

BOARD OF EDUCATION

MICHAEL J. TESTANI
Acting Superintendent of Schools

City Hall - 45 Lyon Terrace
Bridgeport, Connecticut 06604

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD cont.

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

JOHN R. WELDON
Chairman

HERNAN ILLINGWORTH
Vice-Chairman

BOBBI BROWN
Secretary



"Changing Futures and Achieving Excellence Together"

SYBIL ALLEN

ALBERT BENEJAN

JOSEPH J. LOMBARD

JESSICA MARTINEZ

JOSEPH SOKOLOVIC

CHRIS TAYLOR

Bridgeport, Connecticut

April 22, 2020

Board Members:

A Regular Meeting of the Board of Education will be held on Monday, April 27, 2020, at 6:30 p.m. via a Microsoft Teams Live Broadcast event. Public viewing access to the meeting will be made available through <https://www.bridgeportedu.net/stream>.

Bobbi Brown
Board of Education Secretary

**BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION
AGENDA OF REGULAR PUBLIC MEETING**

**Monday, April 27, 2020 – 6:30 P.M.
Microsoft Teams Live Broadcast Event
Bridgeport, CT**

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Pledge of Allegiance**
- 3. Roll Call**
- 4. Public Comment**
- 5. Approval of Board Minutes**
 - a) 03/09/20 Regular Meeting
 - b) 03/23/20 Special Meeting
 - c) 04/01/20 Special Meeting
 - d) 04/14/20 Special Meeting
- 6. Chairman's Report**
- 7. Committee Reports/Referrals**
 - a) Facilities & Security
 - b) Finance
 - c) Governance
 - d) Teaching and Learning
 - e) Personnel
 - f) Students & Families
 - g) Ad-Hoc Committee: GCS Males of Color
- 8. Superintendent's Report**
 - a) Questions and Answers About Covid-19 School Closure
- 9. Old Business**
- 10. New Business**
- 11. Adjourn**

Monday, March 9, 2020

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held March 9, 2020, at Bridgeport Regional Aquaculture Science & Technology Education Center, 60 St. Stephens Road, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. Present were Vice Chair Hernan Illingworth, Secretary Bobbi Brown, Joseph Sokolovic, Sybil Allen, Albert Benejan, and John Weldon. Chris Taylor arrived subsequently as noted.

Acting Superintendent Michael J. Testani was present.

Mr. Weldon moved to *“add to the agenda discussion and possible action of suspending all out-of-state field trips for the remaining school year of 2019-20.”* The motion was seconded by Mr. Benejan and unanimously approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Felicity Medinger of Shelton said she has been a mentor in the district. The students she mentored are all sophomores now in college and she still meets with them on a regular basis. She said the program was very important.

Joslyn Acevedo, a Central Magnet alumni, said she was in support of the School Volunteer Association(SVA), which is facing the threat of closure. She said she came from a stable household and the program was greatly needed for students who do not have her advantages.

Annie Christy, a tutor with the SVA for six years, said she had worked at Hall and Edison Schools. She said a lot of students need one-to-one tutors. The tutors read to the student and the students read to the tutors. Children are given books to take home

Mr. Taylor arrived at the meeting

Mabel Hoffer-Page, a volunteer reader, described the Reading Pals program that helps 1st grade students every week.

Sara Ice, the Thursday coordinator for the Reading Pals program, said she volunteers in Wilbur Cross School to support students centered on books. She said there has been positive feedback from administrators and teachers, while the students have improved their skills.

Marge Hiller said there are 105 volunteers mentoring students through the School Volunteer Association. She said the tutors follow students in later grades as well. She provided written material on the value of the SVA, which described as a million dollars in direct services to students and materials.

Britt Liota said he was present to speak on behalf of a friend's daughter who was being bullied at John Winthrop School. He said he was asking for help because it had not been handled appropriately.

The 8th grade student, Ms. Harrison, said she had been constantly bullied for several years by another student. She said she did not trust the teachers and she was begging her mom to put her in another school. She said she had been removed from activities like lunch and recess.

Lynn Chanel, a literacy volunteer for the SVA, said after she retired from 41 years in teaching she came to Bridgeport to help struggling readers. She said she only works with students in Tier III, the lowest performing children. She urged SVA funding be restored.

Catalina Acevedo, mom of Joslyn Acevedo, spoke in favor of the mentoring her daughter received from a SVA volunteer.

Mr. Taylor said he wanted the SVA to know that he would not be voting for any budget cuts.

