

Monday, February 3, 2020

MINUTES OF THE FACILITIES & SECURITY COMMITTEE  
OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held  
February 3, 2020, at Bridgeport City Hall, 45 Lyon Terrace,  
Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m.

Committee members present were Chair Hernan Illingworth and Albert Benejan. Board member Joseph Sokolovic was present. Board member Bobbi Brown arrived subsequently as noted.

Mr. Benejan moved approval of the minutes of the meeting of January 22, 2020. The motion was seconded by Mr. Illingworth and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on an RFP for refuse and recycling. Tony Pires of the business office was present. He said the current three-year contract would be expiring in June.

Mr. Illingworth said he preferred the administration present a recommendation to the board after the responses to the RFP are received.

Mr. Sokolovic noted a provision in the RFP that did not make it into the current contract that implied the board would be micromanaging the vendor's firm. Mr. Pires said he agreed it was a good idea to strike the item. He said he could plug dates into the RFP and have the document ready for the next board meeting.

Mr. Benejan moved *"to approve the document to go to the*

*full board with the changes discussed.”* The motion was seconded by Mr. Illingworth and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on security upgrades for the nutrition center.

John Gerrity, director of school nutrition, spoke on security upgrades for the center. He said the current vendor for monitoring and building access is Sonitrol. He said he was astounded to learn of the close to \$1500 a month fee for camera maintenance.

Mr. Gerrity said in consultation with Lt. Grech he developed a plan to update the security system and to save money by eliminating the monthly fee.

Lt. Paul Grech said the current system consists of outdated analog camera systems. He said the district has moved to eliminate Sonitrol door access and replace it with an in-house solution. He said the camera updates were much needed.

Mr. Gerrity said the updates would be funded out of the nutrition department's operating budget. Lt. Grech said the goal is to make the district less reliant on proprietary Sonitrol platforms.

Acting Superintendent Michael J. Testani said there have been discussions about hiring an employee with expertise in both Sonitrol systems and other systems to maintain equipment, which would lead to cost savings.

Lt. Grech said eight years ago only 30 percent of the schools had cameras and 38 percent of schools had door access. He said now the district is at a hundred percent in both

categories. He said all the camera purchases in the last five years have been open-platform devices that any company can work on.

Ms. Brown arrived at the meeting.

Mr. Testani said he speaks to Lt. Grech every day. He noted the camera quality and imagery is much more advanced than in the past. He said there are very few blind spots to cameras in schools now.

Mr. Testani noted that a lighting project in the Central High parking lot had been completed.

Mr. Benejan moved *“to approve and send to the full board.”* The motion was seconded by Mr. Illingworth and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on school enrollment data. Mr. Testani said he wanted to put the item on the radar of the board. He said it was never optimal to have buildings over or under enrolled. He said he was looking at software options to make better decisions on school district boundaries.

Mr. Testani said it was unfair that we keep talking about underfunding, but we haven’t taken all the measures possible on our end to make sure that we’re being more responsible in spending the money we do have.

In response to a question, Mr. Testani said he would begin to start putting together a plan that could be implemented in 2021-22. Mr. Illingworth said he had always been an advocate of a swing space. Mr. Testani said at some point larger buildings like Blackham and John Winthrop would have to be renovated.

In response to a question, Mr. Testani said controlled transfers that were granted for some buildings that previously had space have led to overcrowding when the neighborhood population has grown. He said a lot of students wanted to go to the same three or four schools, so measures have been taken regarding controlled transfers this year.

In response to a question, Mr. Testani said guidance counselors and data management are working to resolve a situation at Bridgeport Military Academy to get class sizes at 29 students or under.

Mr. Sokolovic said he was probably the only person here who voted to close a school during the last budget cycle. He said he did not think it was a waste of money to have a small class size because the students deserve a structured learning environment. He said any plan needed to be presented to the public as it what it is – closing schools – and not use pretty words like consolidating schools.

Mr. Illingworth said he did not believe anyone was discussing consolidation and such a conversation would be premature. Mr. Sokolovic said the board was facing a \$15 million deficit again.

Mr. Testani said because the district hires over a hundred teachers every summer there would not be teacher layoffs in any situation.

Mr. Illingworth said the board was not looking at closing schools now. He said the discussion was going down a road that we should not.

Mr. Testani said the conversations would be part of a larger plan. He said dollars and cents was not the best way to approach the issue if consolidation was an option under the plan. He said it was about providing students with the most resources possible.

Mr. Sokolovic said consolidation means elimination and the public needed to be informed every step of the way. Mr. Testani said he agreed the public needed to be informed. He said some decisions had been kicked down the road over several years and some difficult decisions needed to be made.

The last agenda item was a facilities report. Mr. Illingworth said he would like a monthly report on facilities, including work orders that can't be fulfilled. He said he realizes the district is short-handed and is sharing tradespersons with the city.

Robert Hammond said the department was more reactive than proactive because of the reasons cited by Mr. Illingworth. He suggested monthly presentations of bullet points. He said the staff had been reduced to its lowest levels due to the Custodian I civil service test. There are vacancies and other employees out on long-term compensation.

Mr. Benejan said head custodians know what is going on in schools. Mr. Hammond said in his tenure he has had open communication with principals, administrative staff, and the superintendent's office. He said custodians are reminded that they are the eyes and ears of the building.

Mr. Illingworth said he would like to capture the number of facilities emergencies in a monthly report. Mr. Hammond

said there had been three water main breaks in the last couple of months.

Mr. Testani said Mr. Hammond is extremely responsive. He said a small percentage of the custodial staff are challenging in terms of getting them to do their jobs.

In response to a question, Mr. Hammond described the input he had provided for the civil service testing.

Mr. Sokolovic said as a 28-year civil servant the favorite part of his job was when he has supervisors who are afraid of the paperwork to hold employees accountable.

Mr. Benejan moved the meeting be adjourned. The motion was seconded by Mr. Illingworth and unanimously approved.

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

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

*Approved by the committee on May 4, 2020*