

Monday, December 9, 2019

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held December 9, 2019, at Bridgeport Regional Aquaculture Science & Technology Education Center, 60 St. Stephens Road, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 6:55 p.m.

Present were Chair Jessica Martinez, Vice Chair Hernan Illingworth, Secretary Bobbi Brown, Sybil Allen, Joseph Lombard, Chris Taylor, John Weldon, Albert Benejan, and Joseph Sokolovic.

Acting Superintendent Michael J. Testani was present.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Nino Del Cegno said on October 17th he was working and part of a tree landed on his truck. He said he was willing to pay 50 percent of the costs because he was instructed in park in that location by custodians He provided a police report to the board.

Ms. Martinez said she would defer action on this to the superintendent.

Wayne Winston congratulated the new board members. He said the assistant director of the nutrition center was engaged in a creative venture that he urged the board listen to.

JoAnn Kennedy spoke in opposition to informing parents about the mandatory status of vaccination and/ flu shots. She said wrong information was being provided to parents about the religious exemption. She said the religious exemption is still in place. She described an incident where a female veteran's immune system was wrecked because her vaccination paperwork was lost.

APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES:

Mr. Sokolovic moved to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of October 28, 2019. The motion was seconded by Ms. Allen. The motion was approved by a 6-0 vote. Voting in favor were members Martinez, Illingworth, Weldon, Sokolovic, Allen and Lombard. Members Benejan, Brown and Taylor abstained.

Mr. Sokolovic moved to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting, Nov 12, 2019, at 5:30. The motion was seconded by Mr. Illingworth and approved by a 6-0 vote. Voting in favor were members Martinez, Illingworth, Weldon, Sokolovic, Allen and Lombard. Members Benejan, Brown and Taylor abstained.

Mr. Sokolovic moved to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting, Nov 12, 2019, at 6:00 p.m. The motion was seconded by Mr. Lombard and approved by a 6-0 vote. Voting in favor were members Martinez, Illingworth, Weldon, Sokolovic, Allen and Lombard. Members Benejan, Brown and Taylor abstained.

CHAIR REPORT:

Ms. Martinez said she was grateful for the opportunity to lead the board for the future of the children. She said every

board member was here for the right reasons. She asked the public to link arms with the board. She added Mr. Weldon did an amazing job in bringing the board to where it is today.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Ms. Martinez said there would be a Finance Committee meeting shortly.

Mr. Sokolovic referred an update of the cost of the recently passed NAGE contract to the Finance Committee. Mr. Testani said he could provide that information via e-mail.

Mr. Sokolovic reported on the Teaching & Learning Committee meeting of November 19th. He said special education referrals and acceptances are going up, but out-of-district placements are going down. The updates from the science and math departments indicated positive news.

Mr. Sokolovic said the Students & Families Committee meeting was cancelled due to the lack of a quorum.

Mr. Sokolovic said the ad Hoc Committee on Males of Color met in November. A rough draft of the white paper was presented and will be concluded soon. He requested the committee continue for the foreseeable future.

Ms. Martinez said the updated committee members and chairs would be announced shortly.

Mr. Taylor said because he was in pursuit of his Ph.D and LLM and would not be able to attend any committee meetings.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT AND AGENDA:

Mr. Testani said a calendar recognition ceremony at City Hall was held for students who created the artwork and their families. He thanked Ms. Robinson.

Mr. Testani said an event will be presented by the bilingual department as part of professional development for teachers on working with the diverse school community.

Mr. Testani said the district science fair will be held February 11th at Sacred Heart University.

Mr. Testani said beginning in January there will be celebrations. January will be focused on school custodians.

Mr. Testani said the district's quarterly newsletter is available on the website. He thanked Rita Valle and Tim Grasty for their work.

Mr. Taylor said he has received an overwhelming amount of favorable phone calls from the service industry, security officers, paraprofessionals, cafeteria workers and some teachers about the e-mails the acting superintendent sends out every Friday and the work of Mr. Testani.

Mr. Testani said he attended the Brothers Table Saturday mentoring program last month at Batalla School. He said they are doing an amazing job with the students.

NEW BUSINESS:

Mr. Sokolovic said the agenda item on legal review of the District PAC bylaws came out of the Students & Families

Committee. He said the goal is to get the District PAC up and running again. He said the bylaws had been revised by some parents and he requested the board approve a review of the bylaws by the board's attorneys.

Ms. Martinez said as a former District PAC president she was in support of the legal review.

Mr. Taylor said he wanted to be sure this was not retaliatory against Mr. Benejan and Tammy Williams [sic]. Ms. Martinez said this was not the case. Mr. Benejan said the bylaws needed to be updated and he was in support of the motion.

Mr. Sokolovic said according to the state law the board had an obligation to assist the PAC and this would fit into that. He said he believed a lot of the problematic bylaws had been stricken from the draft. He requested the document be distributed to the board by the superintendent.

Mr. Taylor suggested the city attorney review the bylaws rather than Berchem Moses to save costs. Mr. Sokolovic said he was in favor of cost savings, but the matter involved a specialty in education law.

Ms. Martinez said more information was needed on the costs and the ability of the city attorney's office to review the bylaws.

Mr. Sokolovic suggested board approval with the matter to be sent to the city attorney's office, who could then refer it to Berchem Moses.

Mr. Benejan suggested all the school PAC leaders review the draft before legal review. Mr. Sokolovic said it was decided at the committee level that legal review should

precede further revisions.

Mr. Illingworth said it should go to the city attorney's office first.

Mr. Sokolovic said the primary legal review needed was to determine if there were any violations of state or federal law in the draft.

Mr. Illingworth moved that "*we refer the draft PAC to the district's attorneys for review and vetting on any legal issue that may be.*" The motion was seconded by Mr. Taylor and unanimously approved.

Mr. Taylor moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Lombard and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod