

Monday, May 11, 2020

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held May 11, 2020, by video and audio conference call, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m. Present were Chair John Weldon, Vice Chair Hernan Illingworth, Secretary Bobbi Brown, Joseph Sokolovic Joseph Lombard, Albert Benejan and Sybil Allen.

Acting Superintendent Michael J. Testani was present.

Jeffrey Postolowski, IT director, reported no members of the public had signed up for public comment.

### **APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES:**

Ms. Allen moved to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of April 27, 2020. The motion was seconded by Mr. Illingworth and unanimously approved.

### **CHAIR REPORT:**

Mr. Weldon asked there be a moment of silence in observance of those people who have succumbed to COVID-19 and in empathy for the families they have left behind.

Mr. Weldon said the district continues operate with distance learning, which is a different way of doing things. He said he believed everyone was doing a great job under very adverse conditions. He said the board recognizes how hard this is for students, parents, and staff.

## **COMMMTTEE REPORTS/REFERRALS:**

Mr. Illingworth said the Facilities Committee met on May 4th. He said the facilities department has worked over and beyond cleaning schools. Unfortunately, the department is over budget by about \$74,000 because of all the extra activity.

Mr. Sokolovic said the Finance Committee would meet on Wednesday.

Mr. Illingworth said the Governance Committee will meet on the first Monday in June.

Mr. Sokolovic said the Teaching & Learning Committee met on May 6th and the items discussed will come up for approval later in the agenda tonight. The next meeting will be on May 19th.

Mr. Weldon said the Personnel Committee will meet on Wednesday to conduct interviews for executive level positions.

Mr. Benejan reported on the last Students & Families Committee meeting. There was discussion of the PAC leaders and their parent engagement expenditures. Monies that are unspent, including for the parent convention, will be rolled over into next year. The next meeting will be on May 28th.

Mr. Sokolovic said May 26th is the tentative date for the next meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Great Cities Schools/Males of Color.

## **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT AND AGENDA:**

Mr. Testani said he recognizes it has been incredibly difficult time for students and families. He said adjustments to the distance learning have been made after feedback from students, teachers and parents. He said overall the district had made a successful pivot on a dime to the distance learning.

Mr. Testani said as the weather gets better the challenge is going to be even greater. He said there is planning underway to get staff in the buildings in a safe and responsible way to retrieve their belongings and prepare their classrooms for summer cleaning, and a responsible way of parents and students to come back to retrieve belongings and any medication stored in the nurses' offices.

Mr. Testani said last week was Teacher Appreciation Week and he added it was never too late to drop a teacher a note of appreciation. He said the district put out a thank you to teachers on the website.

Mr. Testani said planning for an outdoor high school graduation in early July is underway.

Mr. Testani said summer camps and summer school will be opened on June 29th with specific guidelines to be released by the state. He said he has urged a limitation on the number of people allowed in school buildings during the camps.

Mr. Weldon asked that Mr. Testani keep everyone updated in upcoming weeks on the status of summer activities.

Mr. Testani said he did a Facebook Live event last Friday and some tweaks will be made to allow public questions for this coming Friday. He thanked Mr. Benejan and Angel Resto for passing out donated masks to parents. He also thanked an anonymous Trumbull Mall merchant donated footwear to food and nutrition employees in the district.

Ms. Brown said Mr. Testani did a good job on an event with Faith Acts today, especially in providing direction in the way the district is going. Mr. Weldon said he agreed.

In response to a question, Mr. Testani said the health and safety guidelines for the summer will limit gatherings to no more than ten people. He said job postings for summer teaching have gone out and it is stressed that the teachers must be well versed in the Teams platform.

Mr. Benejan praised Mr. Testani Facebook event today with Faith Acts and said the board was here to support him.

Mr. Lombard said he believed the board had peace of mind because Mr. Testani would be continuing as superintendent and not having to pass the baton to another person at this difficult time.

In response to a question, Mr. Testani said he had built some strong relationships with other superintendents in the state and there have been discussions about what reopening schools in the fall would look like. Ideas have included alternating days for students attending classes. He said he realized anything out of the normal would be an incredible burden on families.

In response to a question, Mr. Testani said over 5,000 devices had been distributed. He said work has been going

on with schools to see how many devices remain in buildings, although some may not be operable. He said it looks like the first 40 percent of devices from the Connecticut Partnership will be delivered at the end of May for use in the next school year. He noted printed materials for the younger learners has been the preferred method for parents.

In response to a question, Mr. Testani said a reopening committee would be put together after state guidelines are released on May 15th. Mr. Sokolovic suggested there be planning for the eventuality that schools do not open on schedule in the fall.

Mr. Weldon noted the shutdown started off as two weeks and it has morphed into three and a half months. He said the summer was a good time to look back at what we went through.

Mr. Postolowski said no members of the public have submitted questions to the superintendent tonight.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

The next item was on the healthy food certification for school year 2020-21. Mr. Weldon said this and the following two items are done annually.

John Gerrity, director of food and nutrition, was present. Mr. Gerrity said the district and the board would agree to comply with the Connecticut nutrition standards for all food items offered for sale to students, which is almost exclusively done at the high schools. He said the board could also vote for exemptions for after-school events.

Mr. Sokolovic moved that *“pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-215f, the Bridgeport Board of Education certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction, and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021, and that this certification shall include all food for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals, at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, culinary programs, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or non-school organizations and groups.”*

The motion was seconded by Ms. Allen.

In response to a question, Mr. Gerrity said the provision covered what are called school stores.

The motion was unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on food exemptions to the healthy food certifications. Mr. Illingworth moved *“the Board of Education will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards provided that the following conditions are met: (1) The sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; (2) The sale is at the location of the event; and (3) The food items are not sold from vending machines or school stores.*

*“A ‘event’ is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays,*

*interscholastic debates, are events, but soccer practices, play rehearsals and debate team meetings are not. The 'regular school day' is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. 'Location' means where the event is being held and must be the same place as the food sales."*

The motion was seconded by Ms. Allen and unanimously approved.

The next agenda was on beverage exemptions to the healthy food certification. Ms. Allen moved *"that the Board of Education of the City of Bridgeport will allow the sale to students of beverages not listed in Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes provided that the following conditions are met: (1) That the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; (2) The sale is at the location of the event; and (3) The beverages are not sold from a vending machine or school store."*

*"A 'event' is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting or extracurricular activity. The 'school day' is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. 'Location' means where the event is being held and must be the same place as the beverage sales."*

The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on grading for school year 2019-20 in Marking Period 4.

Mr. Testani said this was discussed at the Teaching & Learning Committee meeting and passed unanimously. He said all the options being discussed around the state were discussed, with input received from high schools students, teachers and administrators.

Mr., Testani said there would be a three-pronged grading system. There will be a larger area for a narrative for teachers on elementary report cards to discuss the progress the child made prior to school closure and any commentary since the closure. For middle school and high schools there would be three levels: (1) pass; (2) fail; (3) and passing with distinction. He said a numerical grade of 55 would be applied to failure; a 75 would be passing; and 90 for passing with distinction.

Mr. Testani said instead of a final exam there will be an assignment or project due within a week that did not require students to venture out to stores to purchase anything.

Ms. Allen moved *“to accept the proposed grading as approved by the Teaching & Learning Committee and recommended by the superintendent for Marking Period 4 of the 2019-2020 school year.”* The motion was seconded by Ms. Brown and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on a Grades K-3 literacy assessment. Mr. Testani said the assessment would use the DIBELS materials as was presented by Dr. Jenkins, executive director of early childhood. at the Teaching & Learning Committee.

Dr. Jenkins said the assessment would be administered three times a year. The assessment takes about six minutes per child to administer and about 15 to 20 minutes for

teachers to enter data, which helps to guide instruction. She said the cost would be \$1 per child per year, which goes to the University of Oregon to maintain the platform.

Ms. Allen moved “to accept the proposed Grade K-3 literacy assessment system as referred by the Teaching & Learning Committee and as proposed and described by Dr. Melissa Jenkins.” The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on a Grade K-8 math program. Mr. Sokolovic said the item came out of the Teaching & Learning Committee. Mr. Testani said we are the end of a six-year curriculum renewal cycle, so Mr. Planas put together a team of teachers and administrators to look at renewal options and choose the best option.

Herminio Planas, executive director of elementary education, said the committee met from October to February and considered every available textbook option. The final two choices were sent to all teachers in Grades 6 to 8 and they voted for their preferred choice. The book selected was *Into Math*.

Mr. Planas said the cost of *Into Math* was very similar to the alternative option.

In response to a question, Mr. Planas said he agreed with Mr. Illingworth that workbooks are very important for math and the purchase will include all necessary consumables.

In response to a question, Mr. Planas said new textbooks were needed because the current books had been in use for almost ten years and were written before Common Core standards came out.

Mr. Sokolovic moved *“to adopt the Grade 6-8 math program as referred to this board by the Teaching & Learning committee and as proposed by Mr. Planas.”* The motion was seconded by Ms. Allen and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was suspending the deselection of magnet school students for the 2019-20 school year.

Mr. Testani said this was also discussed at the Teaching & Learning Committee and there was a vote to suspend deselection from magnet programs due to the school closure. He said it was felt it was not fair to deselect any children given the current situation.

Mr. Illingworth said he agreed with the proposal and urged students who might have fallen into this category be provided with interventions as soon as they are available. Mr. Testani said that would be the case.

Mr. Testani said a few deselections were made prior to closure for non-academic reasons involving incidents such as drugs or alcohol, and would not be applicable to the revised policy.

Mr. Illingworth moved *“to suspend the deselection of magnet school students for academic purposes for the 2019-20 school year.”* The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

Mr. Postolowski reported that no members of the public submitted a question about COVID-19 school closures.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 7:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

*Approved by the board on May 26, 2020*