

Monday, March 5, 2018

MINUTES OF THE FACILITIES COMMITTEE OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held March 5, 2018, at Bridgeport Military Academy, 160 Iranistan Avenue, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m.

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

Mr. Illingworth moved approval of the minutes of the meeting of February 5, 2018. The motion was seconded by Mr. Weldon and unanimously approved.

Mr. Taylor noted Principal Diana Soares and Mary Pat Underhill, magnet resource teacher, were present. The committee toured the school.

The meeting was reconvened.

Mr. Illingworth moved *"to move along the washer and dryer hookup on the third floor and to change out two toilets selected on the second floor bathrooms."* The motion was seconded by Mr. Weldon and unanimously approved.

The next item was on High Horizons Magnet School science lab stools. Mr. Taylor said there were problems with the stools and Ms. Scott, the science teacher, would like fifteen of the ones with backs and fifteen without backs.

Mr. Taylor said he had visited the classroom and when a student can't sit and learn it's defeating the whole purpose of the public education system. He said for the amount of money this board spends on outstanding consultant fees it is just a drop in the bucket to improve the quality of life for students. He said he was big on taking care of little things.

There was a discussion of the type of stools to be purchased. The preferred option had vinyl backing but Mr. Illingworth noted vinyl tends to rip with use.

Mr. Illingworth suggested the matter be referred to the Finance Committee. Mr. Weldon said he wondered why we were talking about this. He said if they have our blessing, they should be able to go through the regular purchasing procedures.

Assistant Superintendent John Lischner said he presumed it would go through Ms. Siegel and the regular procurement process.

Mr. Taylor said he was tired of hearing we don't have money when he has a whole list of purchase orders that went out to total almost \$80 million.

Mr. Weldon suggested following the regular procurement procedures. Mr. Taylor suggested the matter be referred to the full board unless it can be done in-house.

Mr. Weldon moved *"to go to the full board for approval to purchase thirty stools as presented by High Horizons in an amount not to exceed \$3,500."* The motion was seconded by Mr. Illingworth and unanimously approved.

In response to a question, Alan Wallack said the washer and dryer at BMA could be done once a work order is received.

The next item was the computer lab at Waltersville School. Principal Carmen Ortiz thanked Mr. Taylor for visiting the school. She said this was her fifth year in the school and since she has been there the computer lab has not worked. She said at the end of last year a School Improvement Grant was received and Chrome Books were purchased for Grades 3 through 8. She said Mr. Postolowski and IT team had visited the school.

Jeffrey Postolowski, the director of IT, said the district did not have not a capital budget for purchasing equipment. He said all the computers the district gets either comes through grants or F, F & E

for buildings. He said he has a constant challenge to figure out what to do about that. He said the computers in the school were too old to resurrect. He said the Waltersville and Barnum had a design defect that causes students to accidentally knock into the receptacle in the floors. This means they have to be constantly repaired.

Mr. Postolowski said because Barnum has grant money his proposal is to do a laptop lab which avoids problems with receptacles and Ethernet jacks. He added the age of the computers in the labs are a problem all over the district. He said computers received via donations are being rehabilitated.

In response to a question, Mr. Postolowski described the work required to retrofit computer labs with proper connections.

Mr. Taylor said he was looking to get this off and running as soon as possible with minimal cost to the board. Mr. Postolowski said the devices are a bigger problem than the connectivity. He noted the computers in the labs are nine years old. Mr. Taylor said his computer at home was twelve years old. Mr. Postolowski said older computers have spindles inside that wear out. He said he was actively working on this issue through donations.

Mr. Taylor said Mr. Postolowski had his cell number and the committee would do anything he could to assist. He said this should be priority one for the students in Waltersville School.

Mr. Taylor said there had to be more retainage or lawsuits against contractors. He noted the air conditioning doesn't work at Tisdale School. He said contracting is way out of control. He said he wasn't blaming Mr. Wallack.

Mr. Postolowski says he has issues all across the district and he prioritizes projects based on the entire district and the relative needs. He said Barnum and Waltersville are significantly better off than a lot of the other schools in the district in terms of technology.

Mr. Taylor said he would appreciate it if Ms. Ortiz got Mr. Postolowski's direct attention. He said he couldn't see it requiring more than \$1600 to do what needs to be done. He said he wanted

the room functioning in case someone donates computers to the schools. He added that the school wasn't built right and doesn't work right. He said this was a cheap and simple fix. He said the principal of the schools cares and noted the presence of children with special needs. He said the absence of a computer lab was unacceptable.

Mr. Sokolovic said this was a districtwide problem. Mr. Taylor said we're going to solve it one school at a time. He said principals could call us and we'll be happy to get them on the agenda.

