

Monday, August 23, 2021

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held August 23, 2021, at Central High School, 1 Lincoln Boulevard, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 6:40 p.m. Present were members Chair John Weldon, Vice Chair Bobbi Brown, Secretary Joseph Lombard, Joseph Sokolovic, Albert Benejan, and Sybil Allen.

Superintendent Michael J. Testani was present.

APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES:

Ms. Brown moved to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of August 10, 2021. The motion was seconded by Mr. Lombard and unanimously approved.

Ms. Brown moved approval of the minutes of the Special Meeting of July 29, 2021 The motion was seconded by Ms. Allen and unanimously approved.

Ms. Brown moved approval of the minutes of the Special Meeting of July 20, 2021 The motion was seconded by Ms. Allen and unanimously approved.

Ms. Brown moved approval of the minutes of the Special Meeting of June 30, 2021 The motion was seconded by Ms. Allen and unanimously approved.

Ms. Brown moved approval of the minutes of the Special Meeting of June 21, 2021 The motion was seconded by Ms.

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

Ms. Brown moved approval of the minutes of the Regular Meeting of June 21, 2021 The motion was seconded by Ms. Allen and unanimously approved.

CHAIRMAN REPORT:

Mr. Weldon said there was a great convocation today. He said he was glad to see it was an upbeat event. He thanked the superintendent and Rita and Tim of the superintendent's office.

COMMITTEE REPORTS/REFERRALS:

Mr. Weldon noted there have been no committee meetings since June.

Supt. Testani said work is going on with the new director of visual and performing arts on the branding initiative work at the Districtwide Branding Initiative Committee.

In response to a question, the superintendent said the finance department was working to tie up loose ends on balancing last year's budget.

Mr. Benejan requested an update on security and on facilities from Mr. Garcia. Supt. Testani said Mr. Garcia is prepared to present on the summer projects. He asked that Mr. Benejan contact him about specific questions on security.

In response to a question, the superintendent said work was going on with regard to the Central Magnet policies.

Mr. Weldon said the Personnel Committee would meet on September 1st. Supt. Testani said there were two candidates for Park City Magnet principal and assistant principal at Fairchild Wheeler.

Mr. Benejan said the Students & Families Committee will meet on September 16th.

Mr. Sokolovic said the Teaching & Learning Committee would be meeting in September.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

Supt. Testani said the convocation today was very positive and successful. He said he was particularly pleased to welcome back staff and teachers. The Covid-19 dashboard will be reset. Lizette Early, director of nursing, will be reporting data to the state this year.

The superintendent said the schools are opening to full capacity and full mitigation strategies will continue. He said the governor's executive order on vaccination impacts school boards. All staff members and contractors that come into school buildings to work will have to be fully vaccinated at some point in October, with one vaccine shot prior to September 27th. Those not fully vaccinated will be required to undergo weekly Covid testing on their own time and be responsible for the costs if they don't have insurance. There are exemptions for religious reasons or a physician's order, with weekly testing for those in that category.

In response to a question, Supt. Testani the governor's order will include those employed in after-school programs, interns, student teachers, substitute teachers, or anyone who works on a regular basis. The status of volunteers is not known yet.

In response to a question, the superintendent said he believed the vaccination rate of staff was about 60 percent previously, not including after-school personnel and contracted employees. He said there was a danger that personnel would have to be laid off or terminated. Human resources will be providing information to employees on the executive order.

In response to a question, Supt. Testani said he was sure the order would be challenged at the court level. Mr. Weldon said the order clearly states the board may not employ anyone who is not vaccinated. He said he agreed with the superintendent about the extent of uncharted territory.

Mr. Benejan said he did not agree with firing persons who did not take the vaccine. He said his son had to be hospitalized with a 102-degree fever shortly after being vaccinated and he is still in the hospital. He said he understood we have to follow the policy, but the staff works very hard and should not be fired for not being vaccinated.

In response to a question, the superintendent said the superintendents were informed last Thursday and it seems superintendents like the fact that there is clear direction statewide. He said it simplifies the process if all personnel have to be vaccinated.

Ms. Brown said a lot of parents were in favor of hybrid instruction, but now the delta variant is occurring among the

vaccinated. Supt. Testani said the situation would be monitored closely by health authorities and superintendents. He noted the statistics showing the effectiveness of the vaccines compared to those unvaccinated. He said the positivity rate in the city of Bridgeport was only about four percent.

Ms. Brown said she believed a lot of the worry about vaccines was because those vaccinated were still able to contract the virus.

The superintendent said he believed the governor's priority was the education of children. He said the Pfizer vaccine received official FDA approval today.

Mr. Benejan said he understood the superintendent had to follow the rules, but Mr. Benejan said he had concern about the staff.

Mr. Weldon noted the order was only a few days old and may be revised at some point. He said it was likely there would be pushback on the governor's order. Supt. Testani said it was not expected that the district would have to administer the testing of unvaccinated personnel.

Mr. Benejan thanked Supt, Testani for his participation in the event distributing book bags and being there for the community and the children. He also thanked human resources, Lighthouse, adult education, PLTI and others. He said 500 book bags were distributed. He thanked staff members, including Dr. Morgan, for participating.

OLD BUSINESS:

Ms. Allen moved “*to suspend the reading of the full policy for the second read of the revised district magnet policy.*” The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

Ms. Brown moved “*to approve the revised district magnet policy.*” The motion was seconded by Ms. Allen and unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS:

The next agenda item was on action to award nutrition center food, paper, cleaning supplies bids for the 2021-22 school year.

John Gerrity, director of food and nutrition, was present. Mr. Weldon noted board members received a summary and a spreadsheet of 170 pages with details.

In response to a question, Mr. Gerrity said the bids requested to be awarded were contained in the spreadsheet. He said all the bids were the lowest for the respective products.

In response to a question, Mr. Gerrity said the total expenditure of his department is dependent on participation. He said food and products are ordered based on need. He said the overall budget this year is over \$20 million; food is approximately \$9 million. The biggest expense is payroll.

Mr. Gerrity explained commodity purchases of raw product such as beef, chicken, cheese, eggs are sent to companies for processing into finished product. Other products are purchased from grocery distributors.

Mr. Benejan moved “*to award the nutrition center’s food, paper and cleaning supply bids to the suppliers as noted in the presentation with the understanding that these are all the lowest bidders for their respective items.*” The motion was seconded by Ms. Allen and unanimously approved.

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

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

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

Approved by the board on September 27, 2021