Mr. Benejan said he agreed with Mr. Taylor. He said he would like to discuss the bullying problem at the Students & Families Committee on March 20th. Mr. Taylor said he believed the superintendent and Ms. Morgan have a good handle on the bullying situation and would get good results.

APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES:

Ms. Allen moved approval of the minutes of the Regular Meeting of February 10, 2020. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic.

The motion was approved by a 6-0 vote. Voting in favor were members Illingworth, Weldon, Allen, Brown, Sokolovic, and Benejan. Mr. Taylor abstained.

Mr. Sokolovic moved to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting held at 5:30 on February 24, 2020. The motion was seconded by Ms. Allen and approved by a 6-0 vote.

Voting in favor were members Illingworth, Weldon, Allen, Brown, Sokolovic, and Benejan. Mr. Taylor abstained.

Mr. Sokolovic moved to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of 6:00 p.m. on February 24, 2020. The motion was seconded by Ms. Allen.

Mr. Benejan noted it was very clear in the minutes that Mr. Benejan did not vote. He said he wanted to be clear that he voted against removing Ms. Martinez as chair. He noted things went very fast at the time of the vote.

The motion was approved by a 6-0 vote. Voting in favor were members Illingworth, Weldon, Allen, Brown, Sokolovic, and Benejan. Mr. Taylor abstained.

Mr. Sokolovic moved to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of March 2, 2020. The motion was seconded by Mr. Weldon.

The motion was approved by a 6-0 vote. Voting in favor were members Illingworth, Weldon, Allen, Brown, Sokolovic, and Benejan. Mr. Taylor abstained.

CHAIR REPORT:

Mr. Illingworth welcomed the student representatives to the meeting and invited them to participate.

Mr. Illingworth said he is planning on calling a meeting for the election of a new chair on March 23rd. He said the date was chosen because some board members were not available until that date. He said he would invite the mayor to preside over that meeting.

In response to a question, Mr. Illingworth said the board had a 30-day deadline to choose a new chair or the City Council would do so.

Mr. Sokolovic suggested the board receive a legal opinion on the timing of the deadline to choose a chair, particularly given the wording of the statute. Mr. Taylor said he agreed.

COMMITTEE REPORTS/REFERRALS:

Mr. Illingworth said the Facilities & Security Committee would meet at some point in March.

Mr. Illingworth said the Governance Committee met on March 2nd and took up two matters. He said the committee has the aggressive goal to review and approve half of the board's policies by the end of the year.

Mr. Illingworth moved to handle next on the agenda discussion and possible approval of the first read of revised field trip policy 6201 and 6201a. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic. (There was no vote taken.)

Mr. Testani said Policy 6201 would be changed to indicate that school trips must be linked to academic and social-emotional learning experiences. Another change calls for permission for an overnight field trip must be submitted to the executive director prior to the requested trip.

Mr. Testani said the policy revision calls for required items to be submitted to the executive staff prior to the approval of a trip. The approval process for local field trips requires submission of the form to the principal five days in advance for review and authorization; out-of-state field trips must be submitted by the principal to their executive director ten days

in advance of the trip. For overnight field trips the principal must submit appropriate forms to their executive director 30 days in advance of the field trip for Board of Education review and authorization; and for international trips the principal must submit appropriate trip request forms to the executive director sixty days in advance of the trip for Board of Education review and authorization.

Mr. Testani said if available, trip insurance will be offered to each student's family to voluntarily accept or deny.

Mr. Taylor left the meeting.

Mr. Sokolovic reported on the Teaching & Learning Committee. The committee met on February 25th and discussed field trips, a nutrition survey, and curfew enforcement. He said the next meeting would take place on March 16th.

Mr. Weldon said the Personnel Committee would next meet on March 24th.

Mr. Benejan reported on the Students & Families Committee meeting. He said the School Volunteer Association gave a great report. He said the SVA does an amazing job with students and he hoped they could be restored to the budget. He said there was a great presentation by a teacher, Ms. Brown, on recycling. He said the parent convention and the current status of the PAC/PTSO was also discussed. The next meeting will be held on March 19th.

Mr. Sokolovic said the Males of Color Committee met on February 26th to discuss the white paper, which is progressing nicely, professional development on unconscious bias, and a possible collaboration with the New

Haven Family Alliance program on mentoring. The committee will next meet on March 24th,

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

Mr. Testani thanked everyone for their help in coordinating the student and staff recognition event last Thursday.

Mr. Testani said Senator Chris Murphy visited the Friday Night Live program at Central High School. A second site has been opened at Harding High. He said the programs are open from 6:00 to 10:00 p.m. each Friday.