Mr. Postolowski said the math is straightforward: there are schools that far worse than Barnum and Waltersville in terms of technology. He said he had been using donations to repopulate stuff all over the district.

Mr. Taylor said he was asking Mr. Postolowski to do a conduit drop with power and a coax cable, and if the computer doesn't work it will be addressed at a later date. Mr. Postolowski said it's the responsibility of the school to provide the mice and keyboards for the computers. He said the man hours required to restart the computer lab could be allocated if that is a priority.

Mr. Postolowski said the line of the computers in the lab have been decommissioned because they are very old in terms of technology.

Mr. Weldon said maybe the first step is to determine if the computers work at all before there is work done in the lab. Mr. Taylor said he had assessed the situation and discussed it in depth with Ms. Ortiz and others in the school.

Mr. Illingworth said he would like to hear a firm number on the costs. Mr. Postolowski said on the Barnum side of the building laptops were used in the room to bypass the power and electric issues. He said he would do exactly what was asked and he would provide the cost. He said nine times out of ten when there is a problem it is the outlet that provides the internet that gets damaged. He said that function has been brought in-house now to save money.

Mr. Taylor said he didn't doubt Mr. Postolowski's ability. Mr. Postolowski said he understood he was being told re-prioritize the

Waltersville computer lab. Mr. Taylor asked Ms Ortiz to keep in contact with him.

Mr. Illingworth said all we can do is recommend the full board do something. Mr. Weldon suggested he ask the superintendent to have a discussion about the issue. He said if the superintendent disagrees with it, it can go to the full board. Mr. Illingworth said he didn't think a motion was needed. Mr. Weldon said he would talk to Dr. Johnson.

The next agenda item was on the condition of the building and playgrounds at the JFK Campus. Principals Dr. Luis Planas of Multicultural Magnet and Francine Carbone of High Horizons Magnet were present.

Mr. Weldon said he placed the item on the agenda in response to some public comment at the regular meeting and a tour of the facility about four or five months ago. He said it had been suggested that parents be able to come in and help out, which has been declined due to liability concerns. He said perhaps a fundraiser through the district's 501(c)(3) may be possible. He wondered if volunteered labor could be accepted as an in-kind contribution.

Mr. Taylor said he toured the facility and it was time to move on with it. He said he would like to see Mr. Wallack reach out to Bismark Construction, the contractor at Central High that has been killing us on change orders, and have them give something back to our students to address all the playground issues.

Mr. Weldon said he didn't think we use the 501(c)(3) as well as we could. He said there were enough little projects that it would be possible for one contractor to do a little thing that isn't a big cost.

Mr. Weldon said the restrooms were in deplorable shape. There are also issues with flooring and the playgrounds.

Ms. Carbone said there was more than one playground on the campus. She said she was recently shown some damage on the playground that was very dangerous to children. Both Multicultural and High Horizons playgrounds have been shut down by Mr. Hammond.

A student at the school at Park City Magnet was recognized. He spoke on the state of playground facilities.

Dr. Planas said there were several families that are in business that have offered to help with the playgrounds, including donating materials. He said he could not allow this because there is a procedure that has to be followed. He said a 1995 graduate of Multicultural Magnet, Nicholas Cordeono, started a movement to help out with fundraising.

Mr. Illingworth said it was a tricky situation because of union rules.

In response to a question, Alan Wallack said there was an incident where the union filed a grievance. Robert Hammond said the board had to pay a painter who didn't even have to do the painting because of the grievance.

Mr. Wallack said playgrounds are a tricky thing because there are ADA issues and liability concerns. He said playgrounds are assessed by professionals.

Mr. Wallack said the \$6,800 cost quoted for repair was provided by a professional. He added that a new playground is about \$150,000.

Ms. Carbone said she reached out to Ms. Clarke, the grants director, concerning availability of grants. She said the students at Six to Six get playgrounds through state money. Dr. Planas said the \$6,800 quote consisted of \$6,000 for wood fiber and \$800 for repairs to make it safe again for use.

Mr. Wallack said he just learned Friday we have \$80,000 capital money from the city for High Horizons, which would not cover the complete cost of the playground.

In response to a question, Mr. Wallack said with the exception of the new schools all the district's playgrounds could use some type of work. He said about four playgrounds in district need a playground.

Mr. Wallack said any new playground requires a poured surface

because of safety concerns. Ms. Carbone said the High Horizons playground has a wood barrier around it.

Mr. Wallack said with the \$80,000 available for the playground bonding at High Horizons he could send a vendor to Ms. Carbone to see what that amount would purchase.

