

Monday, June 25, 2018

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held June 25, 2018, at Bridgeport Regional Aquaculture Science & Technology Education Center, 60 St. Stephens Road, Bridgeport, Connecticut

The meeting was called to order at 6:54 p.m.

Present were Chair John Weldon, Vice President Hernan Illingworth, Secretary Jessica Martinez Joseph Sokolovic, Chris Taylor, Sybil Allen, Dennis Bradley, Maria Pereira and Ben Walker.

Supt. Aresta Johnson, Ed.D., was present.

Mr. Weldon said translation services were available.

Mr. Illingworth moved to add to the agenda "*discussion and possible action on retainer agreement with Berchem & Moses, P.C., after public comment.*" The motion was seconded by Mr. Taylor.

Mr. Weldon said he understood Atty. Bohannon had an update that the board asked for.

The motion was unanimously approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Isiah Rodriguez of Make the Road Connecticut said the group had organized around education and immigration. The

campaign Walking Towards a Brighter Future asks the board and the city to address the unsafe routes to school that are not walkable, unreliable transportation to school, and the tardy policy when students are late to school.

Crystal Aguirre of Make the Road Connecticut said while organizing their campaign they have collected over 200 surveys from Bridgeport students. She said we have been taking a hands-on approach on how we want our schools to improve by performing route evaluations for our sidewalks and intersections with the Nature Conservancy and Sacred Heart University. She said the group also met with Dr. Johnson.

Yesenia Espinoza, part of the mothers committee of Make the Road Connecticut, said she had four children in public schools in Bridgeport. She said her son would go to high school next year and have to walk or take public transportation to school, which are not the best options for him. She said she did not want her son to get to school late.

Morgan Gonzalez, a 13-year old with Make the Road Connecticut, was worried about the security lines at Central High and getting to first period on time. He said we have taken matters into our hands to make the change we want to see in our schools. He said we need the board members to meet with us this summer so that we can work together.

Robin Mastro, PAC president at Thomas Hooker School, urged the board to uphold the decision by the School Governance Council for its candidate for principal. She also asked the board to keep the assistant principal, who has built relationships with the parents and students. She asked why an interim principal was allowed to take away part of our SRBI team and the band.

Kevin Muhammed of Muck Mud Academy said they would like to bid on the funds that are available for an alternative school. He said he had a budget with him that outlines what we are able to do for half the cost of the The University School. The proposal is for 40 students and will include academics and a social-emotional behavior component such as restorative practices. There will be community partnerships with construction companies, hairdressers, and local merchants that will accept internships.

James Meszoros said he was here to talk about athletics. He noted the board voted \$3,500 for freshman football at Harding. He said when he came to Bassick High, Coach Brown, a former NFL player, changed his life. He said freshman sports programs would provide structure to the students. He said it led to him doing volunteer coaching in Bridgeport for 24 years with American Legion baseball. He said one former player is a vice president at People's Bank.

Crystal Mack said she was here to serve children, disabled, parents and the community. She said she doesn't care about politics. She said money needs to be put back into the school system and all schools made magnet schools. She said parents, teacher aides and nurses were dire needs in the schools.

JoAnn Kennedy congratulated the graduates of 2018. She said the board had made some serious errors over the 2017-18 school year. She asked the board members to reflect to their decisions because they have God to answer to. She said these people could care less and make decisions their puppet masters tell them. She read Psalm 37. She said to ask Dr. Johnson to find a \$1 million to cut ten days before the end of the school is a disgrace. She added the board

members had not reported on charter schools as promised.

Eneida Martinez said she was in support of Kevin Muhammed. She urged the board to consider a high educational service academically at a reasonable cost. She said Mr. Muhammed will balance the check needed to help our kids with the greatest needs as well as in an understandable and comprehensive manner.

Ernest Newton said he came here to support the overdue Bassick project. He said it was strange that Mr. Muhammed did not have a chance to bid and to participate in the process. He urged the board to allow Mr. Muhammed to show how he could best service the children who were in the most need. He said Career Resources would be willing to work with Mr. Muhammed to provide training for the students in trades.

Lyle Hassan-Jones said he was in support of Mr. Muhammed's bid for an alternative school. He said he has known him for 35 years. He said Mr. Muhammed had a phenomenal ability to communicate, influence and encourage our children. He said Mr. Muhammed continues to volunteer to go into schools and help children.

Albert Benejan, the PTSO president at Bassick, thanked Dr. Johnson for everything she did for the school year. He thanked the board members who helped support him at Bassick. He said we need a new Bassick High; it was not fair to the kids to renovate it. He thanked the board members who attended the graduation ceremonies. He urged people making a lot of money at the top be cut, not security guards.

Tammy Bogdanyi said she was a proud parent of a Bridgeport Public School graduate. She thanked Dr.

Johnson for everything that she did for the BMA graduation. She thanked the board members who attended the ceremony and for saluting the students for their accomplishments. She said a board member promised to wear a gown at the ceremony, but ignored Dr. Johnson's request to wear a gown to honor the students.

The next agenda item was on the possible action on retainer agreement with Berchem Moses, P.C.

Deputy City Attorney John Bohannon said he hoped the contract he had this evening would meet with the board's approval. He said the last time he appeared before the board there were some major sticking points around concerns articulated by board members.

Atty. Bohannon said upon further reflection the provision that stated that the city attorney reserved all of his charter authority was deleted. He said there was no need to preserve such authority in a contract.