Mr. Testani said there was a recent Black History event at Boca Oyster Bar and funds were raised for a scholarship fund for district students.

Mr. Testani said Governor Lamont and Commissioner Cardona visited Harding High. Student representative Kevin Frank spoke with them about the school.

Mr. Testani recognized the Bassick girls' basketball team for making the state playoffs. He said Coaches Pierce and Brown had turned the team around.

Mr. Testani congratulated 100 Girls Leading for beginning presentations at schools. He noted Ms. Brown and others are involved in the effort.

Mr. Testani said all high school graduations would be held on June 11th at Webster Bank Arena. He said the cost has been cut significantly and donations of about \$16,000 of the \$25,000 needed have already been received.

Mr. Testani said the district takes reports of bullying very seriously. He said there was a meeting with a parent today and support will be offered to try to resolve the issue.

Mr. Testani said he participated in a call with the governor and all state agencies today on the corona virus. He said according to the state Department of Health of the 56 individuals tested in the state only two have tested positive. He said all events containing crowds of over a hundred have been recommended to be cancelled. He said unfortunately that will affect a lot of after-school programs.

Mr. Testani said he was recommending that out-of-state and international student trips be postponed until we have more information. He said the contract for the Fairchild Wheeler trip will permit the students to receive vouchers for future travel.

Mr. Sokolovic said he wanted to caution the board and superintendent about knee-jerk reactions. He said what works for other school districts may not work for Bridgeport. He added a lot of our students depend on schools for food. He said if trips are cancelled the students may never have a chance to take a similar trip in their lifetime.

Mr. Weldon said his primary concern was the folks who had already paid for trips, but the provision of vouchers would make him more comfortable. He agreed with suspending any out-of-state travel sponsored by the district.

Mr. Testani said if we do not notify the tour company within the next four days the vouchers would not be provided or payments will not be refunded.

In response to a question from a student representative, Mr. Testani said a trip to Texas in July would not be affected by the current action, but would be revisited.

Student representative Kevin Frank said he understood Mr. Sokolovic concerns about students in Bridgeport.

Ms. Allen moved to approve “*postponing all out-of-state field trips for the rest of the school year.*” The motion was seconded by Mr. Illingworth.

Mr. Sokolovic moved to amend “*to add a thirty-day time period and revisit it in another thirty days just in case the situation changes.*” He said he believed the trips should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Ms. Brown seconded the amendment. The amendment was unanimously approved.

Mr. Sokolovic expressed concerns about students not having the opportunity to travel. He said it should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. He said keeping students in school may not be healthier than traveling.

Mr. Illingworth said it was a difficult situation and he worried about the risk of a student or a chaperone coming into contact with the virus. Mr. Sokolovic said the seasonal flu killed over 13,000 people in the country last year. He said drastic measures were not taken during the H1N outbreak, the swine flu, or the Ebola issue.

Mr. Benejan said the virus was all around the world and we could not risk our children on a trip. He said he worried about the risks of the board being sued. He said he would rather lose the money than the life of a child.

Ms. Allen said she believed the students were more properly protected in their own environment and expressed concern about legal liability to the board.

Mr. Testani said he was concerned because if the board reconsidered the matter in thirty days all the money would be lost for those who paid for the trips. He said the Fairchild Wheeler trip to the United Kingdom was scheduled for April, but the tour company had to be informed by March 16th.

Mr. Testani said if the students choose to accept the voucher they can go on next year's trip, while the seniors can go on their own on any tour offered by the tour company. He said if the virus threat was lifted it was possible the students could go in August as a class again.

Mr. Testani said he did not believe students should travel to Washington, New York or Boston under these circumstances where they are exposed to thousands of people. He said some tourist attractions are closing.

Mr. Sokolovic noted there was a Nature Classroom's trip scheduled for Massachusetts. Mr. Testani said there were no confirmed cases locally so the students were safer at home.

Kevin Frank said he believed it would be probably a good idea to postpone all the trips until the end of the school year.

Mr. Testani said there was another meeting scheduled at Fairchild Wheeler with parents that he will participate in. He said if they received vouchers they may be able to go as a group in August or next year somewhere else.

Mr. Sokolovic noted BuildON had an upcoming trip to Nicaragua. Mr. Testani said he would be very leery in having the district participate in that trip.

The motion was approved by a 4-1 vote. Voting in favor were members Illingworth, Weldon, Brown and Benejan. Mr. Sokolovic was in opposition. Ms. Allen abstained.

Mr. Sokolovic said he was not concerned about money, but students missing out on enrichment opportunities.

Mr. Testani said the Commissioner of Education was clear there needs to be equitable educational access if distance learning is employed during the virus. Mr. Testani said it cannot be guaranteed that all students have access to the proper technology in the home. He said worksheets sent to the home would not be equitable. He said in the event schools are closed, the days will be made up at the end of the school year. He said travel plans had probably been made by people for April break so he was reluctant to eliminate that vacation.

In response to a question, Mr. Testani said he spoke to Mr. Hammond about diligently cleaning buildings. He said stronger products that are legally allowed are being used. He said unfortunately the bus company can only clean its vehicle at night, not in between runs.

OLD BUSINESS:

The next agenda item was on the 2020-21 school calendar. He said the calendar had been amended to include September 28th, Yom Kippur, as a day of off and adding two days at the end of the year, so students will be in session for 182 days and teachers for 186.

Mr. Sokolovic moved *“to approve the revised 2020-21 school calendar as presented by Mr. Testani.”* The motion was seconded by Ms. Brown and unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS:

The next agenda item was on the nutrition center’s security upgrades.

John Gerrity, nutrition director, said approval was requested for the security upgrade at 113 Federal Street. He said it would modernize cameras and switch over to the city’s monitoring center, which provide the monitoring at no cost. He said the expenditures would come from the food and nutrition budget and pay for itself in about two and a half years.

Mr. Weldon moved *“to approve the nutrition center’s security upgrade as proposed by Mr. Gerrity.”* The motion was seconded by Ms. Allen and approved by a 5-0 vote.

Voting in favor were members Illingworth, Weldon, Allen, Sokolovic and Brown. Mr. Benejan abstained.

Ms. Allen moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Brown and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

Monday, March 23, 2020

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE
BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held March 23,
2020, by video conference call, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m. Present were Vice Chair Hernan Illingworth, Secretary Bobbi Brown, Joseph Sokolovic, Sybil Allen, Albert Benejan, John Weldon, and Joseph Lombard. Jessica Martinez joined the meeting subsequently as noted.

Acting Superintendent Michael J. Testani was present.

The first agenda item was an update on the current situation with the coronavirus.

Mr. Illingworth said the superintendent and the district's staff had done a tremendous job in an unprecedented situation.

Mr. Testani said it has been extreme effort on everyone's part to try to make sure that students are safe and to provide a continuity of education. He said an amazing job was done implementing a distance learning program districtwide, particularly by the IT department. He said printed materials of the online presentations were available for distribution for today.

Mr. Testani said 30 schools have responded to his e-mail and over 8,000 printed copies have been given out.

Mr. Testani said the meal program was growing and over 4,200 meals were served today. Meals will now be provided from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Mr. Testani said adjustments would be made for the next learning experiences for students. He noted school has been closed through April break.

Mr. Testani said all information would flow out of his office to make sure there is a uniform message to staff or families. He said there is some inaccurate information on social media posts. He also noted some districts are approaching things differently.

Mr. Testani said he has done some spot-checking of buildings. He said an e-mail has gone out to custodians to ramp up cleaning efforts. He said he was not pleased with a couple of buildings he visited today, which was day seven of the district's closure. He said the board needed to explore other options on how we maintain our buildings in the future.

Mr. Testani said many staff members had gone above and beyond to ensure the safety and education of students.

Mr. Testani said the state has indicated 60,000 devices will be released to Alliance districts for high school students in the next month. He said he told state legislators that a minimum of 5,000 would be needed to cover high schools students.

In response to a question, Mr. Testani said the current devices at the high school would trickle down into the middle schools.

Mr. Sokolovic suggested a survey be conducted for students who do not need access to a device to rational them for the best possible use.

Mr. Sokolovic said he was hoping that the instructional packets would be expanded and that future efforts include online lessons by teachers. Mr. Testani said every teacher is available through e-mail during regular school hours beginning today. The superintendent said there is some online instruction at the high school level with the Teams platform. He said principals are reviewing the proposed lessons submitted by teachers and the best ones would be shared districtwide. He said it was important to have continuity across the district.

Mr. Sokolovic said from what he has seen at the 6th grade the materials being provided are not curriculum-aligned. Mr. Testani said the students will turn in their work on April 1st and can then pick up a new printed copy of the new material. He said teachers will grade the submitted material and provide feedback. He said the state Department of Education has not provided guidance yet on grading and whether there will be letter grades or pass/fail.

