

ORGANIZATINAL MEETING (DRAFT)

BOARD OF EDUCATION

BRIDGEPORT, CONNECTICUT

BRIDGEPORT REGIONAL AQUACULTURE SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

EDUCATION CENTER

60 ST. STEPHENS ROAD, BRIDGEPORT, CONNECTICUT

DECEMBER 10, 2018

PRESENT:

JOSEPH GANIM, Mayor

JOHN WELDON, Chair

JESSICA MARTINEZ, Vice Chair

JOSEPH SOKOLOVIC, Secretary

SYBIL ALLEN

MARIA PEREIRA

DENNIS BRADLEY

CHRIS TAYLOR

HERNAN ILLINGWORTH,

BEN WALKER

Transcribed by: John McLeod

1 MR. GANIM: I'm going to – if we have – begin on the record,  
2 opening the meeting. This is the organizational meeting in December  
3 2018 of the – I guess it's called the annual organizational meeting, –

4 MS. PEREIRA: Did you say 20th?

5 MAYOR GANIM: – being held today on December 10th, 2018, at  
6 5:30 p.m., at the Bridgeport Regional Aquaculture School. And I'll call  
7 the meeting to order without the necessity of the hammer or the gavel.

8 The roll-call vote. Allen.

9 MS. ALLEN: Here.

10 MR. GANIM: Here? If you can answer. Bradley. Illingworth.

11 MR. ILLINGWORTH: Present.

12 MR. GANIM: Martinez.

13 MS. MARTINEZ: Here.

14 MR. GANIM: Pereira.

15 MS. PEREIRA: Here.

16 MR. GANIM: Soko –

17 MR. SOKOLOVIC: Sokolovic.

18 MR. GANIM: Thank you.

19 MR. SOKOLOVIC: Present.

20 MR. GANIM: Thank you. Taylor.

21 MR. TAYLOR: Here.

22 MR. GANIM: Walker.

23 MR. WALKER: Present.

24 MR. GANIM: Weldon.

25 MR. WELDON: Present.

1 MR. GANIM: We have a quorum. Okay. The first item – and just  
2 go this quickly, at least my role, will be to do the public speaking.  
3 There's two people that have signed up for it; we'll take them in the  
4 order they signed up. And then there will be the election of the officers  
5 in following order: the chairperson, vice chair and secretary.

6 If the board would grant me the courtesy because of at least two, if  
7 not three, other places that I have to be tonight – I'd stay for the whole  
8 meeting if you wanted me to – but I think the important part is to  
9 participate and chair until we elect a chair, and if there's no objection, at  
10 that point I'll probably ask for the courtesy of moving on.

11 MS. PEREIRA: Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, –

12 MR. GANIM: I'm going to –

13 MS. PEREIRA: – under board policy, you only have to wait until  
14 the chair's elected and then the chair takes over for the next two.

15 MR. GANIM: Thank you. All right. So the first – we're going to  
16 begin the public speaking. The first speaker is Maria Pereira. You have  
17 two minutes. Does someone keep time? Okay. So whenever she starts,  
18 you can – two minutes.

19 MS. PEREIRA: It is important to note that over the last ten years  
20 that I have been involved in the Bridgeport Public Schools we have only  
21 had one chair that has articulated a vision for the Bridgeport Public  
22 Schools, and that was Sauda Baraka. Barbara Bellinger, Dr. Kelleher,  
23 Pastor Kenneth Moales, Dave Hennessey, Dennis Bradley, Joseph  
24 Larcheveque and now Mr. Weldon have never articulated a vision for our  
25 students, parents, staff and schools. They have been ethically and

1           morally challenged.

2                       What was most important to all of the former and current chairs I  
3           just referenced was that they have a little name plaque reading “chair,”  
4           that they had a little gavel, and that they sat at the head of the table.  
5           The work was never their driving motivation for serving as chair, nor did  
6           these individuals demonstrate a passion for the work. In fact, not a  
7           single current or former chair I just referenced has ever offered a single  
8           policy, program or initiative that made a difference in a child’s life.

