

Wednesday, January 22, 2020

MINUTES OF THE FACILITIES AND SECURITY COMMITTEE OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held January 22, 2020, at Bridgeport City Hall, 45 Lyon Terrace, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 5:20 p.m.

Committee members present were Chair Hernan Illingworth and Albert Benejan. Board member Joseph Sokolovic was present.

Acting Superintendent Michael J. Testani was in attendance.

Mr. Benejan moved approval of the minutes of the meeting of October 7, 2019. The motion was seconded by Mr. Illingworth. The motion was approved by a 1-0 vote. Voting in favor was Mr. Illingworth. Mr. Benejan abstained.

The next agenda item was on decommissioning the old Harding high building.

Mr. Testani said he was requesting the building be turned back to the city. He said the building was undergoing extensive decay and the district had no use for the building. Costs could be cut by transferring it to the city.

Mr. Illingworth said this was discussed last year. Alan Wallack said the amount of money offered by the city last year was not enough to bring the building up to a standard to put students in. He said the building went downhill very fast. Robert Hammond said the water and gas has been turned off, which will accelerate the process.

Mr. Illingworth said he believed the district still needed a swing space.

Mr. Sokolovic said the timing seemed very bad because of the negotiations for a property for the new Bassick High School. He said even if the building is decaying it could be demolished as part of a new plan. He said Hubbell property owners will likely raise the price of their parcel.

Mr. Testani said regarding possible negotiations that the transfer will be to the city, so it's not being transferred to another entity. He said the negotiations for the Hubbell site have to be through the agreed-upon appraisals of the property by a third party.

Mr. Sokolovic said he was concerned that there were no other potential locations for the location of a new Bassick High, other than the nightmare of construction on the Bassick site with school in session.

In response to a question, Mr. Testani said it was not an option to put Bassick students into the former Harding High. Alan Wallack said it would cost at least \$3 million to put able to put children in the building; additionally, the money would not be reimbursable from the state.

Mr. Benejan said he agreed that Bassick students should not be sent to the old Harding High. Mr. Illingworth said he agreed based on the condition of the building and the safety considerations as raised by the police department last year.

Mr. Illingworth said he believed there were other options available for a new Bassick if the Hubbell property could not be used.

Mr. Sokolovic said we don't know if it is possible for the Hubbell site to be turned over to the board in a clean state and remediated to residential standard. He said his concern was based on the situation being in flux.

Mr. Testani said there are several options for Bassick that could be explored but will not be explored if there is a looming option of using the old Harding building.

In response to a question, Mr. Hammond said to retain the old Harding building for another five or six months would require turning the heat back on. He said the building cost about \$300,000 to \$400,000 a year to keep it unoccupied.

Mr. Wallack said even if the city commits \$3 million dollars to keep the building operational it would be a three-to-four-year project.

Mr. Testani said he believed the negotiations were more about the current Bassick site than the district having an option to go to the old Harding site. Mr. Benejan said he was confident Mr. Testani would handle the options available for Bassick.

Mr. Wallack said we can't keep going back to the state making changes to the plan. He said he agreed there were other options available that could not be discussed tonight.

Mr. Sokolovic said the savings from decommissioning the building would be short-term and may turn around and cost another million dollars in negotiations.

Mr. Testani said there are real savings because the city takes over the building. Mr. Sokolovic said the expenditures would come from the taxpayers in any event.

Mr. Benejan moved “*to approve the decommissioning of the old Harding High School building at Central Avenue.*” The motion was seconded by Mr. Illingworth and unanimously approved.

Mr. Illingworth said the item would be referred to the full board.

The next agenda item was the 2020 capital plan.

Mr. Wallack said the plan is required to be submitted to the city every year. He said the process is to meet with all of the staff, including tradesmen, to establish priorities. Communications are then sent to every principal to learn their concerns. The compilation of all the information is submitted to the board.

Mr. Wallack said the plan this year includes repairs to elevators in six schools. He said there is no guarantee the board will receive funding for the plan. He described it as a wishlist.

In response to a question, Mr. Wallack said discussions have begun with the city about a facilities master plan.

In response to a question, Mr. Wallack said a lot of district’s boilers have asbestos on them which adds to the expense.

Mr. Wallack said when the full board approves the plan Ms. Siegel will transmit it to the city.

In response to a question, Mr. Wallack said his department had about \$1 million in discretionary funding for 40 school buildings. The capital budget item request for the Central

High floors is \$350,000. Mr. Illingworth noted they were the original floors.

Mr. Benejan moved “to *approve the plan and present it to the full board for approval.*” The motion was seconded by Mr. Illingworth and unanimously approved.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 5:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

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