Ms. Martinez joined the meeting.

Mr. Testani said he did not want to place an unfair burden on parents to teach students over the next four to five weeks.

Mr. Sokolovic said he believed the best possible education should be provided to as many students as possible even if all students were not in equal situations.

In response to a question, Mr. Testani said we're doing everything humanly possible for special education students with the guidance of federal and state authorities for services around the IEPs.

The next agenda item was discussion on electing a new chair of the board.

Mr. Illingworth said if a Regular Meeting could have been held today the board would have elected a chair. He said the board was now facing an unprecedented situation. He said he would like the board to develop a procedure on how to elect a chair. He said if the board came to a consensus a special meeting could be called for later this week to elect the next chair.

Mr. Illingworth suggested a meeting be held by video conference with the votes for the chair submitted to Rita Valle by e-mail for tabulation.

Ms. Martinez said Mr. Illingworth as interim chair was fully capable and should remain so until the pandemic is over. She said she did not see how the public could participate and speak on the issue in a virtual meeting to choose the chair.

Mr. Sokolovic said the board should stick with its bylaws and state statutes. He said there had always been a 30-day time limit to choose a chair or a board member. He suggested there be a voice vote in addition to e-mail votes. He said the business had to go on despite the pandemic and a chair should be chosen.

Ms. Martinez said if the community was going to participate a longer period of notice was needed. Mr. Illingworth noted the board had a 30-day time limit and he advocated choosing the chair by April 4th. Mr. Weldon said he believed the deadline was April 1st.

Mr. Benejan said he did not see the need to rush to pick the chair. He said he agreed with Ms. Martinez that Mr. Illingworth was doing an amazing job.

In response to a question, Mr. Illingworth said the board's attorneys and the city attorneys could be asked whether it is possible to extend the 30-day deadline. He said these were uncharted waters.

Ms. Brown said it is important to elect a chair, but she suggested the complications in everyone's lives was taking up a lot of time. She said she would like to hear the legal opinion on whether the chair must be chosen in the next week.

Ms. Allen said she agreed with Ms. Brown.

Mr. Lombard said he agreed with Ms. Brown, Ms. Allen and Ms. Martinez because the board was not in a normal situation. He said he was open to hearing from the attorneys if it was an option to extend the deadline.

Mr. Weldon said the thirty days expires April 1st, which leaves the board very little time. He said if a legal answer can be received in a day or so there is no harm. He urged the board not risk forfeiting its decision-making authority. He said he agreed with the procedure suggested by Mr. Illingworth earlier on how to conduct a meeting to select a chair.

Mr. Weldon said to change any current bylaws of the board would not be an easy process.

Mr. Illingworth said the board could always reconvene on March 30th for a meeting, regardless of the legal opinions received.

Mr. Illingworth asked Mr. Testani to inquire of the board's attorney and the city attorney's office whether it is possible to receive an extension of the 30-day deadline to choose a chair until a public meeting could be held.

Mr. Testani said Mr. Postolowski informed him that public comments can be made on a virtual meeting. He said if there were conflicting legal opinions he would ask the lawyers to speak to come to a consensus. Mr. Illingworth said if the opinion is received in writing he could forward it to all the board members.

Mr. Benejan said it was more important to support Mr. Testani and each other than to choose a chair.

Ms. Allen moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Martinez and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

Wednesday, April 1, 2020

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE
BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held April 1, 2020,
by video and audio conference call, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 6:21 p.m. Present were Vice Chair Hernan Illingworth, Secretary Bobbi Brown, Joseph Sokolovic, Sybil Allen, Albert Benejan, Chris Taylor, John Weldon, Jessica Martinez, and Joseph Lombard.

Acting Superintendent Michael J. Testani was present.

Ms. Martinez moved to “*postpone the election of the BOE chair to the next in-person public meeting.*” The motion was seconded by Mr. Benejan.

Ms. Martinez said Mr. Illingworth was the most qualified person sitting on the board currently; he has been a longtime board member and has been a mentor to her. She said Mr. Illingworth was handling the position of interim chair as best as he can. She said there should not be a rush to choose a chair before there could be a public meeting and input from the public.

Mr. Sokolovic said there was ample opportunity to include the public in tonight’s hearing, but Mr. Illingworth chose not to include public comment in the agenda.

Mr. Weldon said the last time the board met it was decided to get a legal opinion. He said the city attorney responded that the board has a duty to elect a new chairman and should do so promptly by electronic means, particularly in consideration of bylaw 9220, which places limitation on the

vice chair's authority. Mr. Weldon said we could find ourselves in a bind if we do not take action. He said electronic meetings might have to continue into the future for months and there should be a fully functional chairman.