9                       The other key factors they have in common is they served as chair  
10          of the Board of Education to serve DTC town chairman Mario Tester –  
11          Testa – and the mayor, whoever that might be. Neither of these  
12          individuals has done right by our students or have they – have  
13          adequately funded our schools. However, they have severely  
14          underfunded our children’s education as demonstrated by the fact that  
15          out of 169 towns and municipalities, no municipality contributes less to  
16          its public schools than Bridgeport. That result falls squarely on the  
17          shoulders of Mayor Ganim and our twenty-member City Council.

18                      Who ultimately pays the price for this severe underfunding of our  
19          public schools? Our children. When Mayor Ganim’s chief of staff, Dan  
20          Shamus, repeatedly tells party insiders they love Mr. Weldon because he  
21          does whatever they ask him to do, you know that cannot be good for  
22          children. It is, however, good for DTC chair Mario Testa and Mayor  
23          Ganim. John Weldon would like to be elected chair tonight; not because  
24          it’s good for children, but because it’s good for the powers that be.

25                      Mayor Ganim, I promised you in 2015 that if you lied to me about

1 fully funding our public schools, keeping your paws off the Board of  
2 Education and raising taxes, that I would walk through fire and hell in  
3 2019 to make sure you were not reelected. Summer 2019 is fast  
4 approaching, and unlike you, I always keep my promises.

5 MR. GANIM: Thank you. The next speaker is Alfred – it's hard to  
6 read – Bene – Albert. Thank you.

7 MR. BENEJAN: Good evening, board; good evening, Mayor. I'm  
8 very simple and I'm very glad, you know, this happened again, and I will  
9 very happy to get back Mr. John as the chair, Mr. Hernan as vice chair,  
10 and Jessica our secretary. And the rest of the board, you know, who  
11 care, who want the best for Bridgeport schools.

12 We're not here to get power; we're not here who's who, who got  
13 this, who got that. We're here for the parents, because we are parents  
14 and I know a hundred percent we are not going to be here. And we're  
15 here for the children; that's the most important thing.

16 People have to think we need to work together. When I said the  
17 board work together, work together with the city, work with the mayor.  
18 Because we are the ones making the votes; we are the ones – the  
19 parents have to make decisions for you guys to the best education for  
20 our children. So it's very important to work together.

21 Sometimes things go up and down; we're not perfect, only God.  
22 But we need to work together for the best for the children. God bless you  
23 all and good luck. Thank you.

24 MR. GANIM: Thank you. Okay. Well, I'm going to – I don't know if  
25 you keep this part of the record, but that were the two individuals who

1 signed up for the public speaking section. So now we'll go to the balance  
2 of the agenda, which is the election of officers.

3 Just for a point of information, last year you did written – you guys  
4 usually use ballots?

5 MS. PEREIRA: That's per board policy.

6 MR. GANIM: Paper ballots? Okay. You have paper ballots. Okay,  
7 that would be great.

8 So if you have paper ballots, then why don't we pass them out as  
9 we open up the – the nominations for the elections of office – of officers,  
10 beginning with the office of chairperson.

11 So at this time I'll entrain a nomination – in just one second for –  
12 for the office of chairperson. Okay. And if we could, if we could try –

13 MS. MARTINEZ: Mr. Chair.

14 MAYOR GANIM: – and just speak in order and not speak over  
15 each other.

16 Yes, you have the floor.

17 MS. MARTINEZ: I nominate Mr. John Weldon.

18 MR. GANIM: The nomination; is there a second?

19 MS. ALLEN: I second.

20 MR. GANIM: There's a nomination and a second. Are there any  
21 other notations?

22 MS. PEREIRA: Yes. I'd like to nominate Mr. Ben Walker. No one  
23 other committee has done more work on behalf of students, parents,  
24 families and teachers than Mr. Walker's committee. He has, since being  
25 chair of Teaching & Learning, has initiated discussions of African-

