

Monday, May 3, 2021

MINUTES OF THE FACILITIES COMMITTEE OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held May 3, 2021, held by video conference call, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 5:34 p.m.

Committee members present were Chair John Weldon, Joseph Sokolovic, and Albert Benejan. Board member Sosimo Fabian joined the meeting subsequently as noted.

Superintendent Michael J. Testani was present.

Mr. Benejan moved to approve the committee's minutes of March 1, 2021. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on the installation of a basketball court at Multicultural Magnet School. Mr. Weldon said further investigation determined the court belongs Six to Six Magnet, and they will handle the issue.

The next agenda item was on the revised educational specification for the new Bassick High. Mr. Weldon said a business decision has been made to reapply for the grant due to the timing constraints, along with the changes that have been made to the proposed school.

Supt. Testani said he received a letter in April from the office of school construction grants at the state about the issue. He said we're still hopeful to be able to get a shovel in the ground by the time of the expiration of the two-year timeframe, which is July 23, 2021. As a backup it was suggested by the state to reapply by June 30th. Among the

items that would be newly submitted are the increase in the enrollment to 1250, the change of the site to the current proposed UB location, and DEEP approvals. He said he believed the elevation of the current property by 18 feet would help a project in the South End.

The superintendent said the education specifications were changed. Larry Schilling said the Bridgeport Military Academy will be added to the school to reach the 1250 student number. He said the athletic fields have been added to the revised educational specification. He said the costs have been updated to reflect the 50,000 cubic yards of soil being brought into the site to raise the elevation.

In response to a question, Mr. Schilling said there have been no modifications to the school's curriculum, including advanced manufacturing, automotive repair, construction technology, and liberal arts. The superintendent said in some respects the construction technology contains a new aspect to include an electrical curriculum and HVAC. Mr. Schilling said the aircraft building program will have its own room.

Supt. Testani said the approach is to provide opportunities for students who do not want to go to college immediately after graduation. He described the internal conversations about which trades to highlight, give the limited space for the shops. Mr. Schilling said there were conversations with the Fairfield County Building Trades Council about areas where labor demand is great.

Mr. Benejan said he wondered about the decision to put Bridgeport Military Academy (BMA) into Bassick, and he said he was disappointed. Supt. Testani said there had been plenty of assessment of the rooms, the equipment and the

offerings in the new school. He said it would enhance recruiting into BMA, which has pretty much remained flat in enrollment and retention. He said about 40 to 50 percent of the students that enter as freshmen are lost prior to graduation. He said BMA students will have access to state-of-the-art equipment.

The superintendent said the school would be Bassick High, but similar to Central and Central Magnet, BMA would be a program within the building. He said the way it looks all of the current students at BMA will graduate before the new Bassick opens. He said only about 9 percent of the BMA students are from out of district, and this would be an opportunity to draw students from other districts.

In response to a question, the superintendent said there would be a conversation about the BMA building when we start nearing the completion of the Bassick project. He said it could be a home to the new Classical Studies.

Mr. Benejan said he was very disappointed in the proposal. He said he had a lot of experience with BMA.

Mr. Sokolovic said this make BMA a neighborhood school, not an interdistrict charter. The superintendent noted there is a designated area of the new Bassick where BMA is going to be housed with customized classrooms. He said BMA can become an intradistrict magnet if the interdistrict concept fails to attract enough students.

Supt. Testani said the BMA school can retain its name inside Bassick with the same program. He said BMA students would now have the ability to play athletics at Bassick. He said over the years BMA students have expressed that they do not have access to a lot of things high school students in

other schools have.

Mr. Sokolovic said he would like to see the interdistrict component stay. He expressed concern that Bassick students would be pigeon-holed into blue collar work, even though he himself does blue-collar work. He said he believed the academic portion should be just as strong.

Supt. Testani said the regular, high school, college prep programming as currently exist will continue, with the other components being an addition, not in place of. He said the new programs would build excitement for kids that have historically dropped out.

Dr. Joseph Raiola, Bassick principal, said the college prep pathway was not going away, but the other programs would be an alternative. He said these programs could help another cluster of students get over the finish line into graduation and provide future opportunities in the workforce or college. He said students who enter the school speak to a grant-funded counselor who help with individual pathways.

