

Tuesday, October 5, 2021

MINUTES OF THE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held October 5, 2021, at Central High School, 1 Lincoln Boulevard, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m.

Committee members present were Chair John Weldon, Joe Lombard, and Joe Sokolovic. Board member Albert Benejan was present

Superintendent Michael J. Testani was present.

Mr. Sokolovic moved approval of the minutes of the meeting of June 7, 2021. The motion was seconded by Mr. Lombard and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on the district student handbook.

Supt. Testani said the handbook was put together based on staff administrative feedback and was previously called the code of conduct. He said the title was updated to reflect new approaches. He said he believed the last major overhaul was in 2012. He said things like SEL, restorative practice, e-cigarettes and social have been incorporated now. Attendance procedures have also been updated.

The superintendent said the document emphasizes a positive message and behavior, rather than a punitive message. He said it makes clear the rights parents and students have under the law and available appeal processes. He noted the emphasis to parents that the

number of excused absences count towards chronic absenteeism.

Supt. Testani said bullying is also addressed, including cyber bullying. Sexual harassment is covered.

The superintendent said the discipline processes have introduced greater discretion to the administration in place of mandatory discipline. He said this gives administrators and schools options outside of punitive measures to work with students.

Mr. Benejan said often staff and principals do not follow bullying protocols.

In response to a question, Supt. Testani said there are different procedures for students with IEPs.

In response to a question, the superintendent said the provision on class-cutting is designed to prevent teachers from chasing a lot of students unnecessarily.

Mr. Sokolovic said the provisions about threats to teachers did not include a reference to “reasonable fear.” He said first-year teachers might have different types of reactions to situations than Bridgeport teachers. The superintendent said “reasonable” could be added. Mr. Weldon noted the onus would be on the person who was in fear to explain why it was reasonable. The superintendent said there are not many incidents like this in the schools.

In response to a question on expulsions, Supt. Testani said appeals to the board of education are heard by an independent hearing officer, an attorney. He said very few, if any, appeals reach his level, although after conferring with

principals the length of suspensions has been reduced on occasion.

Mr. Benejan asked if there should be consequences for parents. The superintendent said that could be a good discussion at the Students & Families Committee.

Mr. Lombard moved *“to refer this to the full board for its consideration and potential approval with the modification as noted by Mr. Sokolovic.”* The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on policy regarding live streaming of committee and board meetings. Mr. Weldon said parameters were needed. He said there could be complications with meetings scheduled the day before.

In response to a question, Nick Fusco of the ITS Department said Aquaculture School and Room 305 have been set up for live streaming.

Mr. Weldon said a reasonable policy would be to say if a meeting is 24 hours in advance the meeting may not be streamed if staff is not available. The superintendent noted using Room 305 requires the opening of the building. He said Central High is open, there is security present, and no additional costs are incurred.

There was a discussion of how the meetings are recorded and stored digitally.

In response to a question, Supt. Testani said members could still participate remotely in the event a meeting was called with 24 hours' notice. He said if a meeting could not be streamed it could be recorded and later posted.

Mr. Sokolovic and Mr. Benejan said it was preferable to use a 48-hour cutoff.

Mr. Sokolovic moved that “*all regular, special and committee meetings with be livestreamed, with the exception of any meeting called 48 hours or less before the meeting date and time.*” The motion was seconded by Mr. Lombard and unanimously approved.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

*Approved by the committee on December 14, 2021*