Ms. Martinez said she respected the opinions of the city attorney. She said the board's attorney's opinion would be more valuable because he is an expert in this area. She said the bylaws of the board can be suspended by a vote of the board.

Ms. Martine said Mr. Illingworth's heart is in the right place for the children. She said she would go with the decision of the team if the team decided to go with the opinion of the attorney.

Mr. Taylor moved to call the question. The motion was seconded by Ms. Martinez.

Mr. Illingworth urged the members speak only to the issue of postponement.

Mr. Sokolovic said we did not know when the next in-person meeting would take place because the virus's course was uncertain and the board could remain deadlocked for a year.

Mr. Taylor asked for a roll call vote. Mr. Illingworth said Mr. Sokolovic could finish his comments.

Mr. Taylor left the meeting.

Mr. Sokolovic said he was prepared to nominate Mr. Weldon to move forward. He said he didn't always agree with what Mr. Weldon has done, but he can move us forward. He said the board needs direction.

Mr. Lombard said if the board thinks it can function then it can function to take a vote on any issue. If the board can't take a vote on any issue, it shouldn't be functioning as a board. He said he believed all three offices of the board should be filled.

Ms. Martinez said what we do is for the parents and she wanted to hear from the public. She noted the stress everyone was operating under because of the virus. She said she was currently assisting her nephew with his 4th grade learning for hours each day. She said under the pandemic the board did not have to make major decisions because the person dealing with it is the superintendent, who is doing an amazing job.

Ms. Martinez said Mr. Weldon had failed previously as a leader. She requested there be public comment on Mr. Weldon. She noted the board had relieved a very good leader for stupid reasons.

The vote on the motion to postpone the election failed by a 4-4 vote. Voting in favor were members Martinez, Benejan, Illingworth, and Brown. Voting in opposition were members Sokolovic, Weldon, Allen, and Lombard.

Mr. Sokolovic nominated Mr. Weldon for chair of the board. Mr. Lombard seconded the nomination.

Ms. Martinez left the meeting.

There were no further nominations. Mr. Illingworth requested the board members send an e-mail confirming their vote to Rita Valle following the roll call. Ms. Allen said she would provide written confirmation.

The vote on the nomination was 4-1 in favor. Voting in favor were members Allen, Weldon, Sokolovic, and Lombard. Mr. Benejan was opposed. Mr. Illingworth and Ms. Brown abstained.

Mr. Weldon thanked those who voted for him and said he hoped to earn the support of those who did not vote for him going forward. He said he would be reaching out to everyone about how to move forward in these strange times.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 6:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

Tuesday, April 14, 2020

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE
BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held April 14,
2020, by video and audio conference call, Bridgeport,
Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 5:39 p.m. Present were Chair John Weldon, Secretary Bobbi Brown, Joseph Sokolovic, Sybil Allen, Albert Benejan, and Joseph Lombard.

Acting Superintendent Michael J. Testani was present.

Mr. Weldon said according to the governor's executive order the documents being referenced in the meeting are available to the public on the board's internet home page.

The first agenda item was on a memorandum of agreement with UConn for an integrated multitier system of support project in K-2 reading and behavior supports.

Dr. Melissa Jenkins presented on this subject. She said the agreement will provide students, teachers and administrators with an opportunity to receive professional development and coaching support from UConn over five years. The first year would consist of a research project across ten schools in the district.

Dr. Jenkins said about 108 classrooms would be involved at the ten largest schools in the district. She said the cost to the district at this time would be primarily time due to the use of professional development and school improvement days for the coaching sessions.

Mr. Testani said the agreement was reviewed by the board's attorneys and UConn's attorneys, including in regard to student privacy. Dr. Jenkins said the federal government has funded the same program in Texas, Colorado, Kansas, and Massachusetts. She said it was equivalent to what the district calls SRBI.

Ms. Allen, Mr. Benejan, and Ms. Brown asked that they be provided with written materials about the program.

In response to a question, Dr. Jenkins said principals have discussed the possibility of this partnership with teachers. She said Winthrop School teachers reached out about it. She said teachers' participation would be voluntary and if there were not enough volunteers at a particular school that school would not be able to participate.

In response to a question, Dr. Jenkins said the two full-day trainings would be conducted virtually due to the pandemic. She said the on-site meetings would be held once monthly when the partnership begins. Mr. Testani said he believed the costs of paying teachers to attend additional professional development for this program would be minimal.