Dr. Raiola said BMA would be enhanced by being part of Bassick. The BMA students would now have access to theater, choir and other electives, including the advanced manufacturing.

Mr. Sokolovic said he had concerns about local community opposition to Bassick being reactivated if the process is restarted. He said right now the board had a bird in hand with the approvals. He said the resiliency project, which is already behind schedule, was attempting to delay Bassick.

Mr. Weldon said the people pursuing the resiliency project have given conflicting information about how Bassick should

be staged. He said the Bassick architect should be asked for his opinion. He said the resiliency project could fall apart and not be pursued or be delayed. He added that there are permitting issues that have to be worked through to proceed on Bassick and to receive reimbursement. He said reimbursement was the key element.

Mr. Weldon said he viewed the planned educational spec as a backup plan in case we're not in a position to put a shovel in the ground on June 30th. Supt. Testani said that was exactly correct.

The superintendent said he believed the resilience project would never get done and we can't wait for it. He said the city engineers have approved the Bassick plan.

Mr. Schilling said he intends to bring back to the board Phase 1 of the project in the next month covering abatement and demolition.

Mr. Benejan said he understood the points made by Dr. Raiola. He described the positive experiences of his niece at BMA and he did not find it right that it had to go into Bassick. He said there was a waiting list for students who want to get into BMA. He was disappointed and he did not agree with the plan.

Mr. Weldon "*moved to refer this matter to the full board.*" The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and approved by a 2-0 vote. Voting in favor were members Weldon and Sokolovic. Mr. Benejan abstained.

The next agenda item was a review of facilities maintenance activities related to Covid.

Jorge Garcia said during the shutdown all the district's air filters except those at Central were changed. Central will be taken care of as soon as the order comes in. He said there is plenty of stock available of PPE. There was a training session on best practices for head custodians during the shutdown, and the management team also attended.

Mr. Garcia said work is now beginning on the assessments for all HVAC systems in the district. He said we're working with purchasing to determine if bids or RFQs are needed.

Mr. Garcia said we're at finish line with the state school facilities survey, which is an assessment of all school facilities. Landscaping operations have started districtwide. An outside vendor is doing the ten largest schools; the goal is to look at bushes and cutting and other issues, not just grass cutting.

Mr. Garcia said an energy conservation program with UI will be initiated, and there will be an audit of five schools, for lighting upgrades. The first calculations run indicate \$180,000 are possible in savings for the schools. He said the costs are paid through savings on the billing. After seeing the numbers, another six schools have been assessed if it is possible to expand the program.

Mr. Garcia said there are discussions with UI on replacements on HVAC chiller replacements. The goal is to put a five-year energy plan together, to save up to \$750,000 a year over the five-year plan. He said the team is looking at every aspect of energy consumption.

In response to a question, Mr. Garcia said the landscaping contract is worth about \$12,000 for the rest of the fiscal year.

In response to a question, Mr. Garcia said the electrical work will be done by UI. This will keep the district's employees free to perform their normal duties. A UI-paid consultant will hire the contractors, with the district getting a five-year warranty.

Mr. Garcia said a similar program was done years ago with about seven schools. He said the new LED products should last ten years and give us the ability not to worry about maintenance on the products.

In response to a question, Mr. Garcia said the current UI program is even more financially favorable than the prior version.

In response to a question, Mr. Garcia said the district currently has four electricians and 1.5 painters. He said they work very hard. He said he has a meeting scheduled to try to get some seasonal work this summer or painting.

In response to a question, Mr. Garcia said 80 percent of the costs will be covered by UI, with the 20 percent paid back through the savings on the billing at zero percent. The return on investment is less than a year.

Dr. Fabian joined the meeting.

Mr. Sokolovic said he wanted assurance the spending was not coming out of the operating budget for these items. The superintendent said that was absolutely the case because our children had taken enough hits. He added that Mr. Garcia had tapped into some old capital money that was sitting around at the city.

Mr. Weldon cautioned that if it gets to a point where the

district has to retain the contractor that it is bid out properly.

Dr. Fabian left the meeting.

In response to a question, Mr. Garcia said the fiscal situation in the department was stable and the inventory of supplies is adequate. He also noted the struggle everyone is having to find seasonal help.

The superintendent said recruitment of high school seniors interested in seasonal employment will take place at all the high schools.

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

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

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod