

BOARD OF EDUCATION

City Hall - 45 Lyon Terrace
Bridgeport, Connecticut 06604

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD cont.

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

MICHAEL J. TESTANI
Superintendent of Schools

JOHN R. WELDON
Chairman

BOBBI BROWN
Vice-Chairman

JOSEPH LOMBARD
Secretary



"Changing Futures and Achieving Excellence Together"

SYBIL ALLEN

ALBERT BENEJAN

JESSICA MARTINEZ

JOSEPH SOKOLOVIC

CHRIS TAYLOR

VACANCY

Bridgeport, Connecticut

November 3, 2020

Board Members:

A Regular Meeting of the Board of Education will be held on Monday, November 9, 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>.

Joseph Lombard

Joseph Lombard
Board of Education Secretary

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

**Monday, November 9, 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 (Agenda Items Only)**
- 5. Approval of Board Minutes**
 - a) 10/26/20 Regular Meeting
 - b) 10/28/20 Special Meeting
 - c) 10/30/20 Special Meeting
- 6. Chairman's Report**
- 7. Committee Reports/Referrals**
 - a) Educational Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
 - b) Facilities
 - c) Finance
 - d) Governance
 - e) Personnel
 - f) Students and Families
 - g) Teaching and Learning
- 8. Superintendent's Report**
 - a) General Report
 - b) COVID-19 Update
- 9. Old Business** – None to be Transacted
- 10. New Business**
 - a) Discussion and Possible Action on The Over Under Initiative
 - b) Discussion and Possible Approval of the 2020 -2021 Alliance Building Grant Application
 - c) Review of Board and Superintendent Performance During COVID-19*
- 11. Adjourn**

*Item qualifies for Executive Session

Monday, October 26, 2020

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held October 26, 2020, by video conference call, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 6:31 p.m. Present were members Chair John Weldon, Secretary Bobbi Brown, Jessica Martinez, Albert Benejan, Joseph Sokolovic, and Joseph Lombard. Sybil Allen joined the meeting subsequently as noted.

Acting Superintendent Michael J. Testani was present

APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES:

Ms. Martinez moved approval of the minutes of the Regular Meeting of October 13, 2020. The motion was seconded by Ms. Brown and unanimously approved.

Ms. Martinez moved approval of the minutes of the Special Meeting of October 15, 2020. The motion was seconded by Mr. Benejan. The motion was approved by a 5-0 vote. Voting in favor were members Benejan, Brown, Weldon, Sokolovic, and Martinez. Mr. Lombard abstained.

COMMITTEE REPORTS/REFERRALS:

Mr. Sokolovic reported on the Educational Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee. The committee met on October 19th and discussed committee goals and objectives and the need for board-level training in culture competencies and recognition of institutional biases.

Mr. Sokolovic reported on the Finance Committee meeting of October 14th. The 2021 budget was updated, including concern about the loss of enrollment of about 800 students and continued pressure on the budget through increased special education services and a possible shortfall in revenue from nutrition services. Also discussed was a budget timeline for the 2020-21 budget cycle and the need to meet with the state delegation. He suggested Supt. Testani arrange a meeting with the delegation. The superintendent said Ms. Vickers from the mayor's office has started that process.

Mr. Benejan said the Students & Families Committee will meet on November 19th.

Mr. Sokolovic said the Teaching & Learning Committee met on October 20th, and the superintendent presented a district learning update. For the most part, things are going well, with a few areas of concern. Mr. Arnold provided a special education update, with no serious issues to highlight. Also discussed was a curriculum review of social studies. Supt. Testani is putting together a team to update the curriculum to provide more culturally competent curriculum. Mr. Sokolovic said Alicia Robinson provided an awesome update on the arts curriculum with a focus of cultural competency.

Mr. Benejan noted he made some referrals to the Facilities Committee regarding IT that Mr. Illingworth forwarded to the superintendent. Supt. Testani said he would confer with Mr. Illingworth and if necessary take the lead on that.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT/AGENDA:

Supt. Testani said an update has been received that Altice is reviewing the list of two thousand families who asked for the offer of one year of free service. To be qualified families cannot be a current customer. He said it seemed that anyone who is arrears from prior Altice subscriptions will not be approved.

The superintendent said the social studies team had its initial meeting.

Supt. Testani said he has reached out to a dynamic speaker on equity, diversity and cultural competency. He said he was thinking in terms of two days of professional development. He said he believed it was critical to staff and students.

The superintendent said new devices are being given out every day. He said the district in most cases is going above and beyond the health department's recommendation on COVID. He said the information on social media is not always accurate; decisions are being made with health and safety at the forefront. He said a lot of research was coming out that indicated schools are safe.

Supt. Testani said there is an uptick in COVID cases in Connecticut. He said if we're not diligent we could get into a "red" state quickly. He said the district was prepared to transition to remote learning if necessary.

Ms. Brown said there had recently been inaccurate information online. She asked about protocols for teachers with health issues and prohibitions against writing and graphics on students' masks.

Supt. Testani said teachers with health issues go through HR to apply for accommodations. ADA accommodations have been offered, including Plexiglas dividers or being excused from lunch duty. About a dozen teachers with severe issues have taken FMLA or a leave of absence. He said a teacher who applied for the sick bank did so to extend their maternity leave. He said requests like that have never been granted.

Ms. Allen joined the meeting.

The superintendent said it was decided to prohibit political statements on masks, although other creative masks are allowed.

In response to a question, Supt. Testani said for the most part closings have been contained to a classroom or a grade level or two, with the exception of some schools. He said many schools have not been impacted at all. He said adults have the opportunity to socially distance from each other so several do not have to quarantine from one positive case in a school.

In response to a question, the superintendent said when a positive case is discovered the district gets a copy of the results and if the transmission is more than 48 hours from the last time the person was in the building the school is not closed. He said he believed this is why there has not been a super spread at any school.

In response to a question, Supt. Testani said all the students impacted at Multicultural Magnet were picked up by their parents today, not transported by bus.

In response to a question, the superintendent said when students have had connectivity issues they have been provided with a hotspot.

In response to a question, Supt. Testani said some high school students in the remote component have begun to disengage and there is work to reengage them. He said other superintendents in Fairfield County have expressed the same frustration. He said he has heard from high school students that it is much easier to not to log on to class or to close the laptop than to have to be in a school building. He said this is not an ideal situation. He said he has expressed his frustration to the Commissioner of Education and the need for support to Bridgeport academically and social emotionally. He noted Bridgeport has been shortchanged on COVID relief funding compared to New Haven, where the district is operating completely remotely.

Supt. Testani said at the elementary level students who do not sign on in the afternoon are being marked absent.

Ms. Martinez said her son chose to go remote because the classroom teachers seem to be teaching to a tablet, which is an example of what our kids have to go through. She said the superintendent's report indicates he and his team are on top of everything. She said perhaps there could be inspirational campaign to get students to log on.

The superintendent said it is not an ideal situation, but teachers are doing the best job they can to balance the remote and the in-person students. He said the challenge of young students working from home is very tough.

Ms. Brown asked if outside partners could tap Into Teams to help keep students in engaged. Supt. Testani said outside

agencies and partners are needed more than ever to participate outside of the school day. He said there is after-school Lighthouse at the elementary level. He said unfortunately many offers of assistance coincide with school hours.

In response to a question, Supt. Testani said some staff members at Columbus School urged waiting on a process to change the school's name. He said he will begin with the staff survey on the professional development day, and he would report back.

In response to a question, the superintendent said he did not know the offenses involved in upcoming expulsion hearings. Subsequently, he reported that Dr. Black informed him that they were weapons-related.

In response to a question, Supt. Testani said he can provide to the board the numbers on meal service at night.

In response to a question, the superintendent said the district is set for the elementary schools going to hybrid in November. Mr. Sokolovic said he agreed with the decision, noting the district had been ahead of the game.

NEW BUSINESS:

The next agenda item was on a memorandum of understanding between the board and the Housing Authority for usage of the Trumbull Gardens computer room as a satellite adult education location.

Supt. Testani said adult education has historically had satellite locations. He said several meetings led to an agreement where the housing authority would provide the

space without rental and the district would provide the instructor and supplies.

In response to a question, the superintendent said the district would like to register at least 15 people per class. He said the cost is an hourly rate of \$37.50 for the teacher, which is built into the adult education state grant.

Ms. Allen moved *“to approve the execution of the memorandum of understanding between the Bridgeport Board of Education and Bridgeport Housing Authority for usage of the Trumbull Gardens computer room as a satellite adult education location.”* The motion was seconded by Ms. Brown and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on Addendum 1 to the student transportation contract with We Transport.

Supt. Testani said the matter also came out of the Contracts Committee. The addendum would give We Transport the responsibility for bus routing, using the district’s Transfinder software. The district will have final approval on the routes to make sure they are operating at maximum efficiency. He said this would take a lot off the district’s plate, although a district transportation hotline would still be operated at the beginning of the year. He said it would put more accountability into We Transport and provide some savings to the district that was reallocated to the coordinator of school counseling and parent partnerships.

In response to a question, the superintendent said students are not tested before they get on school buses. He said the regular buses are running at a low capacity; students without masks are given a mask to wear. He said no one from We Transport participated in the Contracts Committee meeting.

Ms. Martinez moved “*to approve execution of Addendum 1 to the student transportation contract with We Transport, LLC, as presented by the superintendent.*”

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

The next agenda item was on an RFP for specialized substitute staff services for the period March 20, 2021 to 2024.

Supt. Testani said as discussed at the Contracts Committee this is because the current three-year contract with Delta-T is expiring. He said the city character requires a new contract.

In response to a question, Supt. Testani said Kelly Services provides coverage for certified staff, while Delta-T provides paraprofessionals. He said there have been no issues with the current provider.

In response to a question, the superintendent said the paraprofessionals are covered by their company’s insurance. He said an incident mentioned by board members involving a disturbing episode in the past did not occur with Delta-T or Kelly Services. Mr. Weldon said he understood insurance requirements were beefed up following the incident.

Ms. Allen moved “*to approve the issuance of an RFP for specialized substitute staff services for the period of March 2021 to 2024.*” The motion was seconded by Mr. Benejan and unanimously approved.

Mr. Weldon noted the board would have to approve the award of any new contract.

The next agenda item was on exercising option year one of the legal services contract with Berchem Moses. Supt. Testani said the three-year contract was expiring. Two one-year extensions are included in the contract. He said Berchem Moses is doing excellent work and we have a great working relationship. He said the firm was willing to continue the current billing rates and this would allow continuity on items being worked on now.

Mr. Weldon said Berchem Moses is employed primarily for its employment law and school law expertise. He said the city attorney's office has indicated it will not have an issue with continuing the arrangement.

Mr. Sokolovic moved "*to approve the exercising of option year one of the district's legal services contract with Berchem Moses, P.C.*" The motion was seconded by Ms. Allen and unanimously approved.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

Wednesday, October 28, 2020

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held October 28, 2020, by video call, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 5:34 p.m. Present were members Chair John Weldon, Secretary Bobbi Brown, Joseph Sokolovic, Joseph Lombard, Albert Benejan, Sybil Allen, and Jessica Martinez. Chris Taylor joined the meeting subsequently as noted.

Mr. Weldon said the meeting is related to the resignation of Vice Chair Hernan Illingworth, which occurred via e-mail yesterday morning.

Mr. Weldon said the board would have to elect a new vice chair to ensure succession planning purposes and establish a timeline to fill Mr. Illingworth's position on the board.

Mr. Weldon said the city charter and the board's bylaws state that the board has 30 days to solicit and select someone to fill the vacancy. If that does not take place, the mayor has the responsibility of filling the position.

Mr. Weldon said he had a proposed timeline based on past procedures when Mr. Bradley and Mr. Walker resigned. He said Mr. Illingworth indicated he remained a Democrat, so the seat needs to be filled with a Democrat.

Mr. Weldon said he contacted the registrar of voters to confirm the party affiliation of Mr. Illingworth and all other board members. He said he did not receive a response from the registrar of voters today, so he asked each board

member to identify their party affiliations. Identifying as Democrats were Ms. Allen, Mr. Benejan, Ms. Brown, and Ms. Martinez. Identifying as Republicans were Mr. Lombard, Mr. Weldon, and Mr. Sokolovic. Mr. Weldon said he was assuming Mr. Taylor remained a Republican. He said the composition of the board was such that Mr. Illingworth's seat would be filled by a Democrat.

The first agenda item was election of a vice chair. Mr. Weldon said votes could be submitted to Ms. Valle online or members could make an oral vote at the meeting.

Mr. Weldon said it was important to have officer roles consistently filled, particularly given the problems that would result if he was incapacitated.

Mr. Sokolovic nominated Ms. Brown for vice chair. Mr. Weldon noted Ms. Brown, if elected, would have to vacate the office of secretary, and there would have to be a vote for that position at another time.

Mr. Lombard nominated Mr. Sokolovic for vice chair. Mr. Benejan nominated Ms. Martinez for vice chair.

Mr. Sokolovic said he would decline the nomination.

Ms. Valle said a form to vote was sent to each member's Board of Education e-mail address.

Ms. Martinez and Mr. Lombard said they could not access the link. Mr. Weldon said they could vote orally.

Mr. Taylor joined the meeting.

Mr. Taylor said he was able to access the e-mailed ballot. Ms. Valle confirmed she received five e-mailed ballots.

Ms. Allen voted orally for Ms. Brown. Mr. Lombard voted orally for Ms. Brown. Ms. Martinez voted orally for Ms. Martinez.

Ms. Valle read off the electronic ballots. Voting for Ms. Martinez were Mr. Benejan and Mr. Taylor. Voting for Ms. Brown were Mr. Sokolovic, Mr. Weldon, Ms. Brown, and Mr. Lombard.

Mr. Weldon said the vote was 5-3 in favor of Ms. Brown.

The next agenda item was to establish a timeline and process to fill the board vacancy created by Mr. Illingworth's resignation.

Mr. Weldon said he sent everyone a copy of a proposed timeline, process, and solicitation advertisement.

Mr. Weldon said the proposal is applications must be received by November 18th. They will include a resume and a cover letter. From November 18th to the 20th the superintendent's office would schedule interview times with applicants at a Special Meeting on November 23rd. There would be an executive session to discuss the interviews and a vote in public session at the Regular Meeting on November 23rd to select the new board member. The selected applicant would be sworn in on that day and begin attending meetings.

Mr. Weldon said the superintendent's office would verify the Democratic party affiliation and forward resumes to the

board members as they come in. Board members could ask one question of each applicant during the interview.

Mr. Weldon read the proposed solicitation advertisement. It noted the selected individual will fill the vacancy until November 30, 2021. Applicants are required to be a registered voter and a resident of Bridgeport. Only applicants affiliated with the Democratic party will be considered and such affiliation must be in effect for not less than 90 days as of the date of the appointment to the board, with the exception of first-time voter registrants.

Mr. Weldon's proposal described the duties of board members and the process for applying for the position.

Mr. Sokolovic said because the opening is for a Democrat more time may be needed for interviews. He suggested leaving the exact time of interviews of November 23d to be determined. The other board members did not indicate any objection or questions.

Mr. Weldon said typically there is one advertisement in the *Connecticut Post* as well as the district's website, but he would leave that up to the superintendent. Mr. Sokolovic requested the *Post* and other community organizations with paywalls provide free advertisements.

Mr. Weldon said he believed there would be enough publicity by those interested in the board to make people aware of the opening.

Ms. Allen moved *"to follow the timeline and process as outlined by Mr. Weldon just now with the caveat that there will be no specific time determined at this point for the*

interviews.” The motion was seconded by Mr. Benejan and unanimously approved.

Mr. Weldon asked Ms. Brown to send him an e-mail resigning her position as secretary. He suggested a short meeting to elect a secretary on Friday. There was a discussion of the timing of the meeting. It was agreed to hold the meeting this Friday at 5:30 p.m.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 6:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

Friday, October 30, 2020

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held October 30, 2020, by video call, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 5:35 p.m. Present were members Chair John Weldon, Vice Chair Bobbi Brown, Joseph Sokolovic, Joseph Lombard, Albert Benejan, and Sybil Allen. Jessica Martinez joined the meeting subsequently as noted.

Mr. Weldon said the sole agenda item was the election of the board's secretary to fill the vacancy of that office. Ms. Brown resigned that office because she was elected vice chair.

Mr. Weldon said he received verification from the registrar of voters as to all members' party affiliation confirming the representations made at the prior meeting. The advertisement to fill the vacancy created by Mr. Illingworth's resignation will appear in the *Connecticut Post* on November 4th and transmitted to other community organizations.

Mr. Weldon said the district and the city's department of health will be holding a virtual health forum on November 4th, accessible on the district's webpage.

Ms. Allen nominated Mr. Sokolovic for the position of secretary.

Ms. Martinez joined the meeting.

Mr. Sokolovic declined the nomination. He nominated Mr. Lombard for the position of secretary.

Mr. Benejan nominated Ms. Martinez.

Mr. Weldon said Ms. Valle would send an electronic ballot to the board members; other members could vote orally.

Ms. Valle said she had received four responses electronically.

Ms. Allen voted orally for Mr. Lombard. Mr. Lombard voted orally for Mr. Lombard. Ms. Martinez voted orally for Ms. Martinez.

Ms. Valle said the electronic votes for Mr. Lombard were Ms. Brown, Mr. Weldon, and Mr. Sokolovic. Mr. Benejan voted for Ms. Martinez.

Mr. Weldon said Mr. Lombard was elected by a 5-2 vote.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 5:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

**BRIDGEPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS STAFF MOVEMENTS
As of NOVEMBER 3, 2020**

I. PROBATIONARY HIRES

	NAME	SCHOOL	POSITION	EFFECTIVE
1.	DANIELLE WILLIAMS	FCW	SPED	11/09/2020
2.	RADHA RADHAKRISHNA	MARIN	MATH	11/09/2020

II. RETIREMENTS

	NAME	SCHOOL	POSITION	YEARS of SERVICE	EFFECTIVE
	SUSAN HENSHAW	BEADSLEY	SPED	23	12/01/2020

III. SEPARATIONS

	NAME	SCHOOL	POSITION	EFFECTIVE	REASON
1.	JAMES GROSSO	BATALLA	SPED	11/30/2020	PERSONAL
2.	ISABELLA HERNANDEZ	READ	ART	11/20/2020	PERSONAL
3.	DAYRA DONIS	BATALLA	ESL	11/23/2020	PERSONAL