Atty. Bohannon said in response to concerns that the city attorney would contract for legal services on behalf of the board the following language was added: The city attorney provides expressed approval for the engagement of Berchem Moses in satisfaction of Chapter 7 of the Bridgeport Charter. The city attorney recognizes that the BBOE has exclusive statutory authority over the expenditure of BBOE budgeted funds. The Bridgeport Charter, Chapter 7, conditions the retention of outside counsel on available funds and the city attorney recognizes and represents that no outside legal counsel may or will be engaged by the city attorney to perform services for the BBOE at the BBOE's expense without a board vote granting prior approval and authorization that BBOE funds be expended for such legal

services.

Atty. Bohannon said he believed the board members had raised rightful concerns about the previous draft. He said this language addresses those concerns. He said he kept the city attorney as a signatory to this contract because the city charter says the city attorney must give his approval for the retention of outside counsel.

Ms. Martinez moved *“to approve and direct the chairman to execute the retainer agreement with Berchem Moses, PC, as presented by the Deputy City Attorney Bohannon.”* The motion was seconded by Mr. Taylor.

Ms. Pereira thanked Atty. Bohannon and said she would not be voting for the contract because the board controls its own funds and the board would have to go through the city attorney’s office to select an outside counsel to sue the city. She said this was happening throughout the state, such as in Seymour where the city illegally deducted \$600,000 from its board.

Ms Pereira said this was outrageous because the previous contract with Shipman & Goodwin was not signed by the city attorney because it’s not required. She said many of the partners of Berchem Moses are huge donors to Joe Ganim.

Atty. Bohannon said both by virtue of the city charter and the Rules of Professional Conduct, the city attorney is positively obligated to make sure that this board is properly and zealously represented in a conflict situation.

Mr. Bradley said he was in support of the motion. He said the charter is clear as to what mechanism we should have in place in a contract. He said previous contracts not legally

written should not bind the board to their errors. He said the code of ethics and the law protects the board against conflicts.

Mr. Bradley said we've already gone down the road of suing the state for lack of funding and lack of equity in education and we won that lawsuit, and we haven't received a penny more, only lost money.

Mr. Sokolovic said he appreciated the change that recognizes the board has exclusive statutory authority over the expenditure of our funds.

The motion was approved by an 8-1 vote. Voting in favor were members Weldon, Illingworth, Martinez, Allen, Bradley, Taylor, Walker and Sokolovic. Ms. Pereira was opposed.

APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES:

Ms. Pereira moved approval of the minutes of the Regular Meeting of June 11, 2018, with edits. The motion was seconded by Ms. Martinez. One correction was noted. The motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Bradley moved approval of the minutes of the Special Meeting of June 13, 2018. The motion was seconded by Ms. Martinez and unanimously approved.

CHAIR REPORT:

Mr. Weldon thanked Dr. Johnson and her staff for coordinating one of the best graduation ceremonies he's ever seen. He noted there was a lot of work and logistical effort that went into the ceremony.

In response to a question, Dr. Johnson said the BCAS attorney would be meeting with the board's new counsel to establish times and dates to begin the negotiation process.

Ms. Pereira asked if the board could meet next week to make suggestions as to what should be included in the contract.

Ms. Pereira said the board had to establish goals and objectives by June 30th and a committee needs to be formed, including staff, parents and community members. Mr. Weldon said he would send out another poll so board members could suggest dates.

COMMITTEE REPORTS/REFERRALS:

Mr. Taylor said the Bassick High issue had not been brought to the Facilities Committee meetings. He said he was under the impression from people higher up the food chain that there was to be a new Bassick.

Mr. Weldon said there is an agenda item about an educational specification for the renovated-as-new Bassick. He said grant applications are started as requests to renovate as new. He said an architect has been hired to conduct a feasibility study, which will include which option is going to get the district the most bang for its buck. That is then submitted to the state and the state makes the ultimate decision as to which option to pursue.

Ms. Martinez noted she submitted an item to Mr. Taylor's committee regarding going to schools and reviewing cameras and the policies around that. Mr. Taylor said he made some inquiries about that, but had not met on the issue.

Mr. Taylor said he was not comfortable with the language of the agenda about renovating Bassick as new. He said he was not subscribing to that philosophy.

Ms. Pereira said the district used to get 80 percent reimbursement from the state on new construction; the law was changed so that new construction would only be reimbursed at 60 percent. The state will pay 80 percent for renovate-as-new projects. She said the state would probably love to have Bridgeport do new construction because the municipality would have to pay 40 percent. She said the city would have to bond close to \$40 million for new construction instead of \$20 million.

Mr. Taylor said he wished it had been advertised that way to the general public. He said he feels the community has been defrauded, to put it in mild terms. He said Bassick was worthy of a new school.

Mr. Sokolovic referred the issue of food and drinks being confiscated in the security lines to the Facilities Committee. He said a clear policy is needed. Ms. Pereira said students said water bottles were being taken because of a few incidents involving alcohol.

Mr. Taylor asked Mr. Sokolovic to draft up a policy and said he would put it on the Facilities agenda. Mr. Sokolovic said his committee was dealing with several policies and the matter was better handled in the Facilities Committee.

Mr. Bradley commended Mr. Taylor for his suggestion for having the graduations outdoors. He said Dr. Johnson executed it with excellence.

Ms. Martinez reported on the Finance Committee. She said the committee met on the budget gap earlier this month and moved proposals to the full board for a final review.

Ms. Martinez said she was the board member who sits on the Capital Prep board. She said a new principal was hired; a music teacher is being sought. The next Capital Prep board meeting will be tomorrow; the graduation will take place on Thursday.

Ms. Pereira said she would like to refer a dress code policy for board members to the Governance Committee. She said it was important to present a level of professionalism.

Mr. Walker reported on the Teaching & Learning Committee. He said he disseminated a report from the committee meeting on June 19th.

