Testani was present.

Mr. Benejan moved approval of the minutes of the meeting of September 3, 2020. The motion was seconded by Mr. Illingworth and unanimously approved.

Mr. Weldon joined the meeting

Robert Hammond provided a facilities report. He said the department was keeping up with making sure that all schools have proper levels of PPE and keeping the schools clean. He said issues with staff members and principals are addressed as they arise.

Mr. Hammond said the capital plan was being prepared for infrastructure throughout the district, with a special focus on some outdoor items and HVAC issues.

Mr. Illingworth said the department was doing a great job, despite some isolated incidents.

In response to a question, Mr. Hammond said every effort is being made to get Plexiglas items out that have been requested. He said the supply of PPE left is greater than anticipated and probably enough to last through the winter and into the spring.

In response to a question, Mr. Hammond said he met with the head custodians last Monday and met with the entire department in the Central auditorium and discussed staffing levels. He said in some cases personnel have been shifted from night shift to a midday shift to do cleaning of bathrooms and other areas.

Mr. Benejan suggested Mr. Hammond visit schools during the week to address concerns by staff and parents about the lack of hand sanitizer and poorly cleaned bathrooms. Mr. Illingworth suggested reporting to Mr. Hammond and the superintendent which schools Mr. Benejan is concerned about.

In response to a question, Mr. Hammond said his focus is to try to keep overtime down to covering for custodians. He said some overtime had been used to get PPE out on weekends or at the end of the day, as well as addressing hot spots. He said all the COVID-related overtime has been tracked for reimbursement purposes.

Supt. Testani said the first reports of positive cases occurred on weekends. He said the decision has been made to keep overtime costs down for cleaning on the weekends and to maintain the closure of the affected buildings so sanitizing can be done by the regular shifts. This also allows staff members to be tested on Mondays.

Mr. Weldon moved to move up item 5 to item 3 and number

6 to number 4. The motion was seconded by Mr. Benejan and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on the Over Under Initiative.

Supt. Testani said Kyle Martino, a former standout soccer player at Staples High School and professional player, was present. He said Mr. Martino has worked hard to give back to the community and would now like to work in the Bridgeport area.

Mr. Martino said he had particular concerns about kids who have been locked out of sports for a long time. He said there has been a drop in participation in sports for the last four years prior to the pandemic. He described sports as a social justice instrument.

Mr. Martino said the nonprofit was trying to find low cost/high impact solutions to bring activity back to the community.

Supt. Testani said a school has not been pinpointed for the installation yet. He said he would take Mr. Martino to a couple of potential locations. Once a site is decided upon sponsorship and philanthropy will be solicited. Each site costs about \$20,000 .

Mr. Martino said in many other countries almost every basketball court has a soccer goal under it. He said he was worked with San Francisco and New York to turn basketball courts into soccer or street hockey courts. He described the soccer goal designed as similar to a Murphy bed coming out of a wall that will recess into the ground to allow basketball to be played as well. He said the transition from basketball to soccer can take place in about 25 seconds.

Supt Testani said there would be no cost to the board and a spring installation was contemplated. He added the item was brought to the committee for informational purposes.

The next agenda item was on the basketball court repair at Wilbur Cross School. Principal Cordova-Spoto was present. Supt. Testani said he would send photos of the completed work at Curiale School. He said the same type of project is contemplated at Cross.

Mike Evans of Full Court Peace was present. Ms. Cordova-Spoto said the new court was needed for the community and to give kids things to do after hours. The project includes uniforms and game play schedules, so Mr. Evans will continue to be involved.

Mr. Weldon moved *“to recommend to the full board the approval of these repairs done to Wilbur Cross basketball court.”* The motion was seconded by Mr. Benejan.

In response to a question, Mr. Evans said this past weekend new courts were installed at Barnum and Curiale. He said he would supervise the project at Cross and there was insurance in place. Ms. Cordova-Spoto said she would be present as well.

The motion was unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was a security report by Lt. Grech.

Lt. Grech said there have been no arrests since the opening of school. One student has been outsourced to the Juvenile Review Board. The city has experienced about seven homicides in the last thirty days and there were shootings today near Bryant School and near Central High. Both

schools were put into lock-in/lockout.

Lt. Grech said there is only one security guard out on extended leave. There are 72 guards in total. When high schools are closed on Wednesdays, the high school guards are moved to elementary schools.

Lt. Grech said drills will be held on Wednesdays when extra staffing is available to ensure proper spacing.

Lt. Grech said he had received quite a bit of positive feedback about the new uniforms, although there were some negative comments as well. He said fleece jackets are being ordered for the cold weather.

