

Monday, June 21, 2021

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held June 21, 2021, by video conference call, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m. Present were members Chair John Weldon, Vice Chair Bobbi Brown, Secretary Joseph Lombard, Sybil Allen, Chris Taylor, and Joseph Sokolovic. Albert Benejan joined the meeting subsequently as noted.

Superintendent Michael J. Testani was present.

APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES:

Ms. Brown moved to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of June 7, 2021. The motion was seconded by Ms. Allen. The motion was approved by a 5-0 vote.

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

CHAIR REPORT:

Mr. Weldon said the citywide high school graduations occurred last Wednesday. He congratulated all the graduates and the people involved in putting the event together. He said the ceremonies came off flawlessly.

Mr. Taylor congratulated Ms. Pat Booker, a paraprofessional and a member of 1522, for 51 years of service to the board. He said she has personally impacted his life in a positive

manner, and he has heard the same from former students, teachers, and colleagues.

Supt. Testani said Ms. Booker was still going strong after 51 years and it would be a huge loss to the Geraldine Claytor School community.

Mr. Sokolovic suggested the board establish a timeline to evaluate the superintendent, which would cover two meetings, so that it would be completed before the new school year starts.

Mr. Weldon said he had been talking to Mr. Testani about that. The superintendent said he would try to get everything together to do a presentation next week.

Mr. Benejan joined the meeting.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Ms. Brown said the Ad Hoc Committee on Districtwide Branding will likely only meet in the next couple of months if necessary. The superintendent is expected to report on the new communications policy at some point.

Mr. Weldon said the Contracts Committee met last week and worked on an item on energy to be handled later tonight.

Mr. Sokolovic said the Finance Committee is awaiting the final wrap-up of 2021-22 budget. He said it might be more efficient to do it in a special meeting instead of the Finance Committee. Supt. Testani said Ms. Siegel is working on the end-of-year close and a meeting would be needed in the middle to the latter part of July.

Mr. Sokolovic said a meeting was needed on Covid-related expenses.

Mr. Weldon said the Governance Committee met recently and an item on remote participation by board members is up for a second read tonight.

The superintendent said he has requested a committee meeting be held by the Personnel Committee for assistant principal interviews. He said it was a formality based on board policy.

Mr. Benejan said the Students & Families Committee meeting has been postponed. He said he needs to research further the situation with vendors and parent expenditures.

Mr. Sokolovic said the Teaching & Learning Committee will meet in late August or early September.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

Supt. Testani said the graduates and their families had a great day on Wednesday. He said he loved the venue, which is intimate, yet able to hold a lot of people. He said Lt. Grech and his team did an exceptional job of getting folks in and out. He said he has received much positive feedback on the event.

The superintendent said it was important that Bridgeport be the first school district in the state to recognize the holiday of Juneteenth. He asked for board approval to alter the calendar of the 2020-21 school year. He said it may not impact the ending of the school, which depends on the number of snow days.

Ms. Brown moved “*to add to the agenda under New Business the addition of the national holiday of Juneteenth to all future school calendars.*” The motion was seconded by Mr. Taylor and unanimously approved.

The superintendent thanked all staff members, teachers, paraprofessionals, custodians, security officers, clerical staff, the administrative staff at central office, the administrative staff in the buildings, and the nine school board members for all the work and support in a challenging year. He said he believed the district had either the most or close to the most in-person learning days for students in the state in the 2020-21 school year. He said he believed among large school districts we probably had the most in-person learning of any district in the country.

Supt. Testani said he heard a lot of chatter that kids couldn’t do things such as wear masks in school, but they did it and did it well. The year ended with almost 14,000 students in in-person learning out of 19,000. He noted the summer programs and camps that are starting up.

In response to a question, the superintendent said a little over a thousand students graduated, with a few more to follow through summer school. He said food services throughout the district will continue in the summer with 21 sites.

Ms. Brown congratulated the entire staff and the board members on completing the year in a pandemic and hanging in there.

