

Monday, April 22, 2019

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held April 22, 2019, at Bridgeport Regional Aquaculture Science & Technology Education Center, 60 St. Stephens Road, Bridgeport, Connecticut

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

Present were Chair John Weldon, Secretary Joseph Sokolovic, Hernan Illingworth, Sybil Allen, Maria Pereira, and Joseph Lombard. LaMar Kennedy was appointed to the board subsequently as noted.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Faith Villegas, executive director of the Bridgeport Public Education Fund, invited the board members and public to the Fund's 26th Annual Inspiration Awards where teachers, a community member and an administrator will be honored.

APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES:

Ms. Allen moved to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of April 3, 2019. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic. Corrections were noted. The motion was unanimously approved.

Ms. Pereira moved to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of April 8, 2019, with edits. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

Ms. Pereira moved to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of April 8, 2019. The motion was seconded by Mr. Lombard and unanimously approved.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

In response to an inquiry, Mr. Weldon said he was putting together a letter on National Teacher Appreciation Day and would send it to the board members this week. Dr. Johnson said she did not plan to send out a letter for that day, but do what she did in the past, a letter before the spring vacation.

COMMITTEE REPORTS/REFERRALS:

Mr. Illingworth said the Facilities Committee would meet on May 6th or May 7th.

Ms. Pereira said the board voted about six months ago to form a naming committee for the music wing of Harding High. Dr. Johnson said the matter was ready to be presented to the committee.

Ms. Pereira said Ron Rapice spoke to her about the lack of financial support for the debate program he runs. Mr. Illingworth said the program was supported with about \$10,000 this year. Dr. Johnson said the expenditures includes buses, awards and coaches' stipends. Mr. Illingworth said \$5,000 was spent on a trip to Boston. Dr. Johnson said the funding was through Title IV.

Ms. Pereira said she would discuss the issue in the Finance Committee.

Mr. Weldon said the Governance Committee meeting would be rescheduled for next week.

Mr. Sokolovic reported on the Teaching & Learning Committee of meeting of April 11. He said the RFP for expelled students' mandated instruction was discussed and is now ready for approval later in the agenda. He said the literacy textbook and curriculum was also discussed, approved, and appears on tonight's agenda. He said he neglected to place the RFP for translation and interpretation services on tonight's agenda.

Mr. Sokolovic said the committee would next meet this Wednesday.

Ms. Pereira said she would forward the information Dr. Johnson provided about students earning extra credit to the members and the matter could be addressed in committee.

Mr. Weldon said the Personnel Committee would meet on April 29th to conduct interviews for the position of chief financial officer.

In response to a question, Mr. Weldon said he would schedule a meeting to discuss the teacher turnover data and the hiring policies.

Mr. Sokolovic said the Students & Families Committee will meet this Thursday, April 25.

Ms. Pereira said the committee was promised PAC action plans over six weeks ago, but she had not received them.

Mr. Sokolovic said the Ad Hoc Committee on Great City Schools/Males of Color would meet tomorrow night.

Ms. Pereira moved to add to the agenda discussion and

possible action on the public hearing scheduled tomorrow night for the City Council. She said there was another meeting scheduled on May 2nd, with the possibility of the Council voting on their budget on May 6th.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic.

The motion was defeated by a 3-2 vote. Voting in opposition were members Weldon, Illingworth, and Allen. Voting in favor were members Pereira and Sokolovic. Mr. Lombard abstained.

NEW BUSINESS:

The next agenda item was discussion and possible action concerning an appointment to fill the board vacancy created by the resignation of Ben Walker.

Mr. Weldon said the board conducted an interview of the sole applicant, Mr. LaMar Kennedy, who is a registered Libertarian, as was Mr. Walker at the time of his resignation.

Ms. Allen moved to appoint Mr. Kennedy. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic. Written ballots were distributed.

Ms. Alice Ortiz announced the results: Ms. Pereira, Mr. Sokolovic, Mr. Weldon, Ms. Allen and Mr. Lombard voted to appoint Mr. Kennedy. Mr. Illingworth abstained.

Assistant City Attorney Mark Anastasi administered the oath to Mr. Kennedy. Mr. Kennedy was then seated with the board.

Dr. Melissa Jenkins presented on the agenda item regarding approval of ELA/literacy textbooks. Dr. Johnson noted the

presentation was previously made to the Teaching & Learning Committee.

Dr. Jenkins said the recommendation was being presented subject to available funding at the end of the school year. She said an improved program was needed to address five areas of reading. A core program is needed that addresses instructional shifts for the Smarter Balance Assessment.

Dr. Jenkins said a variety of programs were reviewed over two to three years, including free sources, large companies and smaller companies. She said the choice was made on teacher input and district needs. Continuity of materials across schools, support of English language learners, ample practice materials, materials aligned to reading research, and materials to support whole and small group instruction were all considered in the recommendation.

