

ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

BOARD OF EDUCATION

BRIDGEPORT, CONNECTICUT

HELD DECEMBER 7, 2020

PRESENT:

JOSEPH GANIM, Mayor

JOHN WELDON, Chair

BOBBI BROWN, Vice Chair

JOSEPH LOMBARD, Secretary

SYBIL ALLEN

JESSICA MARTINEZ

JOSEPH SOKOLOVIC

SOSIMO FABIAN

CHRIS TAYLOR

ALBERT BENEJAN

MICHAEL J. TESTANI, Superintendent of Schools

Transcribed by: John McLeod

1 (The meeting was called to order at 6:13 p.m.)

2 MAYOR GANIM: Okay. So good evening, everyone. I understand  
3 we're live now and this will be the official annual Organizational Meeting  
4 of the Board of Education, on today, December 7th, 2020, starting a little  
5 after 6:00 p.m., for a variety of reasons, but nonetheless commencing.

6 Public viewing access to this meeting will be made available  
7 through and there's a – there's a site there, I assume if you're hearing  
8 this, you already know about the public access.

9 So it's pretty simple, at least the mayor's role in this, is to call the  
10 meeting to order. There's an agenda; it has four items on it.

11 With the board's pleasure, I'll begin with the call to order, and I  
12 think – it doesn't say on here to take attendance – I can see visually that  
13 we have a quorum, but I think we probably need to be more substantive  
14 with that. Is there someone available to take attendance and identify that  
15 we do have a quorum?

16 MR. LOMBARD: Yes, I'll do that. Joe Lombard. So John Weldon.

17 MR. WELDON: Present.

18 MR. LOMBARD: Bobbi Brown.

19 MS. BROWN: Present

20 MR. LOMBARD: Sybil Allen.

21 MS. ALLEN: Present.

22 MR. LOMBARD: Albert Benejan.

23 MR. BENEJAN: Present.

24 MR. LOMBARD: Jessica Martinez.

25 MS. MARTINEZ: Present.

1 MR. LOMBARD: Joseph Sokolovic.

2 MR. SOKOLOVIC: Present.

3 MR. LOMBARD: Chris Taylor. Sosimo Fabian.

4 DR. FABIAN: Present.

5 MR. LOMBARD: And myself, Joseph Lombard. Present.

6 MAYOR GANIM: So is that an indication that Chris Taylor is  
7 present, by hitting – is that – I don't know that practice. We would like to  
8 hear a voice or see a face, if possible, if you're going count him present.

9 MR. LOMBARD: No.

10 MAYOR GANIM: He's not here?

11 MR. LOMBARD: No.

12 MAYOR GANIM: Okay. All right. We have a quorum. And the first  
13 order of business is the election of officers.

14 You know this better than I do. But the first is the chairman, the  
15 president – it's referred to chairman here, and there's a nomination and  
16 a vote.

17 And so if there's no objection – and I know, Mike and others, and  
18 John, everyone, we've done this by paper ballot before. I don't know that  
19 everyone's together. If there's a practice or procedure that is going to be  
20 – other than a voice vote, tell me. Otherwise, I'm going to proceed that  
21 we'll do verbal nominations and seconds, and any speeches people want  
22 to make, and then a voice vote. But that's just my guess as to how we  
23 want to handle this. And certainly any way you want to handle it will be  
24 the will or the pleasure of the board.

25 Is that's what's expected?

1 SUPT. TESTANI: Mayor, I think once the nominations are made, if  
2 you or I would like, we can say the name. There's a raise-your-hand  
3 feature, they could vote by raising their hand. Then I will –

4 MS. ALLEN: I can't.

5 SUPT. TESTANI: – put them all down.

6 MR. WELDON: Ms. Allen –

7 MS. ALLEN: I can't raise –

8 SUPT. TESTANI: Ms. Allen can do it verbally.

9 MAYOR GANIM: Sybil says she –

10 MS. ALLEN: I have to do it verbally.

11 MAYOR GANIM: Why don't you go around and ask each person to  
12 vote verbally.

13 SUPT. TESTANI: Okay.

14 MAYOR GANIM: As long as there's no disagreement or  
15 discrepancy on what those votes are. We'll do – that's how we do the  
16 Council.

17 SUPT. TESTANI: Okay.

18 MAYOR GANIM: We do the Council meetings a lot of different  
19 ways. I'm not sure we want to imitate one of those.

20 SUPT. TESTANI: Sounds good to me. Perfect.

21 MAYOR GANIM: Okay. So at this point nominations are open for  
22 chairperson or president of the Board of Education. I'll entertain any  
23 nominations, and then of course any seconds.