Mr. Wallack said \$6,800 was not available in his budget for Multicultural Magnet. Mr. Weldon said that was a reasonable amount that could be raised via the 501(c)(3).

Mr. Cordeono said a Go Fund Me account has already been started, but he objected to all the red tape involved such as funneling through a nonprofit. Mr. Weldon said the 501(c)(3) can provide a tax write-off to the donors and it can be directed to the school.

Mr. Weldon said he would like to see Dr. Planas talk to Ms. Clarke regarding the 501(c)(3). Mr. Illingworth said the money can specifically be directed to this project in that manner.

Mr. Taylor said he cannot guarantee the safety of the money when it is handed over to the 501(c)(3) based on what he sees that goes on in operations at 45 Lyon Terrace on a daily basis. He suggested the money be raised and Dr. Planas go out and hire a contractor and work out a direct pay. He said he wanted to get things done and going the route of the 501(c)(3) will take a long time.

In response to a question, Mr. Wallack said a fence was donated at Black Rock and a check was made out directly to the vendor, so the donation would not have go through the 501(c)(3).

Mr. Taylor suggested Mr. Cordeono touch base with Dr. Planas and Mr. Wallack and they work it out.

Mr. Illingworth said the liability is the district's because the playground belongs to the district. Mr. Cordeono said if it sufficient money is not raised by the end of the school year he will put up the money.

Mr. Taylor said if the money is not raised by May 1st, the matter will be brought back to the committee.

Mr. Weldon asked the principals look at their buildings and see what else needs to be done. He noted the partitions in the bathrooms are rotting. He asked that a cost plan be provided. Ms. Carbone said she responded to a district e-mail with the building's top five priorities. Mr. Wallack said the bathrooms were in the capital plan.

Mr. Weldon said it was concerning that things were submitted year after year and they don't get fixed.

The next item was on the RFP for Harding High's early learning center.

Mr. Wallack said the matter was handled at the Teaching & Learning Committee. He said there were concerns on the selection of students in the program, which had no bearing on the RFP. The selection of the students will be left to the administration.

Mr. Weldon moved "*to refer the RFP for the Harding High School early learning center to the full board.*" The motion was seconded by Mr. Illingworth and unanimously approved.

A young lady who was in the teen pregnancy program at Harding in the past said it was important that the program be in place. She said she would never have graduated from school without the program.

The next agenda item was on school security. Mr. Taylor said he viewed the discussion as a little think tank in light of the shootings in Florida and other issues.

Mr. Taylor said in 1957 President Eisenhower ordered the entire 101st Airborne Division to Little Rock to protect the black children desegregating the schools and also nationalized the Arkansas National Guard. In 1962, Robert F. Kennedy, attorney general, ordered 500 federal marshals to accompany James Meredith at the University of Mississippi to ensure his safety and 1100 soldiers from the 70th Engineer Battalion from Fort Campbell, Kentucky, also remained on campus for one year. In 1993, President Kennedy federalized 17,000 members of the National Guard to allow black students to attend previously all-white schools in Alabama.

Mr. Taylor said the schools are all desegregated now and suggested the grandchildren of the students of that era deserve a level of protection as well.

Sgt. Collazo said he was working closely with Dr. Johnson, Mr. Lischner and all the assistant superintendents. Some plans have been put in place for the whole year. Interviews for new SROs are coming up. Lockdown drills are taking place in the schools. He said there would be a doubling of the amount of SROs in the next couple of weeks. He said the current number is seven, including himself, and about eight or nine additional SROs will be added.

Sgt. Collazo said not too many other districts have police officers participate in active shooter drills like Bridgeport.

In response to a question, Sgt. Collazo said he was not aware of how the additional SROs would be funded.

Ms. Sokolovic, a parent of a student at Park City Magnet, said she observed some security infractions and directed the issue to the principal. The principal indicated the security guard was only present at the front desk for part of the day. She said visitors being buzzed in without screening is not an adequate security measure.

Mr. Taylor said it was his personal objective to fix everything. He said each school should have a minimum of eight fulltime guards, along with Sgt. Collazo's SRO officers.

Mr. Taylor said he would research the issues raised by Ms. Sokolovic.

Mr. Lischner said the district had 82 security guards for about 40 sites, along with five substitute guards. Each high school has seven to eight guards. Each elementary school has one security guard except for the large schools.

Mr. Lischner said the job responsibilities of the security guards includes patrolling hallways and lavatories, checking on exterior grounds, breaking up fights, investigating incidents, and questioning

visitors entering the building. He said in buildings where there is only guard the issue comes up of where the guard is at any one time. He said generally they are deployed like a police officer, not in one spot, but doing patrols.