1 American, Caribbean-Latin American studies as a required course of  
2 study; instituted protocols for substitute teachers; launched monthly  
3 special ed compliance reports; established St. Vincent's career and  
4 college partnership; maintained STEM as curricular focus at Park City  
5 Magnet; created a new teacher orientation and established a required  
6 reading list for new teachers; presented African-American and  
7 Caribbean-Latin American studies as a required course of study;  
8 established protocols for interpretation and translation services;  
9 implemented Harding High School's early learning center; selected texts  
10 for Perspectives on Race course; selected texts for African-American  
11 history course and Latin American history course; selected texts for Next  
12 Generation Science Grades 6, 7 and 8th; consummated – excuse me –  
13 consummated a new Bassick High School advanced career curriculum  
14 pathway; effectuated Sacred Heart University grow-your-own program;  
15 and actualized Roosevelt School's application to the Commissioner's  
16 Network.

17 There is no other committee that's done more for this school  
18 district than Ben Walker's committee.

19 MR. GANIM: Is there a second?

20 MR. WALKER: Second.

21 MR. GANIM: Seconded. Any other nominations?

22 MR. TAYLOR: For chair?

23 MR. GANIM: Yes.

24 MS. PEREIRA: I make a motion to close nominations.

25 MR. SOKOLOVIC: Second.

1           MR. GANIM: Okay, the nominations are closed. There are two  
2 names in; you can vote for either name, or appropriately if you have any  
3 other action you want to take you can do that. But why don't you do it in  
4 the form of written ballots. The record will reflect that every member, the  
5 eight members that are here, have received written ballots and upon  
6 filling them out and completing them, they'll be collected and we'll read  
7 the – the vote – or the results into the record.

8           So let the record reflect that the eight ballots have been  
9 transmitted back to – I will call the temporarily appointed clerk, at least  
10 for the chairman's election. She's opening the ballots and will announce  
11 the result.

12           MS. ORTIZ: Mr. Weldon has voted for Mr. Weldon. Jessica  
13 Martinez: Mr. Weldon.

14           MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: Can't hear you.

15           MR. GANIM: She said – she said – would you please repeat it.

16           MS. ORTIZ: Mr. Weldon has voted for Mr. Weldon. Jessica  
17 Martinez has voted for Mr. Weldon. Mr. Illingworth has voted for Mr.  
18 Weldon. Chris Taylor has voted for Mr. Weldon. Ms. Allen has voted for  
19 Mr. Weldon. Mr. Sokolovic has voted for Mr. Weldon. Maria Pereira has  
20 voted for Mr. Walker. And Mr. Walker has voted for Mr. Walker.

21           MR. GANIM: Okay. That's one, two, three, four, five, six votes for  
22 Mr. Weldon; two votes for Mr. Walker.

23           Mr. Weldon, the record will reflect you've been elected as the  
24 chairperson for the Board of Education. Congratulations.

25           And with your permission, I'm going to turn the chair over to you



1 and you conduct the balance of the meeting. Thank the members of the  
2 board, the members of the public, Madam Superintendent, thank you, for  
3 your time tonight and for another smooth process in order to start off  
4 another school year of the Board of Education. Thanks again.

5 MR. WELDON: Okay. I'd like to call – I'd like to open nominations  
6 for the office of vice chair. Any nominations?

7 MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, it would be a great honor and  
8 privilege to nominate Ms. Jessica Martinez as vice chair of the Board of  
9 Education. I think she's got the experience, the wisdom and the  
10 backbone to ride behind you and ride with you and work as a partner.

11 So I'd like to nominate Jessica Martinez.

12 MR. WELDON: Okay. A second is not necessary. Are there any  
13 other nominations?

14 MR. SOKOLOVIC: Mr. Chair, it gives me great pleasure once  
15 again to nominate Mr. Hernan Illingworth for vice chair.

16 MR. WELDON: Okay. So on the floor we have Mr. Illingworth and  
17 Ms. Martinez. Are there any other nominations? Are there any other  
18 nominations?

19 Ms. Martinez.

20 MS. MARTINEZ: Mr. Chair. Mr. Taylor, I greatly appreciate you,  
21 but can I respectfully decline or –

22 MR. WELDON: You can.

23 MS. MARTINEZ: – not?

24 MR. WELDON: You can, if you want.

25 MS. MARTINEZ: At this – at this time, I respectfully decline.

1 MR. WELDON: At this time. Okay.

2 MR. TAYLOR: If she's going to decline the nomination, do I get  
3 another nomination?

4 MR. WELDON: The nominations are still open.

5 MS. PEREIRA: They're not closed yet.

6 MR. TAYLOR: I'd like to nominate Maria Pereira, because if you  
7 put Hernan in there, I might as well have her, because at least I know  
8 where she's coming from. So I'm going to nominate Maria Pereira.

9 MR. ILLINGWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Taylor.

10 MR. WELDON: Are there any other nominations?

11 MR. WALKER: Second.

12 MR. WELDON: Any other nominations? Any other nominations?  
13 Okay. Is there a motion to close nominations?

14 MS. PEREIRA: I make a motion to close nominations.

15 MR. SOKOLOVIC: Second.

16 MR. WELDON: All in favor of closing nominations.

17 ("Ayes" were sounded.)

18 MR. WELDON: Opposed? Ms. Ortiz, would you pass out the  
19 ballots.

20 MS. PEREIRA: So I just like to know. Jessica Martinez has  
21 declined, but we have a right to still vote for her because we nominated  
22 her. She's been nominated.

23 MR. TAYLOR: No, we did not nominate her.

24 MR. WELDON: But she has declined the nomination; she does  
25 not wasn't it.

1 MS. PEREIRA: But it doesn't matter – but she's been nominated.

2 MR. WELDON: You can't force someone to take an office.

3 MS. PEREIRA: No, but if she gets the votes, she can decline it.

4 Am I right?

5 MR. WELDON: There's two ways of –

6 MS. PEREIRA: She's been nominated.

7 MR. WELDON: It's six of one, half dozen of another.

8 MS. PEREIRA: If she doesn't want it after the fact, she can  
9 decline it.

10 MR. TAYLOR: Then we have to do the vote over?

11 MS. PEREIRA: No.

12 MR. WELDON: No. Just put who your preference is, and we'll go  
13 from there.

14 Okay. Are we ready?

15 MS. ORTIZ: Maria Pereira – Maria Pereira voted for Jessica  
16 Martinez. Mr. Walker voted for Jessica Martinez. Ms. Martinez voted for  
17 Mr. Illingworth. Mr. Illingworth voted for Mr. Illingworth. Mr. Weldon  
18 voted for Mr. Illingworth. Mr. Sokolovic voted for Mr. Illingworth. Mr.  
19 Taylor voted for Ms. Martinez. Ms. Allen voted for Ms. Martinez.