24 I don't know if a second is required, but I would normally expect at  
25 least one second for a nomination, unless somebody tells me you don't

1 need it.

2 MR. WELDON: We don't need it.

3 MAYOR GANIM: You don't need it?

4 MR. WELDON: No.

5 MAYOR GANIM: Okay. Whatever the board pleasure is. So  
6 nominations are open. Are there any nominations for chairperson or  
7 president of the Board of Education?

8 SUPT. TESTANI: Mr. Sokolovic, you had your hand up?

9 MR. SOKOLOVIC: Yes. I'd like to nominate John Weldon for chair.

10 SUPT. TESTANI: Okay. One second.

11 MS. ALLEN: I'd like to second his nomination.

12 SUPT. TESTANI: Okay. Thank you, Ms. Allen. Ms. Martinez, you  
13 had your hand up.

14 MS. MARTINEZ: I would like to nominate Albert Benejan as chair  
15 of Board of Education.

16 SUPT. TESTANI: Okay. Albert Benejan. Give me one second.  
17 Okay.

18 Mr. Taylor, you're – Mr. Taylor has joined us. He has his hand up.  
19 Yes - yes, sir. You have a nomination?

20 MR. TAYLOR: No, Superintendent. I'd like to second Jessica  
21 Martinez's nomination of Albert Benejan.

22 SUPT. TESTANI: Okay.

23 MAYOR GANIM: I can go. Is there anyone else – any other  
24 nominations? Are there any other – any other nominations? I'll ask one  
25 more –

1 MS. ALLEN: I move that nominations be closed – be closed.

2 MAYOR GANIM: Nominations are closed. So there are two names:  
3 Albert and John. And why don't we go around – Mike, if you want to do  
4 it, Mr. Superintendent, and you want to ask each person how they want  
5 to vote; we'll tally the votes and we'll get this done.

6 SUPT. TESTANI: Okay. I'll just go in alphabetical order. Ms. Sybil  
7 Allen.

8 MS. ALLEN: Mr. Weldon.

9 SUPT. TESTANI: Okay. Ms. Bobbi Brown.

10 MS. BROWN: Mr. Weldon.

11 SUPT. TESTANI: Make sure – Dr. Sosimo Fabian.

12 DR. FABIAN: I'm going to abstain from voting.

13 SUPT. TESTANI: Okay. Mr. Joseph Lombard.

14 MR. LOMBARD: Mr. Weldon.

15 SUPT. TESTANI: Ms. Jessica Martinez.

16 MR. BENEJAN: Mr. Albert Benejan.

17 SUPT. TESTANI: And, Mr. Benejan – I'm sorry – I skipped over,  
18 you were at the bottom of my scene. Mr. Albert Benejan.

19 MR. BENEJAN: I vote for myself.

20 SUPT. TESTANI: Yes, sir. Mr. Joseph Sokolovic.

21 MR. SOKOLOVIC: Mr. John Weldon.

22 SUPT. TESTANI: Okay. Mr. Chris Taylor. You're on mute, sir.

23 MR. TAYLOR: Sorry about that; I'm new, Superintendent.

24 Technology's come a long way; I'm an old guy here.

25 I'm going to vote for Mr. Albert Benejan.

1 SUPT. TESTANI: Okay. And the last, I believe – two, four – Mr.  
2 John Weldon.

3 MR. WELDON: John Weldon.

4 SUPT. TESTANI: Okay. I don't think I missed anyone. Mr.  
5 Mayor, one – two –

6 MAYOR GANIM: Yeah, I have five, three, one abstention. Don't  
7 know what the rules are on abstaining. Is that right, five to three?

8 SUPT. TESTANI: Yes.

9 MAYOR GANIM: And since the abstention would not change the  
10 outcome, I'm not going to push for – sometimes people are asked to  
11 articulate – and would say that John Weldon, by vote, is the chairman  
12 and the president of the Board of Education.

13 John, congratulations to you, and to all members of the board for  
14 your continued hard work.

15 I think typically at this point I turn it over to the chair, when there's  
16 a – there was a – and, John, you would take it over from here. And I  
17 appreciate it. I'm going to move on to a City Council meeting, but I'm  
18 glad we got this launched through Zoom.

