

Wednesday, June 20, 2018

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PERSONNEL  
COMMITTEE OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF  
EDUCATION, held June 20, 2018, at Bridgeport City Hall, 45  
Lyon Terrace, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. Present were members Chair Hernan Illingworth and Sybil Allen. Board members Joseph Sokolovic, Ben Walker and committee member Jessica Martinez arrived subsequently as noted.

Superintendent Aresta L. Johnson, Ed. D., was present.

Ms. Allen moved to approve the committee's minutes of May 3, 2018. The motion was seconded by Mr. Illingworth and unanimously approved.

Mr. Walker and Mr. Sokolovic arrived at the meeting.

The next agenda item was on the civil service testing for custodian.

Frank Chester, chief talent officer, said Tim McNamara was our resident civil service expert. He noted the board had been focusing on this for quite some time. There have been a number of custodians in provisional status for several years. He said he and the superintendent met with Mr. Dunn, the director of civil service.

Tim McNamara said the last test was given well over five years ago. He said the test was given on June 9 for all provisional employees in the Custodian I position, both board and city employees. The results were just released.

He said the board had 37 provisional employees in the Custodian I position and 36 took the test. He said 32 of the candidates passed and four failed.

Mr. McNamara said there will be another open test, tentatively scheduled for September. The public will be able to take the test. The four custodians who failed will have another opportunity but they would now be facing a little more competition.

Mr. Illingworth said he thought there were a lot more than 37 provisional employees in the Custodian I position.

In response to a question, Mr. McNamara said there are different positions in the custodian category such as service assistants and janitresses. He said the latter is an old civil service title and has no bearing on gender; it is a non-tested position. He said the pay and job descriptions are different than that for custodian.

In response to a question, Mr. McNamara said he did not know why one employee chose not to take the test.

Mr. McNamara said employees had a 30-day window to review and challenge their scores.

Mr. McNamara said union agreements may possibly be upheld if the employees who failed the test were taken out immediately and replaced with people who also are not tested.

Mr. Chester said the problem is civil service hasn't done the testing so they don't have a list to choose people from. Because there is no list you end up with a situation where people can't be taken out of the job because there is nobody

to replace them with. He said the status quo will exist until there is another test.

In response to a question, Mr. McNamara said the list remains in effect for two years after testing. He said when the open test is completed; the candidates will be ranked in order.

Mr. Chester said basically we will have five positions available that are up to be filled in the September testing.

Mr. Illingworth said he would still like to know what happened to the custodian who did not take the test.

Mr. Illingworth said he heard there was a curving grading of the test in the past. Mr. McNamara said a passing score is 70 percent of the highest score of those who took the test. He said that is standard civil service practice.

The next item was the extension of the contract for John DiDonato. Mr. Illingworth said the extension is a simple one-page document, which will extend his contract for one year, from July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2019

Ms. Allen moved “*to extend the contract.*” Mr. Illingworth seconded the motion.

Mr. Walker said this was an absolute move in the right direction. He said Mr. DiDonato had done yeoman’s work to reduce costs for special education services and made tremendous efforts to streamline the IEP process. He said litigation costs have been cut down through Mr. DiDonato’s expertise. He added there is a potential problem if this is the last year The University School will be in operation, which

would be 40 additional students the district would have to outsource at great expense.

Mr. Walker said to renew the contract rewards Mr. DiDonato for the good work he's done and keeps the district on pace to provide the required special education services.

Mr. Illingworth said he agreed with Mr. Walker. He said when he first got on the board he was part of the decision to let Mr. DiDonato leave. He said he definitely regretted that vote because it was a tremendous loss to the district and it backfired one hundred percent. He said he was thrilled when Dr. Johnson brought Mr. DiDonato back. He said he knew Mr. DiDonato was trying to build a program in-district and he hoped the board could look at innovative ways to do it.

Ms. Martinez arrived at the meeting.

Ms. Allen said she worked under Mr. DiDonato at an alternative high school and he did a tremendous job in helping her to keep her head above water and to do the things that were necessary.

The motion was unanimously approved.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 6:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

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