20 MS. PEREIRA: It's tied – is it a tie?

21 MR. WELDON: It's a tie.

22 MS. PEREIRA: That means it goes – either we break the tie or it  
23 goes to the Common Council after thirty days.

24 MR. TAYLOR: Let's send it to the Common Council.

25 MR. ILLINGWORTH: That's okay; we don't have to send it to the –

1 to the Council. I can –

2 MR. WELDON: Okay. Let's put this to a vote.

3 MR. ILLINGWORTH: I can – we can – it's okay.

4 MS. PEREIRA: We can take a second ballot.

5 MR. ILLINGWORTH: I'll drop out.

6 MR. WELDON: We can take a second ballot.

7 MR. ILLINGWORTH: I'll drop out.

8 MR. TAYLOR: Good.

9 MR. ILLINGWORTH: I'll drop out and Mr. – and Ms. Martinez will  
10 be vice chair. I think we can do that.

11 MR. TAYLOR: Second.

12 MS. PEREIRA: I think we should take another ballot vote because  
13 it's required.

14 MR. WELDON: Okay. The choice is that we redo this or we send it  
15 to the City Council.

16 Is there a motion to –

17 MR. TAYLOR: Hang on, Mr. Chair.

18 MR. WELDON: – take a re-ballot? If somebody wants to change  
19 their ballot, they can do that.

20 MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Chair, he just withdrew. He just withdrew.

21 MR. WELDON: I understand that. If he wants to do that through  
22 his own ballot, he can do that.

23 MR. TAYLOR: I don't know the parliamentary procedure.

24 MR. WELDON: I mean, initially Ms. Martinez withdrew.

25 MS. PEREIRA: But that was before the vote.

1 MR. WELDON: That was before the vote.

2 MS. PEREIRA: Right. She wasn't – she wasn't – she didn't have  
3 votes at that point to be in a tie.

4 MR. WELDON: I understand that.

5 MS. PEREIRA: So –

6 MR. WELDON: But the point is, she declined it.

7 MS. PEREIRA: Okay. But now there's a four-four tie.

8 MR. WELDON: And people voted for her anyway. So now the  
9 question is, does Ms. Martinez want to stick with her declination or not.

10 MR. TAYLOR: Take it, Jessica. You're good; take it. Do it for the  
11 children.

12 MR. WELDON: Or does Mr. Illingworth want to withdraw?

13 MS. MARTINEZ: If I currently decline, there's no – I mean, I  
14 currently decline.

15 MR. WELDON: Okay.

16 MS. PEREIRA: So they both decline, so we have to take a new  
17 vote.

18 MR. WELDON: Are you declining, Mr. Illingworth?

19 MS. PEREIRA: He declined.

20 MR. ILLINGWORTH: I – I – if she declines it, then I'll – listen,  
21 someone's got to do it.

22 MR. WELDON: Someone's got to do it.

23 MR. ILLINGWORTH: It should not go to the City Council. If you  
24 don't want it, then I'll take it. If you want it, I don't – I won't. That's the  
25 respect I have for you, Jessica.

1 MR. TAYLOR: Jessica, it's your time. Take it, Jessica. It's your  
2 time; you're doing the right thing for the student body. You're doing the  
3 right thing for the student body.

4 MR. ILLINGWORTH: I will respectfully decline.

5 MR. WELDON: Okay. Ms. Martinez, what is your decision –  
6 decline it or accept it?

7 MR. TAYLOR: All right.

8 MR. WELDON: So do you decline it or accept it? I need it for the  
9 record.

10 MS. MARTINEZ: I'll accept it.

11 MR. WELDON: Okay. Ms. Martinez is the vice chair. I would call  
12 for nominations for the office of secretary.

13 MS. MARTINEZ: I nominate Hernan Illingworth.

14 MR. WELDON: Okay. Any other nominations?

15 MR. TAYLOR: I'd like to nominate Joseph Sokolovic.

16 MR. WELDON: Okay. Any other nominations? Any further  
17 nominations? Are there any further nominations?

18 MS. PEREIRA: I'm sorry. Who's on the table? I apologize.

19 MR. TAYLOR: Joseph Sokolovic as secretary.

20 MS. PEREIRA: And Hernan?

21 MR. TAYLOR: And Hernan, yes.

22 MS. PEREIRA: And Joseph's was seconded?

23 MR. TAYLOR: We don't need a second, he said.

24 MR. WELDON: We don't need a second.

25 MS. PEREIRA: Oh, I know that, but I'm just saying Joe Ganim's

1 saying you need a second; you're not required to have a second.