Mr. Walker said there are no outstanding special education complaints against the district. A teacher will be hired during the summer to offer compensatory services in response to the complaint against New Beginnings charter school. He said Mr. DiDonato reported there would not be any budgetary impact on the district.

Mr. Walker said the board needs to take a hard look at special education costs and explore ways to reduce our exposure to special education complaints.

Mr. Walker said the contracts for The University School were discussed. He said they should be in the board members' packets. The first contract is the students' individual education program contract where 40 slots are prepurchased at \$25,000 per slot. The services are provided by certified teachers and the services are approved towards

graduation requirements. He said similar out-of-district costs are between \$60,000 and \$80,000. He said the contract will save the district between \$1.4 million and \$2.2 million per year.

Mr. Walker said the second contract is for services for expelled students, for a fixed fee of \$180,000 for ten months. The program is designed to accommodate thirty students at a time, but the numbers could fluctuate down to as low as twenty and up to as many as forty.

Mr. Walker said it is rumored that at the end of this contract The University School may not be in existence any longer, which would be extremely costly to the district compared to outsourcing students.

Mr. Walker moved that *“the agenda item on review and possible approval of the 2018-19 University School contracts be moved from Old Business to be discussed and voted on now as part of this particular report.”* The motion was seconded by Ms. Pereira.

Mr. Bradley said he did not understand why the item had not been placed on the agenda so the public could see the item. He said he knew there was nothing nefarious in Mr. Walker's request. Ms. Pereira noted the item was on the agenda and it was only being moved up.

Mr. Taylor said the board is criticized for cutting the budget, but when an outside vendor who's been killing us for thirty-five years comes along they are given a no-bid contract. He said he heard testimony from Mr. Muhammed and others about an alternative.

The motion was approved by an 8-1 vote. Voting favor were

members Weldon, Illingworth, Martinez, Allen, Bradley, Pereira, Walker and Sokolovic. Mr. Taylor was in opposition.

Mr. Walker moved that *“we approve the contract for professional service for students individual education program with The University School for 2018-19.”* The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic.

Ms. Pereira said The University School only had a one-year contract. She said she had a concern because the contract was not completely filled out due to the presence of blanks. John DiDonato, chief of specialized instructional reform, said there was a copy available that was complete.

Ms. Pereira said it needed to put into the contract that The University School cannot expel any of our students. She said almost every student referred to them has an IEP. She said she understood that some of the students have been expelled in the past.

Mr. DiDonato noted there were two contracts before the board. He said all forty of the students have an IEP and are placed there by a PPT process. He said he believed all private special education programs reserve the right to expel students should they violate a code of conduct.

Ms. Pereira said it was clear in board policy that anything related to special education and PPTs does not involve bidding, because under federal and state law that decision is made solely by the PPT and the cost cannot be taken into account. She said that is the reason special education services don't go out to bid.

In response to a question, Mr. DiDonato said when the PPT team develops an IEP they make a series of program

recommendations and the parent is offered a number of possible choices for a placement, The University School being one choice. He said there are commonly four or five places where students are placed. He said only The University School has a contract for a specified number of placements.

In response to question, Mr. DiDonato said The University School was comparable to a high school program. Ms. Martinez said she was given information that some students attend for three or four hours and are sent home. Mr. DiDonato said a supervisor visits the program four or five times monthly, visits the classrooms and participates in IEP meetings. He said that had never come to the attention of that supervisor.

Mr. Illingworth said The University School has a morning program and an afternoon program. Mr. DiDonato said the special education program is separate and apart from the expulsion program, which is held in the afternoon.

Margaret Zowine of The University School said the morning program is all special education students. She said no student had ever been expelled from that program. She said the program runs five hours and does not include study hall and meals. She said the students receive the full 900 hours of required education.

Ms. Zowine said the afternoon program, the expulsion component, was completely separate. Thirty students are served and they are not expelled either. They attend for only two hours according to state requirements. She said the district approached The University School to do this in lieu of two hours of homebound tutoring. The students take the four major subjects.

Mr. Illingworth said he works directly across the street from the program and sees students come and go. Ms. Zowine said the morning students are bused.

In response to a question, Mr. DiDonato said if the PPT meeting cannot reach consensus the state requires that the parents be given procedural safeguards, including a state process called mediation. If that is not successful, there is a formal process called an impartial hearing administered by the state Department of Education.

Mr. Illingworth said the board previously renegotiated the contract with The University School with stipulations. He said we held up our side, but was not convinced they held up their side of the bargain. He said he had legitimate concerns about this contract.

Mr. DiDonato said if the contract was not approved we would have to convene IEP meetings as quickly as possible and the parent would have the opportunity to choose among the comparable programs.

Mr. Taylor said he thought of antitrust because it sounded like the Big Three in the auto days when they got together and did price fixing. He said if the The University School wanted to charge us \$100,000 per student they would have the upper hand because there is no competitive process.

Mr. DiDonato said there were forty students in the program at the end of the year and eight students graduated. He said the register approaches forty students around November or December.

Mr. Taylor said it sounded like The University School was in

a monopoly situation. He said there was a local man who understands our local needs who happens to be a man of color in an apartheid situation here. He said he couldn't see any reason to support The University School after being an attendee there in 1983 or 1984. He said we're giving away money and our students in other areas aren't being funded.

In response to a question, Assistant Superintendent Christiana Otuwa said the expulsion program is for students in Grade 7 to Grade 12. She said the students were getting social-emotional training. Dr. Otuwa said there are not restorative practices at The University School .

Ms. Martinez said the students are in the specialized school for only two hours, getting academic needs but not the other needs they have. She said the students need extra training with things such as RULER and social-emotional.