Dr. Jenkins said the review process included a cross-section of teachers, including special education teachers, and administrators. The consensus narrowed the choice to Into Reading by HMH and Reading Wonders by McGraw-Hill. Print materials and digital materials were reviewed and a rubric was used to rate the program. Costs and professional development proposals were reviewed by district leaders.

Dr. Jenkins said two cost proposals were presented; one for K-3, which will be adopted this year; and one for Grades 4 to 6, which will be a future adoption.

Dr. Jenkins said professional development proposals were presented. Reading Wonders offers onsite professional development three times within the 2019-20 school year, three more the following year, and a variety of webinars and onsite support for no additional cost. She said Into Reading

offered one onsite professional development, with other professional development charged at the rate of \$2,800 a day for each day after August 2019 and \$800 for each webinar.

Dr. Jenkins said the recommended purchase is Reading Wonders by McGraw-Hill. \She said the program includes a hardcover bound book of stories called an anthology for each student. There is support for English language learners, SBAC and research on how children learn how to read. There are digital and print materials for all students.

Dr. Jenkins summarized the advantages of Reading Wonders over Into Reading. She said Grades 4 to 6 would use the current texts for one year; and Grades 7 to 12 would use current books for two more years.

Dr. Jenkins said the six-year plan would have a phase-in implementation, with Grades K-3 launching in 2019, Grades 4-6 in 2020, and Grades 7-8 in 2021. She noted this would all be subject to available funding since English/language arts does not have an identified funding stream.

Ms. Pereira said she previously asked questions about the matter at the committee.

Mr. Sokolovic moved “*to approve the ELA curriculum and textbook Reading Wonders by McGraw-Hill as presented this evening.*” The motion was seconded by Ms. Allen and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was discussion and possible approval of RFP for administrator of the program for expelled students’ services.

Atty. Mark Anastasi said the draft being presented was only available as of when he arrived tonight. He said he conferred with Atty. Dugas of Berchem Moses after the last committee meeting.

Atty. Anastasi said he believed there was a great deal of legitimate concern by the committee members that in dealing with a sensitive situation off school premises there had to be substantial limitations and controls regarding prior criminal activity. He said he believed the proposed amendments gives adequate flexibility.

Ms. Pereira said she was concerned that the document was being presented at the last minute. Atty. Anastasi said the proposed language would make the restrictions subject to C.G.S. 46a-79 and 46a-80 if and as applicable. He said Atty. Dugas agreed that the board was not a state agency for purposes of being mandated to be using the individualized assessment policy, but there is language in 46a-80 that says a person shall not be disqualified to practice, pursue or engage in any occupation, trade, vocation, profession or business for which a license, permit, certificate or registration is required to be issued by the state or any of its agencies solely because of a prior conviction of crime. He said the concern is that providing the services is something that requires a state license or certification. He said this needs to be checked out.

In response to a question, Assistant Superintendent Dr. Christiana Otuwa said the programs are not required to be licensed or have a certificate, but the individuals in the program do. Atty. Anastasi noted there is a process where someone who commits crimes can lose a license or certification.

Ms. Pereira said the board had been talking about this since last June.

Atty. Anastasi said further review was needed because his review of grants and contracts between the board and the city with the state and federal agencies require assurance of compliance with EEOC policies.

Atty. Anastasi apologized that, all things being equal, it would have been very preferable if he had completed his review earlier. He said if the board needed more time for review, a special meeting could be scheduled.

Mr. Sokolovic said the whole point of the extensive review was the protection of students off school property under the supervision of an outside agency. He noted the board was not using its own personnel department to vet the employees of the vendor.

Atty. Anastasi said the board's personnel department does have some regulations that do not apply absolute bars to employment, but adopt the state policy of individualized assessments.

In response to a question, Atty. Anastasi said the provisions would apply to the principals of the proposer, the proposer as an entity and the employees of the proposer.

There was a discussion of whether to handle the matter at the Teaching & Learning Committee or in a special meeting. One option discussed was to pass the language subject to final tweaks by the superintendent and the board's attorney.

Atty. Anastasi said it was important that the legislative record of the matter reflect that the board has very legitimate public

policy concerns to the extent anyone were ever to question this. He said he was just wanted to be sure when the board implements its restrictions that it is upheld.

Mr. Illingworth moved to approve the RFP. The motion was seconded by Mr. Weldon.

Ms. Pereira noted under the current timeline it was not intended to award the bid until June 13th, for the contract to go into effect on August 1st.

Atty. Anastasi said he will communicate with the chair when the legal review is concluded so he can consider calling a special meeting or whether to handle it at the board meeting of May 13th.

Mr. Illingworth withdrew his motion.

Ms. Pereira moved *"to postpone until Mr. Weldon either calls a special meeting or it comes back to the board on May 13th."* The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

Dr. Johnson said the PAC action plans were sent on to her on April 11th while she was on vacation by Ms. Brown-Clayton, and she has just forwarded them to board members this evening.

Ms. Allen moved the meeting be adjourned. The motion was seconded by Mr. Lombard and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

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