In response to a question, Dr. Jenkins said reading data from the new assessment tool DIBELS would be collected. The external UConn coaches would work with the district on interpreting data and deciding interventions with the teams.

In response to a question, Dr. Jenkins said observers would look for fidelity in the implementation of the program and it would not include formal evaluation of teachers.

Mr. Sokolovic said the provisions on FERPA seemed to imply UConn could use the data any way that they so chose

as long as it's not illegal. Mr. Testani said he believed UConn would publish data to demonstrate the success of the program, if it is successful, in order to expand it. He said student data would be de-identified by district data management.

In response to a question, Dr. Jenkins said the coaching would be done by HILL for Literacy and consultants, including adjunct professors from UConn. She said UConn has some of the leading authorities on positive behavior supports in the country.

Ms. Allen moved *"to enter into the memorandum of agreement with UConn for an integrated multi-tiered system of supports project in Grades K-2 reading and behavior supports."* The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was discussion and possible action concerning a memorandum of agreement(MOU) with Today's Students, Tomorrow's Teachers.

Ms. Allen asked that a physical packet be delivered to her going forward.

Mr. Testani said there was a partnership at a significant cost to the district for many years prior to it being removed from the budget. He said the organization secured funding from private donors to restart the program to work with high school students who are identified and worked with during their college career, with the intent of returning to Bridgeport to teach. He said there would be no cost to the district at all for this MOU.

Ms. Allen moved “*to enter into the agreement.*” The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic.

In response to a question, Mr. Testani said the Today’s Students, Tomorrow’s Teachers personnel would be subject to the same background checks as other organizations that work with students.

The motion was unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was discussion and possible action concerning award of a refuse removal contract. Tony Pires, business manager, presented on this item.

Mr. Pires said the item was a recommendation of the award to Country Disposal. He said an RFP was issued in February. He said a contract delivered by the city attorney’s office was created for the board’s approval.

Mr. Pires said Country Disposal was the only bidder that responded to the RFP. He said they have been the district’s provider for the past three years. He said he was extremely happy with their service and recommended approval.

In response to a question, Mr. Pires said most of the refuse in the schools are not recyclable materials. He said the vendor is governed by state statutes in regards to recyclables. He said only cardboard and paper is recycled at the school level. Mr. Weldon noted that items that are contaminated with food or other matter are not recyclable.

In response to a question, Mr. Pires said the last RFP for this service resulted in bids with considerably higher prices. He said he believed most companies were looking for a larger

profit margin than the district's vendor. He said the \$321,000 bid is the same as last year.

Mr. Lombard moved *"to award a contract for refuse removal with Country Disposal Services for the next three fiscal years."* The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was discussion and possible action to issue an RFP for point of sale, inventory and production software for the nutrition center.

John Gerrity, director of food and nutrition services, said the current company is not supporting its software.

Mr. Weldon said once responses are received the board can talk about the merits of different providers.

In response to a question, Mr. Gerrity said the purchase would be funded under the nutrition center's operating budget.

Ms. Brown moved *"to authorize the nutrition center to issue an RFP for point of sale, inventory, and production software for Bridgeport Public Schools' food and nutrition center."* The motion was seconded by Ms. Allen and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was discussion and possible action to solicit bids for commodity food items for the 2020-21 school year.

Mr. Gerrity said the department receives funding from the federal government through the state based on previous year's meal counts. U.S. Department of Agriculture raw food

products are purchased with the money and the products are sent to a processor for finishing. He said the department was looking to go out to bid with the food processors who provide the finished product.

Ms. Allen moved “*to authorize the nutrition center to solicit bids for USDA commodity food items for the 2020-21 school year.*” The motion was seconded by Ms. Brown and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was discussion and possible action to accept devices from the Partnership for Connecticut for district high school students.

Mr. Testani said the partnership has purchased 60,000 laptop devices for high school students in the 33 Alliance districts in the state. He said it was not expected that any of the devices will arrive any earlier than the second week of May, and distribution procedures would add additional delay. He said they would be accepted as district property.

Mr. Testani said they are Dell laptops that Mr. Postolowski, the IT director, described as very good machines. They will include GPS tracking and content filtering. He said this will allow high school students to access curriculum online. He requested the board vote to accept the devices.

Ms. Allen moved “*to accept technology devices from the Partnership for Connecticut to be used by Bridgeport Public School high school students.*” The motion was seconded by Ms. Brown.