Tammy Bogdanyi was recognized. She said she believed security guards are being called from classroom to classroom to remove students, and they are constantly moving about the building. She said additional guards were needed because one should always be stationed at the front door.

Mr. Illingworth said at one point the board has to decide what is a priority, and at some point security has to be a priority. He said at least two security guards were needed at each elementary school. He said as a board the money has to be found when building a budget. He said he was a firm believer in checking visitors coming into schools, including ID checks. He said there should be a school parent ID to avoid issues with undocumented visitors.

Mr. Illingworth said having two guards would allow one to always be at the door. Mr. Lischner said an additional 22 guards would be needed to implement such a plan.

Mr. Weldon said things were being spread too thin with only one guard. He said the practice of searching visitors was stopped for lack of a policy, but something needs to be put in place. He said visitors who don't want to be searched should not be allowed in buildings.

Ms. Bogdanyi said as a parent the first line of defense are the secretaries, who operate the buzzers. Many of them buzz people in without asking why they are there.

Albert Benejan, PTSO president at Bassick High, said he was worried about security at the school. He said handicapped people such as himself have an issue at the school because the principal told him to sign in every day, but there is not a ramp available. He said he did not want to sue the board because of his disability.

Mr. Taylor said Mr. Illingworth went to a Facilities meeting at Bassick and was attacked by Dr.

Williams and Ms. Kennedy on the issue of security. He added he believed in equality; each school should have an equal number of guards.

Mr. Illingworth said we were told as a committee that everything is perfect at Bassick High. He said he believed Mr. Lischner agreed with that assessment.

Mr. Sokolovic said he was at a school where the replacement security guard knew nothing about the building. He urged there be a turnkey that would document if security guards are completing their patrols. He said he heard on Friday that 22 security guards were out, which is almost a quarter of the force.

Mr. Lischner said the NAGE contract calls for security guards to use vacation days by April 1st or they lose them. He said he was told historically Mondays and Fridays are tough in March.

Mr. Sokolovic said he works for a government agency where no more than 10 to 15 percent of employees are allowed to be off each day. Mr. Lischner said the 22 people out included six who were out on either medical leave, workers' comp or administrative leave.

Mr. Illingworth said he believed the NAGE contract expires at the end of the year. He said it was time to really look at this. Mr. Lischner said he believes the city negotiates the contract with NAGE, not the board. He said moving forward he believed he would be involved in the negotiations at least as a consult.

Mr. Taylor said it seems like administration is always beating up on the little guy when it comes time for cuts. Mr. Lischner said prior to his arrival essentially his position was previously done by three positions.

Mr. Benejan said the security guards were amazing at Bassick. He said he was worried about the lack of searches of visitors and parents.

Michael Testani said he was present with Dr. Black from the Bridgeport Council of Administrators and Supervisors(BCAS). He said in the last ten years schools have been added and the BCAS union

has probably lost the most members percentage-wise. He said about twenty positions had been eliminated in the last decade. He noted custodians and security also lost positions.

Mr. Testani said Park City Magnet has a security guard and a principal, the only two people managing the entire square footage of the building.

In response to a question, Mr. Testani said his members do not feel safe. He said this was the first time in 25 years that we don't have a director of security. He said security was only part of Mr. Lischner's job. He said the security guards need a leader and supervision. He said the position was cut due to finances.

Mr. Testani said it needs to be someone who has security training and who also understands how to operate within a school. He said the SROs need to be handpicked to fit this criteria.

In response to a question, Mr. Testani said he would be willing to work with James Meszoros and his membership to come up with a plan. Dr. Black noted principals have to be in classrooms to make sure instruction is taking place.

Mr. Testani said a school like Batalla was not only large in number of students, but in square footage. He said Bassick has less students than Central, but the same square footage.

Mr. Sokolovic suggested the committee look at the policies on security protocols and add ID requirements or searches. Mr. Weldon said he understood why Mr. Lischner stopped the practices because there is no clear policy to follow.

Angel Resto was recognized. He said Lt. Grech used to have the SROs walk the buildings. He said we should go back to that practice.

Mr. Lischner said there was a presentation to the prior board about policies across the state and country on searching and school safety. He said that could be presented again, along with some draft policies and procedures. He said the board would have to define what exactly the searches are looking for.

Mr. Illingworth said when he was on the board previously only the Governance Committee could make policy, but now all committees do it. He recommended Mr. Lischner gather input from the administrators' union and create a policy. He said the committee would consider it and make a recommendation to the full board. He said best practices in other districts should be looked at in the area of IDs and searches.