Dr. Otuwa said the social-emotional training is tailored to where the students are, but RULER or restorative practices are not used.

In response to a question, Mr. DiDonato said annual reviews of all students have been completed but PPTs could be reconvened if the contract is not approved. Ms. Pereira said this would create upheaval in families' lives.

Ms. Pereira said we're talking about a provider and we don't know their expertise in special education. She said she had great concerns about Mr. Muhammed due to his arrest for serious allegations and being terminated from the New Haven Public Schools for those allegations. She said we don't know what credentials he has or what experience they have with special education.

Ms. Pereira said we have a federal and state mandate to do what's best for our children with special needs, not what's best to do for our friends or associates.

Ms. Martinez said regardless of Mr. Muhammed's background we should give everyone a chance to explain to us what they have to offer.

Ms. Allen said it beats her to think a child would go into school for two hours and get an education. She said that is only ten hours a week.

Ms. Zowine said we were asked to do it this way by the board. She said she agreed with Ms. Allen. She said she was happy when the state started talking about four hours. She said she understood these were students who were previously homebound with two hours of instruction.

Ms. Zowine said there is a clinical psychologist who works with the students included in the two hours.

Dr. Otuwa said the two hours was in accordance with state law. She said the kids need more time.

Mr. DiDonato said the issue of the duration of services for expelled students is the state minimum requirement. He said if the district wanted to give the expelled students more time that would not be prohibited.

Mr. Walker said the special education students at The University School were getting every class and noted eight of them graduated. He said the homebound instruction of expelled students is tremendously more expensive than having them come to The University School. He said none of us think two hours is enough instruction except the state.

In response to a question, Mr. DiDonato said alternative programs to The University School for special education would be ACES, CES or Boys and Girls Village, which cost between \$60,000 and \$85,000.

In response to a question, Mr. DiDonato said there is one The University School teacher in the special education portion that is in a program to become certified and the remaining teachers are certified.

Ms. Zowine said this year over 55 students who were expelled were served. She said students come and go through the program.

Ms. Martinez said she was not worried about the special education program. She said she was baffled that the board previously agreed to two hours of instruction for the expelled students. She said we do not have to agree to the state mandate and we need to lobby to change that.

Ms. Martinez said she works with children in trouble, including some without mothers or fathers. She said academics are not the issue; they need social-emotional training and restorative practices. She said we need to ensure they are not going to go from school to prison.

In response to a question, Mr. DiDonato said the agreement to establish a slot system with The University School was started under Dr. Ramos, although the district sent students to the school even previously.

In response to a question, Ms. Zowine said the address of the school is 160 Holland Avenue.

The motion was defeated by a 5-4 vote. Voting in opposition were members Bradley, Allen, Taylor, Weldon and Martinez. Voting favor were members Illingworth, Walker, Sokolovic, and Pereira.

Mr. Walker moved “*that we contract for professional service for expelled students’ education service with The University School for 2018-19.*” The motion was seconded by Ms. Martinez.

Mr. Walker said we need to look at the cost ramification of this because without the school the students are being put back in their home to receive the two hours of instruction.

Mr. Bradley said this was not our area of expertise. He said he appreciated the hard work Mr. Walker had done in vetting the contracts and the work of The University School, but he believed we should be concerned with transparency and going out to bid to see what other services are out there.

Ms. Pereira said by not agreeing to this contract The University School will not open, which will displace 32 special education students who have been placed there through PPTs. She said this would cost us a fortune. She said it costs \$100,000 per pupil to send some students to ACES. She said more importantly this would hurt children and families.

Mr. Bradley suggested temporarily extending the program and allow it to go out to bid.

Mr. Sokolovic said he was all for looking for other providers but we can’t just jump because it will take the board a long time to approve a replacement.

Mr. Taylor said he didn't see why it's the board's concern whether The University School stays in business or not. He said it is a private, for-profit entity that has no affiliation with us. He said his concern was for the students and the ineffectiveness of home schooling. He said he would be voting no on giving The University School any contracts. He said there was plenty of talent in the district that we do not take advantage of.

Ms. Pereira said The University School is a Bridgeport program, and many of the teachers are former district teachers.

Mr. Bradley said there are talented people in the city who are probably willing to bid for this contract and pick up the slack. He objected to the alarmist mentality. He said we should be outraged about the state law that allows students to get two hours of instruction a day.

The motion was defeated by a 6-3 vote. Voting in opposition were members Bradley, Allen, Illingworth, Taylor, Weldon and Martinez. Voting favor were members Walker, Sokolovic, and Pereira.

Mr. Walker said the Teaching & Learning Committee also took up the 2017-18 district profile performance report. He said the report is generated by the state from data submitted by the district. He said the board members had been provided Dr. Johnson's narrative that accompanies the report. He said the document needs board approval to be included in the state report.

Mr. Walker moved "*discussion and approval of the 2017-18 district profile and performance from Old Business to be discussed and voted on now as part of the Teaching &*

Learning Committee report.” The motion was seconded by Ms. Pereira.

The motion was approved by a 7-0 vote. Voting in favor were members Weldon, Illingworth, Pereira, Sokolovic, Walker, Allen and Bradley. Mr. Taylor abstained. Ms. Martinez was not present.

Mr. Walker moved that *“we approve the 2017-18 district profile and performance narrative to be submitted to the Connecticut state Department of Education for inclusion in the 2017-18 district profile and performance report.”* The motion was seconded by Ms. Pereira.

The motion as approved by a 7-0 vote. Voting in favor were members Weldon, Illingworth, Pereira, Sokolovic, Walker, Allen and Bradley. Mr. Taylor abstained. Ms. Martinez was not present.

Mr. Walker said the committee received a report for bids on the Harding High early learning center. He said the board members received the RFP bids from Creative Me and ABCD and a scoring sheet.

Mr. Walker said the winning bid was by ABCD.

Mr. Walker moved *“that we move discussion and approval for the vendor of the Harding High School early learning center from Old Business to be discussed and voted on now as part of the Teaching & Learning Committee report.”* The motion was seconded by Mr. Bradley and unanimously approved.

Mr. Walker moved *“that we approve the Action for Bridgeport Community Development, Incorporated, otherwise known as*

ABCD, as the vendor for services for the Harding High School early learning center.” The motion was seconded by Mr. Bradley.

Ms. Pereira said she was concerned because ABCD listed a budget in their documents, but there was not a budget submitted by the other vendor. She said she was concerned at some of ABCD's expenditures.

Dr. Johnson said Dementred Young, director of social work, handled the RFP process and the committee selection.

Mr. Young said there would be three classes – one preschool, one toddler and one infant. He said the classes would consist of six children each.

Ms Pereira said there were only 18 students, but they're going to hire a director for \$139,000 and a finance manager for \$60,000. Mr. Young said the funding source is ABCD and the district is not paying any of the costs. Ms. Pereira said the document indicates a Harding percentage of three percent. Mr. Young said that was an internal accounting by ABCD.

Dr. Johnson said that was looked at and none of the expenses come from the board; ABCD covers all of it.

Ms. Perinea said a clear policy was needed on how the slots are going to be allocated. Dr. Johnson said we were working on this in phases and would now move forward with the naming committee and policies.

Ms .Pereira said the discussion at the committee reflected that children of students at the school would have priority over staff members' children.

Mr. Young said pregnant students at other schools will be transferred to Harding to take advantage of the program.

Dr. Johnson noted the contract calls for 24 children in the program. Mr. Young said the RFP was amended to add more students.

The motion was approved by 7-0 vote. Voting in favor were members Pereira, Walker, Sokolovic, Weldon, Illingworth, Taylor and Bradley. Ms. Allen and Ms. Martinez were not present.

Mr. Illingworth reported on the Personnel Committee. He said the committee met last week.

Mr. Illingworth moved "*the extension of Mr. DiDonato's contract up on the agenda.*" The motion was seconded by Mr. Taylor and unanimously approved.

Mr. Illingworth said the board had been provided with a copy of the contract and it will run through June 30, 2019. He moved that "*we extend Mr. DiDonato's contract to those dates as mentioned.*" The motion was seconded by Mr. Taylor.

In response to a question, Mr. DiDonato said he was a W-2 employee and follows the BCAS agreement.

Ms. Pereira said she did not understand why the benefits were listed in the contract. Dr. Jonson said that the contract amount was \$158,000,

The motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Illingworth said the Personnel Committee will be meeting through the summer as needed, especially for interviews.

Mr. Sokolovic said the Students & Families Committee met on June 14th. Magnet school policies were discussed. Magnet school principals gave their views on the current iteration of the policies. There was a general consensus that there should be selection and deselection criteria. He said about twenty students had been deselected in the last four years.

Mr. Sokolovic said it seemed like we were trying to create a solution in search of a problem and attempting to manage the exception rather than the rule.

Mr. Sokolovic said one principal with many years of magnet school experience reached out to him with grave concerns of the direction policy seems to be headed.

Mr. Sokolovic said the committee did not have a consensus to bring something forward to the board. It is hoped to bring something to the board at the beginning of the school year.

Mr. Sokolovic said the committee also had a bullying report. He asked that Mr. Young present to the board on the subject.

Mr. Sokolovic moved *"to move up the bullying report."* The motion was seconded by Mr. Bradley and unanimously approved.

Dr. Johnson said the bullying page in Power School was changed and assistant superintendents were included in the cycle so they would be aware of the bullying reports at the school level.

Mr. Young said the change was made to make sure we have an accurate record of all reported allegations.

Mr. Young said in 2014-15 there were 49 reported allegations; in 2015-16, there were 37 reports; in 2016-17, there were 17 confirmed reports of bullying; and in the current school year there are 19 confirmed reports bullying and 71 allegations.

Mr. Young said he knows the number is low. He said he does not supervise principals, but simply creates the reports. The assistant superintendents receive the reports weekly.

Ms. Pereira said the PowerPoint presentation submitted to the board was not legible. Dr. Johnson said that was printed in her office from Mr. Young's electronic copy.

In response to a question, Mr. Young said of the 49 reported incidents in 2014-15 he could not tell how many were substantiated.

Ms. Pereira said Mr. Young had been testifying before the board now for four consecutive years and she had been the toughest on him. She said we have 21,000 students and over 5,000 in high schools and there are 14 schools that did not report a single bullying incident, which is not possible.

Mr. Young said he gets the policies from the state and does training for administrators. He said that's why he wanted the assistant superintendents who supervise the principals to report on this at their principal meetings.

Ms. Pereira said in the final year of Supt. Rabinowitz's tenure Mr. Young reported that there were zero instances of

substantiated bullying.

Ms. Pereira said to Dr. Johnson that this is not acceptable to have four straight years. She said every school in the district has bullying every single day. She said it is a national epidemic with children committing suicide or being frightened to go to school, among other difficulties.

Ms Pereira said this cannot happen. She said she did not blame Dr. Johnson because she became the superintendent in last April.

Dr. Johnson said the assistant superintendents are supposed to present the issue to the principals. She said she knew of a bullying incident at a school because she spoke to the parent herself, but the data indicates no incidents at that school. She said she agreed 14 schools not reporting one incident was a high number.

Ms Pereira said she hoped this was going to be on principals' and assistant superintendents' evaluations. She said the board had been trying to address this for four straight years.

Mr. Sokolovic said it was important for the board to take a strong stance. In response to a question, Mr. Young said he didn't feel the numbers accurately reflect what's going on in the schools.

Mr. Sokolovic said he was worried about children afraid to participate in their education or afraid to come to school because of fear of bullying. He said principals may be afraid to make these reports for fear of looking bad. He said the principals need to be held accountable. He said employees who do not report incidents could be arrested. He said there

was improvement from last year, but we need to go further.

Ms. Martinez said this was alarming. She said as a Bridgeport parent and community leader she sat in on five different incidents in five different schools, which were substantiated incidents. One incident involved gang activity in a middle school. She said accountability must happen. She added we can't help the students unless we have actual numbers. She said she agreed with Ms. Pereira.

Mr. Illingworth said his daughter went through bullying. He said when he first saw the data he thought Mr. Young's response was going to be that he did not supervise principals. He asked if Mr. Young went to the assistant principals about the problem of inaccurate reporting. He said this is fudging numbers and data that is just outright lies. He said part of the problem is the principals' discretion.

Mr. Illingworth said his daughter had a chair thrown at her and other actions, but he was told the student just liked her.

Mr. Illingworth said this was truly unacceptable. He said he would like to hear a report if there were discussions with the schools that were not reporting bullying incidents to make sure the numbers were correct. He said there was bullying everywhere, every day, every minute. He said some parents had to go to court for help with bullying. He said someone needs to be held accountable.

Mr. Taylor said the biggest complaint he hears from parents, aside from safety from shootings, is bullying.

In response to a question, Mr. Young said if any principal has a high level of anything in their schools as a human they try to put their best foot forward. He said he can't go to a

principal and tell them anything, which is why the reports go to the supervisors of the schools.

Mr. Young said he agreed there was bullying going on in the schools but he did not think it was happening to thousands and thousands of students. He said he supervises 39 social workers and he does hear of the climate in schools.

Ms. Pereira said social workers are generally involved in bullying. She said she was not going to give Mr. Young a pass because she had been talking about this for four straight years. She noted the assistant superintendents were new and had not written a single principal evaluation in the past.

Ms. Pereira said bullying has gotten much worse than when she was in school. She said she was charging Dr. Johnson with holding administrators accountable. She said Mr. Young should be holding the social workers accountable.

Mr. Young said the social workers are there to do clinical services for students for all different types of issues. He said investigations for bullying happen with the school climate officer, who is usually an 092 person who can impose discipline. He said principals can choose someone to investigate allegations of bullying.

Ms. Pereira said social workers are certified and trained to deal with emotional issues. She said bullying is usually a manifestation of something else going on in the child's life. Mr. Young said he agreed.

Mr. Young said social workers in a substantiated incident give counseling or restorative practices. He said sometimes there is a conflict of interest because it can create a clinical

issue with some students on our caseload.

Ms. Pereira said she this was the fourth year and she's not accepting any more excuses from Mr. Young. Mr. Young said he was not giving excuses.

Dr. Johnson said she agreed with sentiments shared by the board, but we have made some strides over the last year. She said we have a long way to go and it is about having those conversations, particularly the 14 building leaders that did report any incidents.

Dr. Johnson said the principals are aware of her stance on accurate recordkeeping. She said she shared that in meetings with BCAS. She said conversations would start with the building leaders who did not report any incidents.

Ms. Martinez said she can't stand the fact that no accountability is perpetrated year after year in many departments. She said don't be mad at us if we cut something that isn't working. She said she was pleased with the restorative practices being used in the district. She said Harding did a whole 180.

Ms. Martinez said every school has not been using RULER at its best. She said it was not used at her son's son. She said if we did it from kindergarten on up there will be less incidents by the time of high school. She said principals needed to be accountable. She said RULER works.

Mr. Sokolovic moved that "*the nutrition center bids be moved from New Business up to his report.*" The motion was seconded by Ms. Pereira and unanimously approved.

Ms. Pereira said there are a total of 13 bids; six are

commodities and seven are processing requests, which include bread and bakery, milk and dairy.

Ms. Pereira said we tried to take out any language that was making it difficult for local vendors to participate.

Ms. Pereira said she found some items that still were not fixed following the committee discussion.

Dr. Johnson said she made changes since the committee meeting after meeting with Vincent Esposito of the nutrition department.

In response to questions, Dr. Johnson said the cleanliness provision had been removed and indemnification of the board was added to the bid. Mr. Esposito said the language was corrected to allow the nutrition department to suspend the contract with immediate notification to the board. Mr. Esposito said a change was made regarding the ability to reject delivery equipment with notification to the board. He said registry with the secretary of state was added. He said the provision that allows extension of the contract for one year was changed to the discretion of the board.

Mr. Esposito said the item about frozen bread has been eliminated. Dr. Johnson said the reference to the flour certification has been eliminated.

Ms. Pereira said there was some separate language in the commodity bids that Mr. Esposito wanted to stay in there. Mr. Taylor said if Ms. Pereira was happy with the bids at present he would support the motion.

Ms. Pereira moved *"to approve all 15 RFPs for the nutrition center."* The motion was seconded by Mr. Taylor and

unanimously approved.

Ms. Martinez left the meeting.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT/AGENDA:

Dr. Johnson said there was an increase in iReady math scores across all grade levels. Most notably, for kindergarten the level of students at or above proficient was 8 percent in the fall and in the spring was 53 percent.

Dr. Johnson said a grant was received from the Bigelow Foundation to support a summer camp for girls in computing code, with over a hundred students participating at Claytor School. IT students from Fairchild Wheeler are working in the program.

Dr. Johnson said there is a health insurance plan partnership with BEA and BCAS.

Dr. Johnson thanked IT for streaming the graduation ceremonies live online. Over one thousand students graduated this past Friday. She noted Mr. Testani handled all of the logistics.

Mr. Illingworth added the security staff did an excellent job being out there all day, including helping folks who couldn't make the walk from the parking lot to the field. He thanked the police department as well.

Dr. Johnson said it was a great citywide effort for the graduation, with the city and community coming together.

Ms. Pereira noted the superintendent's staff did an amazing job of presenting at the Teaching & Learning Committee about what they've accomplished with so little resources. She pointed to increased math scores and the fundraising by the athletic director. She said she wished more board members had attended.

Dr. Johnson said 72 administrators and teachers will be traveling to Boston this summer to participate in the Greg Tang math conference.

Dr. Johnson said the board received an update of the budget gap plan last week.

Ms. Pereira said the agenda item did not indicate which year the item referred to. Dr. Johnson said it was the 2018-19 budget. She said there were previous comments by the board members about not touching the school level, so she proposed cuts from the facilities department. She said additional cuts from facilities will allow the retention of four additional ISS officers, for a net loss of two positions.

Mr. Illingworth moved *"to add discussion and possible action on the 2018-19 budget gap proposed by the superintendent dated 6/21."* The motion was seconded by Mr. Taylor and unanimously approved.

Mr. Walker moved that *"we approve the pending potential actions on the 2018-2019 budget gap plan, with the change from the ISS officers reduction from 18 to 16 as opposed to 18 to 12."* The motion was seconded by Mr. Taylor.

Mr. Illingworth thanked Dr. Johnson and the staff for hearing the board members. He said he knows it wasn't easy and

really appreciates it.

Dr. Johnson said she made additional cuts in facilities that are not in the document in the area of overtime. This led to the additional ISS officers being put back in the budget.

Ms. Pereira said she won't be voting for it because the position that Dr. Johnson has been put in is inappropriate and unreasonable. She said six administrators have told her since last week's meeting that we're on the verge of blowing up the district because we have a skeleton running the whole district. She said the administrators explained how terrible morale is due to the lack of resources and help.

Ms. Pereira said New Haven had a chief of staff, a communications director, and a director of guidance.

Dr. Johnson said today Mr. Taylor gave her some insight regarding the overtime for facilities and that prompted her to look at the overtime. She said what she saw was quite excessive. She thanked Mr. Taylor.

Mr. Taylor thanked Dr. Johnson for executing that move. He said to see other people lose their positions and others reap the benefits of overtime doesn't seem equitable.

The motion was approved by a 5-1 vote. Voting in favor were members Weldon, Illingworth, Walker, Allen, Pereira and Sokolovic. Ms. Pereira was opposed. Mr. Bradley abstained.

Mr. Sokolovic moved that "*we rank what we bring back in the event of a windfall.*" He said he had three items that he rates highly to bring back; The National Network Partner Schools, the parent coordinator; number two, the School Volunteer

Association; and third, the ISS officers.

Mr. Illingworth seconded the motion.

Mr. Weldon said there were previous rankings that were not reflected in the document.

Mr. Walker suggested looking at the proposal and the chair send out a survey for the board members to rank the items. Mr. Weldon said he would do so. Mr. Sokolovic agreed.

Dr. Johnson said there was a section in the budget entitled “pending potential actions,” where \$600,000 is being looked at in the summer with attrition and grant revenue.

In response to a question, Dr. Johnson said the item in the board packet about Great City Schools was for information and she was not looking for action.

Ms. Pereira moved “*approval of items I to IV on the consent agenda.*” The motion was seconded by Mr. Taylor and unanimously approved.

OLD BUSINESS:

Ms. Pereira moved “*to approve the educational specifications for like-new renovations of Bassick High School.*” The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic.

Mr. Taylor said he did not feel comfortable with the term “like new.” He suggested deleting the phrase so we don’t end of owning it from here on in.

Ms. Pereira said Mr. Wallack told her that this is the specific language that must be sent to the state with the grant application. If we don’t get it, we’re going to lose a whole

year on the Bassick grant.

Dr. Johnson said that was correct and this is just approval to submit the grant.

The motion was approved by 7-1 vote. Voting in favor were members Illingworth, Weldon, Walker, Pereira, Sokolovic, Allen and Bradley. Mr. Taylor was in opposition.

NEW BUSINESS:

The next agenda item was on playground equipment at Batalla School. Mr. Taylor said the equipment was donated to the school and got a green light in Facilities; he suggested approval.

Mr. Taylor made a motion *“to approve donated playground equipment at Cesar Batalla.”* The motion was seconded by Mr. Bradley.

Mr. Sokolovic asked if the equipment was ADA-compliant and whether there would be maintenance costs. Dr. Johnson said Batalla received the current playscape that was donated and this would be a second playscape site.

Ms. Pereira said the Kiwanis Club came to the board over a year ago and they’re saying they found additional money to buy two additional pieces of equipment.

The motion was unanimously approved.

The next item was an update of the Regular Meeting schedule of the board. Dr. Johnson noted Monday, September 10th is a holiday. She said the meeting would have to be cancelled.

Ms. Pereira moved *“that we cancel the Regular Meeting scheduled for Monday, September 10th, and replace it with a Special Meeting on Tuesday, September 11th, 2018, following the regular board agenda.”* The motion was seconded by Mr. Walker.

The motion was approved by a 5-1 vote. Voting in favor were members Weldon, Pereira, Walker, Sokolovic, and Allen. Mr. Illingworth was opposed. Mr. Taylor and Mr. Bradley abstained.