Mr. Benejan thanked Supt. Testani and said he was always there for our kids and parents. He said the superintendent

never gives up. He added that the board works very well and supports each other, with good communication.

OLD BUSINESS:

The next item was a second read and possible action to establish policy for remote participation in in-person board and committee meetings.

Mr. Weldon said there have been additions to the proposed policy, including defining a year from December 1 to November 30, and the provision that board members could participate remotely in any in-person special board meeting without limitations.

Mr. Weldon read the proposed policy into the record as follows: "Except as otherwise required by emergency circumstances or executive order, all board and committee meetings shall be chaired in person at the designated physical location of the meeting. Any board member may participate remotely at any in-person regular meeting at a maximum of up to six times per year, with a year being defined as December 1 through November 30th.

"Any board member may participate remotely in any in-person special board meeting without limitation.

"Any committee member may participate remotely at any in-person board member at a maximum of up to three times per year, with a year being defined as December 1 and November 30th.

"The chairman of the board or the chair of a committee may participate remotely in an in-person meeting, but when doing

so may not function as the chair for the in-person meeting he or she is participating in remotely.

“For the chair of the board or the chair of a committee to participate remotely, he or she must designate another member who will be physically present in the meeting room to act as the chair of the meeting.

“At all times when a board member participates remotely in a board or committee meeting it shall be done in a manner that does not serve as a distraction from the overall meeting.

“Any board or committee member attempting to exceed the above-referenced remote participation limitations will not be granted remote access as a meeting participant and will instead be considered absent for attendance and quorum-settling purposes.”

Mr. Benejan said he did not want the chair thinking he was taking too long to answer him. He said he did not like that sometimes Mr. Weldon’s body language indicates he feels like Mr. Benejan is bothering him. Mr. Weldon said he was having trouble hearing Mr. Benejan.

Mr. Weldon said he made the original draft for the Governance Committee to review, and they provided modifications, and it was brought to the full board, where additional suggestions were made.

Mr. Sokolovic moved *“to approve the policy as presented in the second read establishing the policy for remote participation in in-person board and committee meetings.”* The motion was seconded by Mr. Lombard and unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS:

The next agenda was on establishing the Juneteenth holiday.

Supt Testani said if the holiday fell on a Saturday it would be observed on a Friday, while a Sunday date would be observed on a Monday. He said historically this date has been impacted by inclement weather in the winter, but twelve-month employees would observe the holiday in any event. He said it needs to be there as families look at next year's calendar.

Mr. Sokolovic moved that *“all future school year calendars will include the Juneteenth holiday and that the holiday will be based on the federal guidelines of when that holiday falls.”* The motion was seconded by Ms. Brown and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on energy project at the Thomas Carroll Nutrition Center with UI.

Mr. Weldon said the matter came out of the Contracts Committee. He said the nutrition center was approached by an energy efficiency contractor to perform upgrades. United Illuminating would pay the contractor and the board would pay UI through monthly bills. Bids were then sought from other contractors. He said as energy consumption of nutrition center goes down, the bill will go down, while payments are made to pay back the loan for the efficiency work.

Mr. Weldon said one contractor was selected as a result of the bidding process, and the facilities department and

nutrition is recommending we move forward with the company Energy Solutions.

Ms. Brown moved “*entering into a municipal energy opportunities project at the Thomas Carroll Nutrition Center with United Illuminating with the aforementioned installer.*” The motion was seconded by Ms. Allen.

The motion was approved by a 5-0 vote. Voting in favor were members Lombard, Weldon, Brown, Sokolovic, and Allen. Mr. Benejan abstained.

The next agenda item was the first read of the revised district magnet policy.

Supt. Testani read the proposed policy.

The superintendent said we would be working on the dated entrancement requirements for Central Magnet. He said Claytor magnet school students need to also have the same opportunities as the other magnet schools.

Mr. Sokolovic said this came through committee with a hundred percent of the principals on board. Supt. Testani said the magnet principals worked extremely hard on this.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 7:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

Approved by the board on August 23, 2021