Mr. Lischner said he would update the presentation he did in the fall. He said he had a draft policy on searches already, but would need to create the implementation procedures.

Mr. Illingworth suggested the presentation be vetted through the administrators' union and the teachers' union. He said by including a parent representative the policy would be collaborative instead of being from the top down.

Mr. Illingworth said there remains a problem in high schools with multiple doors and someone opening the doors to people. He said in other districts many doors are alarmed.

Mr. Resto said other districts such as Fairfield and Stratford require visitors to show identification.

Mr. Testani said arming doors and using cameras are great ideas, but there have to be disciplinary consequences for students who open doors in that fashion. He said if serious discipline does not follow, what is the point of spending the money on an alarmed door.

Mr. Taylor said if Mr. Lischner was willing it should be delegated to Mr. Testani.

Mr. Illingworth and Mr. Weldon said the matter should appear on next month's agenda.

The next item was on exploration of options for Classical Studies Magnet Academy.

Principal Helen Giles said we need a building. She said the school

was going on five years that it has been in two different buildings. One building has pre-K to 2nd grade and the main building is Grades 3 to 8.

Ms. Giles said the Catholic Center on Jewett Avenue was a wonderful building. She said she would like to also like to hear about other options.

Mr. Taylor said being fiscally responsible he would like to see Classical Studies in one building because the district is paying rent for one of the current buildings. He said he was concerned about the cost of the Jewett Avenue property. He said the East End was the only community in Bridgeport that did not have a magnet school. He said he had always looked at moving Dunbar to Tisdale and making sure Classical Studies was in one building for September.

Mr. Taylor said he visited Skane School and saw the building was held together with Scotch tape. He said he discussed with Mr. Sokolovic why Classical Studies was entitled to a new building and not Skane or Hooker as a matter of equity.

Mr. Taylor said the way construction works in the city he didn't think Classical Studies would be in the Jewett Avenue building in four years.

Mr. Weldon said a lot can happen in four years. He said while funding is being assembled, someone else could come along and take the building.

Ms. Giles said the school wanted this building but BMA got it. Mr. Illingworth said Ms. Soares would fight for this building.

Ms. Soares said this was BMA's fifth year. Prior to becoming principal, she said the school had been in three different locations. She said the students at BMA needed continuity.

Mr. Wallack said the district received a letter from a Classical Studies parent inquiring about the status of the search. He said after speaking to Dr. Johnson the matter was going to be put on the agenda to form a committee to explore the options.

Mr. Wallack said it's not just finding a building, but determining whether the educational program will fit in a building. He said there are possibilities; Harding will be vacant next year.

Mr. Wallack said what type of building the school is put into it matters because the right bathrooms are needed for young students. He said the current Classical Studies building is ADA-compliant. He noted Bassick, Edison and Hall are not compliant.

Mr. Weldon said the purpose of the agenda item was to give focus to this and give it some real direction.

Mr. Illingworth said the board needs to look at enrollment and capacity of the buildings and may have to make tough decisions.

In response to a question, Mr. Wallack said he did look for other buildings. He said he consulted with Mr. Perez, the senior city planner, who gave him some leads, but the buildings were not of applicable size. A realtor was also consulted.

Mr. Taylor said he would not vote to buy a building or lease a building. He said he hears all day long we're broke. He added after the lease on Connecticut Avenue anything that the administration wants to rent or lease is going to be highly scrutinized. He said paying \$275,000 a year in rent is disgusting, but he said he wasn't taking it out on Mr. Wallack.

Mr. Illingworth said we owe it to Classical Studies to find a building. He said the St. Peter's building just does not work. Mr. Wallack said there would be no problem getting out of the lease for the building.

Mr. Weldon said the committee should take on looking at the capacity and the use of all buildings in the district.

Mr. Taylor said he would like to visit with Ms. Giles at the school and bounce some ideas around.

Mr. Illingworth said the Harding building was an option, but we cannot lose the swing space due to the difficulties with the Central High

project.

Mr. Illingworth suggested the committee study the enrollment and the capacity of all the buildings in the district. Mr. Weldon said that was a logical first step.

Ms. Bogdanyi said there were elementary schools like Hall, Dunbar and Edison that can hold up to six to eight hundred students, but only currently have about three hundred students. She said she was not advocating closing any schools, but Dunbar students are only two blocks from Tisdale.

Mr. Weldon moved that *“Mr. Lischner, in concert with Mr. Wallack, develop a report for presentation at the next meeting, containing the enrollment, capacity and a description of what’s in there.”*

Mr. Taylor suggested Mr. Wallack e-mail the committee the numbers.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Illingworth and unanimously approved.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 7:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

Approved by the committee on May 7, 2018