In response to a question, Mr. Testani said almost five thousand devices would be received based on October 1 enrollment. He said the plan would be to distribute them

next year in lieu of textbooks, with classroom textbooks kept available. He said he has discussed protocols for distribution with Mr. Postolowski. He said a nominal fee would be assessed to families to insure or self-insure the devices.

In response to a question, Mr. Testani said there would not be built-in WiFi in the devices. He said it is expected that the devices have enough capability to contain entire textbooks.

Mr. Testani said he would thank the Partnerships for Connecticut on behalf of the board. He said this is an opportunity for all students to have access to a good computer for years to come.

In response to a question, Mr. Testani said the laptops would only be provided to Alliance districts, not private, charter or parochial schools.

The motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Weldon announced the board's committee assignments effective today.

The Facilities Committee will be chaired by Mr. Illingworth with members Benejan and Allen. Staff liaisons are Robert Hammond and Alan Wallack.

The Finance Committee will be chaired by Mr. Sokolovic with members Brown and Lombard. Staff liaison is Marlene Siegel.

The Governance Committee is chaired by Mr. Illingworth with members Martinez and Weldon. Staff liaison is Supt. Testani.

The Great City Schools/Males of Color Ad Hoc Committee is chaired by Mr. Sokolovic. Staff liaison is Dr. Melissa Jenkins.

The Personnel Committee is chaired by John Weldon with members Illingworth and Sokolovic. The staff liaison is Denise Altero-Dixon.

The Students and Families Committee is chaired by Mr. Albert Benejan with members Brown and Sokolovic. The staff liaison is Herminio Planas.

The Teaching and Learning Committee is chaired by Joseph Sokolovic with members Lombard and Allen. The staff liaison is Supt. Testani.

The Contracts Committee is chaired by John Weldon with members Lombard and Sokolovic. The staff liaison is Tony Pires.

Charter school governance council board liaisons:
Achievement First/Bridgeport Academy (Mr. Benejan)
Bridge Academy(Dr. Victor Black); Capital Prep Harbor School(Ms. Martinez); Great Oaks Charter School(Dr. Selena Morgan); New Beginnings Family Academy(Dr. Melissa Jenkins); Park City Prep(Ana Souza-Martins).

Board representatives to the City School Building Committee are Mr. Weldon and Mr. Sokolovic. The CES representative is Ms. Martinez.

The next agenda item was a COVID-19 update.

Mr. Testani said the governor has closed schools through May 20th. He said there has been outreach from parents

indicating that even a few weeks of the school at the end of the year would be valuable.

Mr. Testani said meals are being served at twenty locations between 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m., including during this spring break week.

Mr. Testani said the third marking period ended last week and student work is being accepted through April 20th. He said regular letter grades are being used. He said grading for the fourth marking period is still to be decided.

Mr. Testani said the district is in Phase 2 of its distance learning plan. Phase 3 will incorporate each teacher working individually with students and classes. He said printed materials are available to be picked up.

Mr. Testani said buildings have been cleaned. If school is closed through the end of the school year at some point summer cleaning will begin earlier than usual.

Mr. Testani said it is hoped to bring staff back to schools for professional development and planning for next year. He said it is also hoped that funding will be made available for students to get remediation and enrichment after school and on Saturdays in the next school year.

Mr. Testani said he spoke to Hartford's superintendent last week and the plan is to create a coalition among other large city superintendents to try to secure extra funds.

In response to a question, Mr. Testani said he was anticipating school closure for the remainder of the year but he was hopeful that could change and students could be brought back. He said he has spoken to Ms. Papa of the

Lighthouse Program about possible programming in the summer such as outdoor camps.

Mr. Testani said given the nature of the pandemic he has given consideration on how to hold graduations for students at some point. He said it could include students socially distanced without family and friends present. He said there was the possibility of holding something in June or July.

Mr. Benejan thanked Mr. Testani for the amazing job he was doing. Mr. Lombard said Mr. Testani was doing a great job.

In response to a question, Mr. Testani said the district had distributed over a thousand devices to parents who have requested them. However, he said, many parents prefer printed materials. He said parents who need a device should be directed to his office.

Mr. Weldon said he believed Mr. Testani and the staff was doing a great job under very trying circumstances. He thanked staff members who have helped make the remote board meetings work without a hitch.

Mr. Weldon said it was planned to hold the Regular Meeting on April 27th even if there are no actionable items. He said he would try to include a public comment component.

Ms. Allen said Mr. Testani was doing a wonderful job. Mr. Testani said during times of crisis the community comes together to support each other. He said he was proud of the way everyone had stepped up.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 7:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

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