In response to a question, Lt. Grech said the new uniforms were purchased from the school security guard budget, which is covered by contract. He said believed the total budget was about \$35,000.

Supt. Testani said he has met with the NAGE leadership to be proactive. He said it was made clear to the union leadership that the budget belongs to the board and any savings beyond the contractually obligated purchases of shirts and pants are passed onto the board.

Mr. Illingworth said that was the same process used in any expenditure by the board.

Mr. Benejan said he did not like the new uniforms because he wanted people to respect the security guards. In response to a question, Lt. Grech said the next set to be purchased will say "school security" on the back of the shirt. He said the guards are told to wear the identification cards around their neck.

Mr. Illingworth said a uniform would not build respect. Supt. Testani said it was about building relationships with students and families. Mr. Illingworth said he respected using an unorthodox color for the new uniforms.

Mr. Benejan said he wanted the security guards to look very professional the way they did before. He said the guards often look a regular parent walking around. He thanked Lt. Grech and Sgt. Collazzo for their hard work. Mr. Illingworth said he agreed.

Lt. Grech said the security guards are very dedicated and represent the schools well.

Mr. Sokolovic said he liked the new uniforms and said the idea to add "security" on the back was a good one. He added the man or the woman makes the uniform.

Mr. Sokolovic said it was important to highlight during the fire drills that if there is a real fire to forget about the six feet and get out of the building quickly. Lt. Grech said that message has been conveyed.

Lt. Grech said last year Sgt. Collazzo went to schools unannounced to observe fire drills, which was very successful. He said Sgt. Collazzo meets with staff afterwards for a debriefing on things that went well and not so well. He said that was about improving for the next time.

Sgt. Collazzo said there will be drills to focus lockdown drills in specific areas of the schools.

Supt. Testani said the state extended the deadline to complete all drills by December 1st.

The next agenda item was the IT report. Mr. Illingworth said IT has always done more with less resources. He said the department now had ten times more responsibilities given the amount of devices being acquired. He said we have to do better in supporting the IT department.

Supt. Testani said he has a regular meeting every Monday with Mr. Postolowski. He said we have learned that time needs to be built in for projects such as the donated laptops from the Connecticut Partnership, which were not ready out of the box to be distributed. He said the district would be receiving another 10,000 devices from the state as part of the coronavirus funding. He said the van received recently by the IT department will facilitate deliveries of devices.

The superintendent said capital budget items are needed in IT, especially cooling in rooms that house equipment.

Jeff Postolowski, ITS director, thanked the board and Supt. Testani for their support. He said the last year had been the most technologically challenging year he had ever experienced. He said moving to one-to-one devices is fantastic for children and the teachers.

Mr. Postolowski said right now ITS supports 2,879 staff members on the platform. He said there are 21,011 registered students, which means there are roughly 24,000 in Teams to one degree or another.

Mr. Postolowski said the academic support team added to the department was crucial and the district would have survived if not for them and the support of the superintendent. He said the academic support team continues to support the needs of the staff.

Mr. Postolowski said last year the department had four technicians, one help desk person, and two people for data center operations, a network engineer, and a data center operation manager(Nick Fusco). He said now there are three new academic support team members and a new network technician, for a total addition of three staff members. He said he was thankful to have the staff.

In response to a question, Mr. Postolowski said the department's workload had at least doubled or doubled and a half. He said the department is now working directly with the public for the first time.

Mr. Sokolovic said it was going a lot smoother than you would think with such a skeleton crew.

Mr. Postolowski said he tries to stay focused on what is attainable, understanding we can't get to everything. He said the main mission is the children and the academics. He said it was valuable to have some temporary staffers to help deploy devices.

In response to a question, Mr. Postolowski said he was seeing less damage to devices than he anticipated. He credited this to being a Windows district and not a Chrome district. He said his own child goes to a Chrome Book district and they don't take the devices as seriously as they do with Windows.

Mr. Postolowski said he was working with the facility department on capital projects for cooling and telecommunications. He said the district was awarded all of the money for E-Rate for 2020-21, which allow addressing a lot of major concerns.



Mr. Postolowski said the ad hoc cooling system at Fairchild Wheeler failed and caused a crash. He said the issue, which was looked at by the Facilities Committee in the past, is the last item that needs to be addressed there.

Mr. Illingworth said it was important to work with the superintendent and the IT department to get resources to the department going forward because the demands will only get bigger.

Mr. Postolowski thanked the members for their kind words and said it was a team effort with the staff.

Mr. Weldon moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Illingworth and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod