

Monday, February 8, 2021

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held February 8, 2021, by video conference call, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m. Present were members Chair John Weldon, Vice Chair Bobbi Brown, Secretary Joseph Lombard, Albert Benejan, and Joseph Sokolovic.

Superintendent Michael J. Testani was present.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Ms. Valle-Shastri said no one had signed up for public comment.

There was a moment of silence for Charles Gray, a Bassick High custodian who passed away. Mr. Benejan said he was a great person.

APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES:

Ms. Brown moved to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 25, 2021. The motion was seconded by Mr. Benejan and unanimously approved.

CHAIR REPORT

Mr. Weldon announced the members of the newly created Ad Hoc Districtwide Branding Committee: Ms. Brown, Dr. Fabian, and Mr. Benejan. Ms. Brown will be the chair.

COMMITTEE REPORTS/REFERRALS:

Mr. Weldon said the Facilities Committee met a week ago and there was a facilities update from the superintendent. An item on a basketball court was referred to the full board this evening. He said the next meeting is on March 1st.

Mr. Sokolovic said the Finance Committee would meet on February 10th

Mr. Weldon said the Governance Committee met last Monday and discussed remote participation by board members in meetings. He said he is drafting a possible policy that would allow board members to participate up to a certain amount of times each year remotely.

Also discussed was the possible inclusion of non-board members on standing committees. Mr. Weldon said after discussion there seemed to be a consensus it would be more complicated to implement than it was worth.

Mr. Weldon said there was a discussion of the student handbook that was created by the superintendent's office, and it will come back to the committee in the future.

Mr. Benejan said the Students & Families Committee met on January 28th. He said Ms. Rocha-Reaes reported on parent engagement funds spending. He said information on bullying was not available by Mr. Young and he hoped to hear from him at the next meeting.

Mr. Benejan said finally the parents have voted to reestablish the District PAC and have approved the draft bylaws. He said the PAC leaders participated in a meeting first with Supt. Testani in a roundtable, followed by a meeting

in which voting took place. Parent leaders from Classical Studies, Read School, Central High, Barnum, Bassick and Hall voted in favor of the District PAC. Abstaining were Fairchild Wheeler and Harding High. Edison voted no.

The schools voting in favor of the draft bylaws were: Classical Studies, Read, Central, Bassick, Hall and Fairchild. Edison abstained.

Mr. Weldon suggested Mr. Benejan place the item on the agenda of the Students & Families Committee to start the District PAC, so that the public has notice of what is going to be voted on and who is going to vote.,

Mr. Benejan said the matter was previously discussed in the Students & Families Committee for months. He said Ms. Rocha-Reaes sent the draft bylaws to all PAC and PTSO leaders.

Mr. Weldon said he believed there should be more structure. The superintendent said it was mentioned in the notice that after the roundtable Mr. Benejan would meet with school PAC leaders to discuss the bylaws and the possible implementation of a District PAC. He said he did not participate in the discussion after the roundtable.

Mr. Weldon said he was not opposed to the District PAC, but it seemed like the vote happened casually. The superintendent said he was hoping for at least fifty percent representation in the vote. Mr. Benejan said the discussion went back to a roundtable in November at Harding High. He said he sent out an agenda in advance of the meeting. He added the motions were made by the parent leaders in the meeting.

Mr. Sokolovic said Mr. Weldon had legitimate concerns, but it has been difficult to get parental involvement because there is not a District PAC to reach out to the parents and they were disengaged and having trouble coordinating. He said he believed it was a valid vote and the parents who voted should not be disenfranchised. He said sometimes there are elections in Bridgeport where only a few hundred people vote.

Mr. Weldon said his only concern was that the people were given notice that a vote could take place, but it sounded as if there was notice to parents. Mr. Benejan said he wanted everybody to be on the same page and didn't want anyone to think things weren't done right. He said he believed the parent meeting was very positive.

Mr. Sokolovic asked that there be an update at the next committee meeting.

In response to a question, Supt. Testani said questions about student yearbooks should be sent to him for referral to principals.

Mr. Sokolovic said the Teaching & Learning Committee would meet on February 16th

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT/AGENDA:

Supt. Testani said the district's reopening for in-person learning continues to be successful. He said in-person learning participation at high schools in Bridgeport and across the state is fairly low. He said positive COVID cases are dropping in the community and have not been frequent in schools. There is full, in-person learning for ELL students, 504 plan students, and students with IEPs. There is full in-

person instruction at elementary schools except where class sizes exceed 15 students.

The superintendent said it was anticipated in the next three or four weeks vaccinations will be opened to board employees, regardless of age. It is hoped that a site just for board employees can be established.

The superintendent said the high schools held a successful FAFSA day for parents and high school seniors. He singled out Ms. Rocha-Reaes for organizing it and thanked Justine Osborne and Christopher Purzycki, guidance counselors at Central High, who contributed their time. He said this would be annual event going forward.

Supt. Testani said the role of guidance counselors was a passion of former board member Hernan Illingworth while he was on the board.

In response to a question, Ms. Rocha-Reaes said a demographic breakdown by race and gender had not been compiled, but could be obtained through Power School data. Mr. Sokolovic suggested that data be obtained to target interventions. Supt. Testani said that he could be accomplished by data management.

Th superintendent said there were weather issues possible tomorrow. He said collective bargaining govern employees reporting to work. He said no matter what decision is made there are groups of individuals who feel they are not treated properly. He added he has told the collective bargaining leadership that we will follow the contractual obligations. He said he was open to negotiating an MOU or MOA if desired.

Supt. Testani said he believed remote learning was not as engaging as in-person learning to all of the students.

NEW BUSINESS:

The next agenda item was on a basketball court at Black Rock School.

Principal Steve Cassidy of Black Rock School said the project was presented to the Facilities Committee and is a collaboration with Full Court Peace, which has previously worked with courts at Cross, Curiale & Barnum Schools. He said the court would be created on a vacant lot, and provide fitness for students and would help encourage the diverse student body playing together after school.

Mike Evans of Full Court Peace said he was honored to be accepted into the city. He added the climate nationally has given his group tailwinds because the donor base is mostly suburban that wants to do good for its neighbors. He said he has spoken to Mr. Wallack about another school and he will continue to do more courts until the board tells him to stop.

Supt. Testani said he would try to include the Over Under initiative to include pop-up soccer goals in the court.

Ms. Brown moved *“to authorize the installation of the basketball court in conjunction with Full Court Peace at Black Rock School.”* The motion was seconded by Mr. Benejan and unanimously approved.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

Approved by the board on February 22, 2021