19 My apologies for the technical problems. Are we good, Mike,  
20 everyone?

21 SUPT. TESTANI: Thanks, Mr. Mayor.

22 MAYOR GANIM: Congratulations. Thank you for all your hard  
23 work on some many things.

24 MR. WELDON: Okay. Thank you for your time.

25 MR. BENEJAN: Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

1 SUPT. TESTANI: Stay safe.

2 DR.FABIAN: Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

3 MR. BENEJAN: Have a good one.

4 MR. WELDON: Okay. Next on the agenda is vice chairman  
5 nominations and vote.

6 Are there any nominations for the position of vice chair?

7 MR. BENEJAN: Mr. Chair.

8 MR. WELDON: Mr. Benejan.

9 MR. BENEJAN: I'd like to nominate Jessica Martinez as the vice  
10 chair.

11 MR. WELDON: Okay. Are there any further nominations? Mr.  
12 Sokolovic, your hand is up.

13 MR. SOKOLOVIC: I nominate Ms. Bobbi Brown for the vice chair.

14 MR. WELDON: Okay. Any other nominations? Are there any other  
15 nominations? Third and final call: Are there any other nominations?

16 Nominations are closed. So we have two candidates, Jessica  
17 Martinez and Bobbi Brown, for the office of vice chair.

18 I'm going to down the list and have everybody articulate their vote.  
19 Sybil Allen, do you vote for Jessica Martinez or –

20 MS. ALLEN: Bobbi Brown.

21 MR. WELDON: – Bobbi Brown?

22 MS. ALLEN: Bobbi Brown

23 MR. WELDON: Bobbi Brown. Okay. Albert Benejan: Jessica  
24 Martinez or Bobbi Brown?

25 MR. BENEJAN: Ms. Jessica Martinez.



1 MR. WELDON: Okay. Dr. Fabian, Jessica Martinez or Bobbi  
2 Brown?

3 DR. FABIAN: Mr. Chairperson, I would like to abstain from voting,  
4 and if appropriate I would like to explain why I'm abstaining.

5 MR. WELDON: It's not necessary, but you can if you want. This is  
6 your first meeting.

7 DR. FABIAN: Yes. It's because I am relatively new to the board  
8 and I feel that I lack sufficient information to be able to make an  
9 informed decision. So I just want members of the public to know that  
10 that's why I'm abstaining.

11 MR. WELDON: That's fair enough. Okay. Mr. Sokolovic, Ms. Brown  
12 or Ms. Martinez:

13 MR. SOKOLOVIC: Ms. Bobbi Brown. Ms. Bobbi Brown

14 MR. WELDON: Okay. Ms. Martinez.

15 MS. MARTINEZ: Jessica Martinez.

16 MR. WELDON: Okay. Mr. Taylor.

17 MR. TAYLOR: Yes, sir.

18 MR. WELDON: What's your vote?

19 MR. TAYLOR: Oh, I'll vote for Jessica.

20 MR. WELDON: Okay. Mr. Lombard.

21 MR. LOMBARD: Bobbi Brown

22 MR. WELDON: Okay. Ms. Brown.

23 MS. BROWN: Bobbi Brown

24 MR. WELDON: Myself, John Weldon: I vote for Bobbi Brown. That  
25 is a five-to-three vote, with one abstention.

1 Bobbi Brown is the vice chair.

2 Next on the agenda is secretary, nominations and vote. Mr.  
3 Sokolovic, your hand is up.

4 MR. SOKOLOVIC: Yes, just a quick point of order. We've got to  
5 reduce this to writing before the meeting is over, so we have in our  
6 record in writing because we've got to have it posted by – I think it's 24  
7 hours.

8 MR. WELDON: Yes.

9 MR. SOKOLOVIC: Thank you.

10 MR. WELDON: Okay. Nominations for the office of secretary.

11 MS. ALLEN: I'd like to nominate Mr. Joseph Lombard.

12 MR. WELDON: Okay.

13 MR. BENEJAN: Mr. Chair.

14 MR. WELDON: Mr. Benejan.

15 MR. BENEJAN: I'd like to nominate Jessica Martinez as secretary.

16 MR. WELDON: Ms. Martinez has a nomination. Are there any other  
17 nominations? Mr. Sokolovic, do you have a nomination?

18 MR. SOKOLOVIC: No, I'm sorry. I had that on accidentally.

19 MR. WELDON: It's leftover?

20 MR. SOKOLOVIC: Yeah, sorry.

21 MR. WELDON: Okay. Are there any further nominations? Are  
22 there any further nominations? For the third and final time: Are there  
23 any nominations?