2 MS. ALLEN: Second.

3 MR. WELDON: Okay. Are there any further nominations?

4 MR. TAYLOR: That's still Sokolovic; not Joe Ganim. Oh, okay.

5 MR. WELDON: Any further nominations?

6 MR. TAYLOR: Two handsome devils; they could easily get  
7 confused.

8 MR. WELDON: All right. Is there a motion to close nominations?

9 MS. PEREIRA: Motion to close nominations.

10 MR. SOKOLOVIC: Second.

11 MS. ALLEN: Second.

12 MR. WELDON: Seconded by Ms. Allen. All in favor.

13 ("Ayes" were sounded.)

14 MR. WELDON: Opposed? Okay. Ms. Ortiz.

15 MS. ORTIZ: Mr. Walker has voted for neither person. Ms. Pereira  
16 for neither person. Mr. Sokolovic for himself. Mr. Weldon for Mr.  
17 Illingworth. Ms. Martinez for Mr. Illingworth. Mr. Illingworth for Mr.  
18 Sokolovic. Mr. Taylor for Mr. Sokolovic. Ms. Allen for Mr. Sokolovic.

19 MR. WELDON: Okay.

20 MR. TAYLOR: How did it go?

21 MR. WELDON: He won.

22 MR. TAYLOR: Oh, good. Congratulations, Joseph.

23 MR. WELDON: The next item on the agenda is the approval of the  
24 minutes of the 2017 organization meeting. Is there a motion to approve?

25 MS. ALLEN: So moved.

1 MR. WELDON: Are you making the motion?

2 MS. ALLEN: Yes, I did.

3 MR. WELDON: Okay. Is there a second?

4 MR. SOKOLOVIC: Second.

5 MS. PEREIRA: I have edits.

6 MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Chair, point of clarification. At what point do  
7 we have change the signs and all that stuff?

8 MR. WELDON: We'll – we'll wrap this up afterwards. Next  
9 meeting.

10 MR. TAYLOR: No, that's fine; that's fine.

11 MR. WELDON: Okay. Any – any edits?

12 MS. PEREIRA: Yes. On page 6 –

13 MR. WELDON: Guys.

14 MS. PEREIRA: Where it says Ms. Parziale, it says "I want to  
15 congratulate the incoming mayors" – it's members. Incoming members;  
16 not mayors.

17 I'm sorry. There's one more if you give me a second. It's kind of  
18 lengthy.

19 Oh, on page 21, it says Mr. Weldon: Okay. "Let her record show" –  
20 I think it says – it's supposed to be "the." "Let the record show."

21 Those are the only two errors I could find.

22 MR. WELDON: Any further edits?

23 MS. PEREIRA: Oh, I'm sorry. One other. I'm sorry. Page 24, my  
24 name is spelled incorrectly. And that was it.

25 MR. WELDON: Any further edits? Okay. All in favor of approving



1           the 2017 organizational meeting minutes with edits as noted by Ms.  
2           Pereira, signify by saying aye.

3   ("Ayes" were sounded.)

4           MR. WELDON: Opposed?

5           MR. TAYLOR: Abstain.

6           MR. WELDON: Abstain. Okay. Motion to adjourn.

7           MR. SOKOLOVIC: Second.

8           MR. WELDON: We need a motion first.

9           MS. ALLEN: So moved.

10          MR. SOKOLOVIC: Oh, so moved.

11          MR. WELDON: Okay. Ms. Allen. Seconded by Mr. Sokolovic. All  
12          in favor?

13   ("Ayes" were sounded.)

14          MR. WELDON: Opposed? The meeting is adjourned.

15   (The meeting was adjourned.)

16

17

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 A TAPE RECORDING OF  
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF  
EDUCATION, AT THE BRIDGEPORT REGIONAL  
AQUACULTURE SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION  
CENTER, 60 ST. STEPHENS ROAD, BRIDGEPORT,  
CONNECTICUT, ON DECEMBER 10, 2018.

DATED THIS 13TH DAY OF DECEMBER 2018.

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JOHN McLEOD