The next item was on discussion and possible approval of transportation RFP.

Ms. Pereira said everything that we asked to amend in the Finance Committee got amended except for errors on page 11 that referred to one-year extensions instead of the three-year contract discussed by the board.

Ms. Pereira moved *“to approve the RFP for school transportation services as amended.”* The motion was seconded by Ms. Allen.

The motion was approved by a 7-1 vote. Voting in favor were members Weldon, Illingworth, Walker, Sokolovic, Pereira, Allen and Bradley. Mr. Taylor was opposed.

The next agenda item was on discussion and possible action on all freshman sports receiving an equal funding increase in the amount of \$3,500 to match the increase awarded to Harding High School freshman football.

Mr. Walker said the board packet contained a list of subvarsity programs in existence and those that were cut in

a prior school year. He said we did a good job helping out freshman football at Harding, but there are a considerable number of other teams that should have equal rights. He said if we have twenty teams and we increase their budgets by \$3,500, that would be a mere \$70,000. The teams that were cut back in 2016 could be restored for \$59,500, with the total impact being \$129,500.

Mr. Walker said the additional funds needed by the teams could be obtained by fundraising and soliciting donations. He said about \$68,000 would have to be raised.

Mr. Walker moved *"to approve \$129,500 of our budget to go towards these 37 freshman/subvarsity teams."* The motion was seconded by Mr. Taylor.

Ms. Pereira said some programs were completely cut. She asked why we would start a freshman team if we didn't have a varsity team.

Mr. Walker said he was citing the information from the athletic director. Ms. Pereira said the back of the sheet listed programs that were completely cut prior to the 2016-17 school year.

Mr. Illingworth said Ms. Pereira was right because Central lost its fencing team years ago. He agreed that several sports were eliminated completely.

Mr. Sokolovic said this was a bad idea two weeks ago when we added the \$3500 to a budget with a giant, gaping hole in it. There is still a \$600,000 gap and now we're going to add \$130,000 more, which won't even get the teams on the field in their entirety. He said he was all for sports, but noted some of our classes don't have paper. He said his son's

school is having a fundraiser to have fans for the school because it is an old building. He said we're getting ridiculous here if we're funding sports before school climate.

Dr. Johnson said the city said they will give \$4,000 to revive the Central freshman football team and \$4,000 to Bassick High athletics (\$3500 for freshman football and \$500 to girls' basketball shirts).

Mr. Taylor said he liked what Mr. Walker proposed, but suggested amending it to limit funding to sports where the varsity team already exists. Ms. Pereira asked if we were going to exclude Bassick and Central football since they're getting money from the city.

Mr. Walker said the twenty teams on the list includes the \$3,500 already budgeted for Harding. Ms. Pereira said the amount was \$59,500 if you take out three football teams.

Ms. Pereira moved *"to amend the motion to add \$3,500 for JV or freshman sports for JV soccer, freshman girls basketball, freshman girls volleyball, softball, and baseball, which is \$3,500 per program, which comes to \$59,500."* The amendment was seconded by Mr. Taylor.

The amendment was approved by a 7-1 vote. Voting in favor were members Weldon, Illingworth, Pereira, Walker, Allen, Bradley and Taylor. Mr. Sokolovic was opposed.

Mr. Taylor said if the \$59,500 was a concern he did not mind if Dr. Johnson went after facilities overtime more to cover it.

The motion as amended was approved by a 7-1 vote. Voting in favor were members Weldon, Illingworth, Pereira, Walker, Allen, Bradley and Taylor. Mr. Sokolovic was

opposed.

The next item was on interaction with BBOE and BCAS members. Mr. Weldon said the item was requested by BCAS.

Dr. Victor Black, the president of BCAS, said BCAS did not request the item. Mr. Weldon said he was asked to put the item on and that union officers wanted to address the board.

Dr. Black said there was a concern in regard to BCAS members' treatment by the board and the need for mutual respect between board members and the employees that execute your mission. He said he was not aware it was requested to be on the agenda tonight.

Dr. Black said we are agents of the board and the leaders implementing your mission and vision. He requested mutual respect between both parties.

Ms. Pereira moved "*to table item 1.*" Mr. Weldon noted it was duplicative with the budget gap item.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Taylor and unanimously approved.

The next item was information on contractual feasibility of suggested merger of department directors.

Mr. Sokolovic said he put forward the item about the consolidation of the titles. He said he wanted more information before making decisions, but the board has already made the decision. He asked if Dr. Black would like to speak on the contractual ramifications of consolidating the subject areas early childhood and literacy.

Dr. Black said from an educational standpoint it is obviously not best practice. He said, as Ms. Pereira mentioned, we're already running on a very tight rope. He said combining two fulltime duties into one position would not promote efficiencies.

Dr. Black said it's an impact bargaining situation because such a job is not completely delineated in the contract. He said we're currently going into negotiations, but that does not apply for this coming year.

In response to a question, Dr. Black said the director positions are not defined in the contract. He said it was a bargaining scenario that would involve the circumstances around the duties and the associated compensation.

In response to a question, Dr Black said it is likely BCAS will be seeking additional compensation for additional duties. He said this is typically done with the negotiation of a stipend.

Dr. Johnson said she gives out a superintendent's scholarship each year. This year one of Dr. Black's students, Luis Rodriguez Jr., of the IT School at Fairchild Wheeler, received it after graduation on the field. Dr. Black said the superintendent made Luis's day and he was elated for the recognition from the superintendent. As a student leader himself, Luis was excited to be recognized by another leader.

Ms. Pereira said that was very generous of Dr. Johnson. Dr. Johnson said Luis is going on to UConn.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 10:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

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