24 Nominations are closed. I'm going to go down the list. Bobbi  
25 Brown, who do you vote for, Jessica Martinez or Joseph Lombard?

1 MS. BROWN: Mr. Lombard.

2 MR. WELDON: Okay. Joseph Lombard, do you vote for yourself or  
3 Ms. Martinez?

4 MR. LOMBARD: I vote for myself.

5 MR. WELDON: Okay. I, John Weldon, vote for Mr. Lombard. Ms.  
6 Allen, who do you vote for, Lombard or Martinez?

7 MS. ALLEN: Mr. Lombard. Lombard.

8 MR. WELDON: Okay. Mr. Benejan, Mr. Lombard or Ms. Martinez?

9 MR. BENEJAN: Ms. Martinez.

10 MR. WELDON: Okay. Dr. Fabian.

11 DR. FABIAN: I'm going to abstain from voting for the reasons I  
12 explained before.

13 MR. WELDON: Previously stated; understood. Jessica Martinez.

14 MS. MARTINEZ: Jessica Martinez.

15 MR. WELDON: Okay. Joseph Sokolovic.

16 MR. SOKOLOVIC: Joseph Lombard.

17 MR. WELDON: Okay. Chris Taylor.

18 MR. TAYLOR: I'm going to go Joseph Lombard.

19 MR. WELDON: Okay. This vote is six to two, with one abstention.  
20 Mr. Lombard is the secretary.

21 MR. WELDON: Next on the agenda is the approval of the 2019  
22 Organizational Meeting minutes.

23 Is there a motion to approve?

24 MS. ALLEN: So moved.

25 MS. BROWN: Motion to approve.

1 MR. WELDON: Moved by Ms. Allen. Is there a second?

2 MS. BROWN: Second.

3 MR. BENEJAN: Second.

4 MS. MARTINEZ: Second.

5 MR. WELDON: Second by Ms. Brown. Any edits?

6 MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Chair – sorry, I'll raise my hand.

7 MR. WELDON: That's okay. Mr. Taylor.

8 MR. TAYLOR: You said – hang on, turn on the cam – hang on.

9 Can you see me?

10 MR. WELDON: No.

11 MR. TAYLOR: John.

12 MR. WELDON: No, I don't see you.

13 MR. TAYLOR: John, can you see me?

14 MR. WELDON: I see you now.

15 MR. TAYLOR: Lucky you.

16 MR. WELDON: The top of your head.

17 MR. TAYLOR: Lucky you. Hey, John, you said December 2019.

18 Was that a scrivener – was that a mistake?

19 MR. WELDON: No, the last time we did this was one year ago, in  
20 December 2019.

21 MR. TAYLOR: Okay. I was just –

22 MR. WELDON: So we do this every year in December, and we  
23 approve the prior year's board meeting – board meeting minutes.

24 MR. TAYLOR: Got you. My apologies.

25 MR. WELDON: Okay. All right. So all in favor?

1 ("Ayes" were sounded.)

2 MR. WELDON: Any opposed? Any abstentions?

3 MR. TAYLOR: Abstain.

4 MR. WELDON: Mr. Taylor abstains. Mr. Fabian, you were not  
5 here; I'm assuming you're going to sustain.

6 DR. FABIAN: I'm here. Yes, I will abstain.

7 MR. WELDON: Okay. I mean, you weren't here a year ago.

8 DR. FABIAN: That is correct; that is accurate.

9 MR. WELDON: All right. So motion carries unanimously, with  
10 seven votes in favor and two abstentions.

11 Is there a motion to adjourn?

12 MS. ALLEN: So moved.

13 MR. WELDON: Moved by Ms. Allen. Is there a second?

14 MS. BROWN: Second.

15 MR. SOKOLOVIC: I'll second.

16 MR. WELDON: Second by Ms. Brown.

17 MR. BENEJAN: Second.

18 MR. WELDON: All in favor?

19 ("Ayes" were sounded.)

20 MR. WELDON: All opposed? Okay. We're adjourned; the time is

21 6:27.

22 (The meeting was adjourned at 6:27 p.m.)

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23

C E R T I F I C A T I O N

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THE FOREGOING IS A TRUE AND ACCURATE TRANSCRIPT OF THE RECORDING OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, HELD BY VIDEO CONFERENCE, ON DECEMBER 7, 2020.

DATED THIS 12TH DAY OF DECEMBER 2020.

-----  
JOHN McLEOD

