

Wednesday, February 14, 2018

MINUTES OF THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE OF THE  
BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held February 14, 2018, at  
Bridgeport City Hall, 45 Lyon Terrace, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 6:16 p.m. Committee members present were Chair Hernan Illingworth and Jessica Martinez. Board members Joseph Sokolovic and Maria Pereira were present.

Ms. Martinez moved approval of the committee's minutes of January 18, 2018. The motion was seconded by Mr. Illingworth. The motion was approved by 1-0 vote. Mr. Illingworth voted in favor of the motion. Ms. Martinez abstained.

The next item was an update on civil service. Frank Chester, chief talent officer, said civil service provided a letter stating that in the March-April time frame there would be testing for Custodian I.

Ms. Pereira said there were over thirty positions in the board that were provisional. She said the city charter indicated an employee could not be provisional more than four months, yet some employees have been provisional six to eight years.

Ms. Pereira said the purpose of civil service testing is to take the politics out of hiring. She said the machine uses the board to put people into positions who aren't necessarily the most qualified, but are politically connected.

Ms. Pereira said there were provisional employees as custodial supervisors, typists, and clericals who have not been tested. She said the civil service director, Mr. Dunn, said the tests could not be held due to costs. She urged the board send a communication requesting testing for all provisional employees.

Ms. Pereira said some courts have ruled that provisional employees cannot be a member of a union, so provisional employees affect

bumping rights.

Ms. Pereira said all firefighters and police officers have to take tests to be hired.

Ms. Pereira said the memorandum indicated that when the test for Custodian I takes place there will be a huge elimination of employees working as custodians.

Ma. Pereira said she was in favor of bringing the matter to the full board and that the board ask for an update on Custodian I civil service testing and there be a response to Mr. Dunn's urging the city charter be followed whether there are funds for testing or not.

While waiting for a document, the committee discussed the next item on total vacancies and positions filled by long-term subs. Mr. Illingworth said the committee had received a report from Mr. Chester. He said he believed the committee should periodically look at this issue.

Mr. Illingworth said the situation was concerning. He said there had been a practice in the district of filling vacancies in non-shortage areas with long-term subs to save money. He said as a parent he knows what it's like for classes without permanent teachers, including constant turnover of the long-term subs.

In response to a question, Mr. Chester said the district is trying to fill vacancies in shortage areas. He said he is not allowed to hire elementary teachers for vacancies if they do not fit into shortage areas.

Ms. Pereira said Mr. Illingworth had the right idea about the need to make every effort to fill vacancies that occur before April.

Mr. Chester said the policy was purely about the budget because long-term subs are paid \$180 a day.

Ms. Pereira said she felt a little misled because Ms. Siegel has repeatedly said that if there is a qualified teacher available to fill a vacancy they are going to be hired.

In response to a question, Mr. Chester said in regards to lateral transfers by district employees that typically teachers are not moved during the year because of disruption, although this is not a hard and fast rule.

Ms. Pereira said we need to make it clear to Ms. Siegel that long-term subs can only be used in April, May and June. Mr. Illingworth said he agreed.

Mr. Illingworth noted the board has budgeted for all the teaching positions in the district. If someone leaves, we have that money to replace them. He said the board needs to make sure the students get the best quality education.

Mr. Illingworth said many students have been impacted by a revolving door of long-term substitute teachers.

Mr. Illingworth said there could be a referral to the Finance Committee to have a dialogue with Ms. Siegel on this issue. Ms. Pereira said Ms. Martinez as Finance Committee chair could just put the matter on her agenda. Ms. Martinez said she would do so.

Returning to the civil service agenda item, Tim McNamara provided the committee with a list of civil service employees working for the board listed by classification.

Mr. McNamara said the tradespeople such as carpenters come from the union trade hall. He said about 95 percent of the provisional employees are in the facilities area.

Mr. McNamara said the job position of janitress was not limited to females. It is a position that involves lighter duty than custodians such as general clean-up.

Mr. McNamara said the Typist I positions are provisional; Typist II and Typist are III are not tested for.

Mr. McNamara said there was a test given a few months ago for Custodian IV. He said he did not believe anyone lost their job,

although some may have reverted back to Custodian I. He said he could research and provide that information.

Gil Velez was recognized. He said those employees that lost their positions went back to the lowest salary grade.

Ms. Pereira said there were 35 provisional employees, some employed as far back as 2012. Mr. McNamara said the management of the department makes the decision as to which provisional employees to hire. Ms. Pereira said they're working off a political list, not a civil service list.

Ms. Martinez said some of the employees retained their positions through different administrations. Ms. Pereira said she believed it was not so much the particular administration but Mario Testa.

Mr. McNamara said Mr. Dunn offered to address the committee if necessary, but he was not available tonight.

Mr. Illingworth said he believed Mr. Dunn should appear before the full board.

Ms. Pereira said according to the document it looks like only one provisional employee was hired all last year, a Custodian I. She said she heard there were twenty custodial vacancies, but the hiring freeze applies to those positions.

Ms. Pereira said she didn't understand how a typist is tested.

Mr. Sokolovic said doing the testing will actually save the board money because the provisional employees are at salary levels above the entry level.

Ms. Pereira said one employees has been a provisional employee since 2013, a Typist I, who is Anthony Paoletto's mother. She said she could be the best typist in the world, but the test should be given.

Ms. Martinez said passing the test protects the employee's job.

Mr. McNamara said he believed under the provisions of the NAGE

contract, provisional employees would have to be laid off first.

Albert Benejan was recognized. He said many of the custodians do an amazing job.

Ms. Pereira said the point of creating the civil service test is to be able to hire someone right away for open positions.

Mr. McNamara said he believed the test was a fairly basic level because it is for an entry level position, and said he hoped persons who have been in the job for up to six years would do well on the test. Ms. Pereira said Mr. Dunn indicated he expected a lot of Custodians to lose their jobs.

Mr. McNamara said he could forward to the committee the contractual language about provisional employees. He said civil service's offer letter makes provisional employees fully aware that they must pass the test high enough to gain a position.

Ms. Martinez moved "*to bring to the full board possible action on civil service testing.*" The motion was seconded by Mr. Illingworth. Mr. Illingworth said Mr. Dunn or a representative will be invited to the February 26th board meeting.

The motion was unanimously approved.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod