

Monday, February 26, 2018 [*Corrected*]

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held February 26, 2018, at Bridgeport Regional Aquaculture Science & Technology Education Center, 60 St. Stephens Road, Bridgeport, Connecticut

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m.

Present were Chair John Weldon, Vice Chair Hernan Illingworth, Secretary Jessica Martinez, Ben Walker, Joseph Sokolovic, Chris Taylor and Sybil Allen. Dennis Bradley arrived subsequently as noted.

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

Mr. Weldon said translation services were available.

There was a moment of silence for the events at Stoneman Douglas School in Florida.

RECOGNITIONS:

The Curiale boys basketball team was honored. Supt. Johnson observed they were a handsome group of young men. Principal Brett Gustafson said the team travels all around the state to play and is currently undefeated and has a 77-game winning streak. Mr. Gustafson said six players also made honor roll. Coach Larry Menta said the team won tournaments this year in Milford, Middletown and at the McGivney Center. The team also won the Fairfield County Travel League. He said the players work very hard and practice hard.

The Discovery Magnet School first-grade chorus performed the song, "Wade in the Water."

Supt. Johnson introduced two Discovery students who were recognized with student achievement awards by The Bridgeport Rotary Club for academic achievement. Principal Sangeeta Bella

described the students' leadership and civic duties.

Alicia Robinson, director of visual and performing arts announced the winners of the Bridgeport Public Schools logo contest. All the students are from Central High under the direction of George Bella. The winner was Abigail Estrada. Honorable mention went to Sherish Sajjad and Marianne Frehner. The students received gift certificates.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS:

Norris Tate of Bassick High reported on his school. Among the items he highlighted were the boys' basketball team qualifying for the state playoffs, the performance of the Drama Club and choir at the Klein Memorial, the girls' cheerleading team's third place finish, and a Black History month performance

Angel Rivera of Bridgeport Military Academy reported on his school. Among the items he highlighted were the \$950,000 in scholarships offered to the Class of 2018, the color guard's invitations to the Juneteenth and St. Patrick's Day Parades, and the school's second place ranking for attendance for the fourth month in a row.

Jeniel Edmonds of the Aerospace School at Fairchild Wheeler reported on her school. Among the items she highlighted were the Relay for Life event on June 1st, the second semester back to school event, the awards assembly on this Friday, Saturday SAT prep, and the spring play upcoming on May 18th.

Alayjah Evans of Central High reported on her school. Among the items she highlighted were the family literacy night on March 1st in the school library, the boys' basketball team qualifying for the FCIAC and CIAC tournaments, and the upcoming SAT testing on March 21.

Mr. Bradley arrived at the meeting.

Angelo Rodriguez of the IT School at Fairchild Wheeler reported on his school. He highlighted the next exhibition day on March 14th and last week's awards assembly. Emily Nivello of the IT School highlighted the next STAR assessment on March 1st, the state-required SAT team on March 21st and the back to school night this

Thursday.

Anyira Barnes of the BioTech School at Fairfield Wheeler reported on her school. She highlighted today's honors assembly and the five juniors who received Book Awards from universities.

Shanoye Ho-Sang of Harding High reported on her school. Among the items she highlighted were an honors celebration on March 2nd, the student council's Black History Month event tomorrow, including music, dance, and spoken word, and Ms. Graham's work to raise funds for five students to perform at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. She said those wishing to donate can send a check to the Bridgeport Public Schools Foundation and write Kennedy Center in the subject line.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Rosie Jones Clark said she was speaking on behalf of a parent she met who was concerned about security at Blackham School. She said the parent believes that security is not as tight as it should be, including visitors to the school who do not sign in at the office and the absence of security from the door to the school. She asked the board to investigate the situation at Blackham. She added Central High now has a fully functioning PTSO.

Chaila Robinson said she also had concerns about security regarding her children at Hallen and Read Schools. She said the tragedies at schools are happening from someone or a child that is tied to the school. She said when she went through intense security upon entering Central High she observed four teachers and six students just use their badges to enter the school.

Anicasia Perez, a senior at Bassick High, said the principal hasn't enforced rules on uniforms or other rules with consequences, however, today because the superintendent visited the rules on uniforms were enforced. She said the school's prom is scheduled on the same night as Harding's and many students have already bought tickets for the Harding prom.

Susan Anschau, the mother of Anicasia Perez, said she had

concerns about Bassick. She said there is no structure in Bassick and things have not changed. She said she has met with the superintendent numerous times on Bassick. She claimed the principal does not control the children. She said a stronger principal with a stronger urge to want change was needed. She added it was not fair that three schools in Bridgeport were holding their proms on the same night. She also objected to holding all the graduation ceremonies on the same day in the Arena.

Crystal Mack said every school should have their own individual prom and graduations. She urged the children be kept safe from dangers such flu and epidemics. She said Dr. Williams was one of the first black principals at Bassick and added that he was unfairly treated while a principal at Cross School. She also spoke against attorneys running charter schools.

Ladundra Mattox, a parent of a child at Claytor Magnet School, said her son was an honor roll student. She said as a parent volunteer at the school she has observed incidents of parents disrespecting teachers and the principal. There were also incidents of parents swearing in the presence of the children. She said she wanted to be sure that her son and other children were safe.

Clyde Nicholson said in light of what happened in Florida it was time to make security the number one priority. He urged there be a security fence around the schools and everyone entering a school should have to go through a metal detector. He said it was possible that a teachers can go crazy too. He noted courthouses, airports and motor vehicle departments are gun-free zones. He also requested that Black History month be made year round.

Elizabeth Perez, PAC president at Multicultural Magnet School, said the playground at the school was built in 1995 and is very worn out and falling apart, including protruding nails. She said some children had been hurt playing there. She said the principal has shut down use of the playground since September. The price to repair to the playground is \$6,800. She asked the board to allow parents who work in construction to help repair it. She said the children are not getting enough exercise under current conditions.

Albert Benejan, PTSO president at Bassick High, asked the board to show respect for parents who come here. He said the school had no security and many wonderful security guards have transferred out. He said there is now a teacher controlling the PTSO election who has a conflict of interest. He said he respected Dr. Johnson, but he did not have the support for his work at Bassick.

APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES:

Mr. Illingworth moved approval of the minutes of the Regular Meeting of February 12, 2018. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bradley. Corrections were noted. The motion was approved by a 7-0 vote. Voting in favor were members Weldon, Illingworth, Martinez, Bradley, Allen, Sokolovic and Taylor. Mr. Walker abstained.

COMMITTEE REPORTS/REFERRALS:

Mr. Taylor said he had nothing to report on the Facilities Committee, but added that the security issue at Bassick High School was on our radar.

Mr. Weldon referred to the Facilities Committee a review of facilities operations for Classical Studies Magnet Academy and the playground facilities at the JFK Campus.

In response to a question about the prom issue, Dr. Johnson said she would pass the issue to Assistant Superintendent Otuwa.

Ms. Martinez said the Finance Committee would meet on March 14th.

Mr. Weldon said the Governance Committee would meet on March 21st.

Mr. Walker reported on the Teaching & Learning Committee. The committee met on February 20th.

Mr. Walker said Mr. DiDonato provided an update on special education; there are no outstanding state complaints with the district. The OCR complaint concerning the website's accessibility by persons with disabilities is in the process of being corrected by Mr. Postolowski, the IT director.

Mr. Walker said Alicia Robinson reported to the committee on performing and visual arts. She supplied a school-by-school course checklist and highlighted things such as a drumming and xylophone project for 200-plus 8th graders, an early college experience in music appreciation at Central High and a districtwide Black History Month event on February 28th.

Mr. Walker said Ms. Robinson highlighted a sneaker design contest that Central High students will compete in. Students will also participate in a national poster contest presented by The Links. Twenty schools participated in Valentines for Vets.

Mr. Walker said the department is currently collecting donations to help 15 Bridgeport students perform at this year's Kennedy Center event.

Mr. Walker said there was a discussion about the early childhood center at the new Harding High. An RFP has been developed for services to staff the center, which will have three classrooms for 24 infants, toddlers and preschoolers. The funding will be at no contest to the district. Enrollment will be prioritized to service students enrolled in the district's schools, staff members and community members. The committee asked that more planning for enrollment parameters be developed.

Mr. Walker said the item was referred by the Facilities Committee with the intent to refer it to the Students & Families Committee. He said the Students & Families Committee was composed of the same members as the Teaching & Learning Committee and the matter could be sent back to the Facilities Committee.

Mr. Illingworth said as a member of the Facilities Committee we were not aware there was a referral. He said the committee would take action on the RFQ at the next committee meeting.

Mr. Walker said the committee was fully on board with the early learning center project.

Mr. Walker said there was a discussion of the idea of reintegrating

students currently enrolled in the Regional Center for the Arts(RCA) back into the district. Currently, there are 82 students from Harding, Bassick and Central enrolled in the afternoon program at the RCA at the cost of \$2,600 per student. The total expenditure is \$213,00.

Mr. Walker said more research into the idea is needed because the district may be statutorily obligated to send students who request to go to the RCA.

Mr. Walker said there was a discussion of the proposed text selected for the Perspectives on Race course, *Race: Are We So Different?* He said it would be the primary text to be used in conjunction with technology developed by the Los Angeles school district for similar courses. The cost of the book is very inexpensive, about \$20.

Mr. Walker moved to “add to the agenda approval of the text *Race: Are We So Different?* to the agenda under New Business.” The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

Mr. Walker moved that “*we move approval for this text up from New Business so it can be voted on as part of the Teaching & Learning Committee report.*” The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

Mr. Walker moved “to approve the text *Race: Are We So Different?* to be used in the course Perspectives on Race.” The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic.

Assistant Superintendent Deborah Santacapita said the district’s committee started developing the curriculum in the late fall. She highlighted the text’s treatment of science, the low cost of the book, and the theme of the book consisting of uniting us. She said there is a website associated with the text as well.

In response to a question, Dr. Santacapita said other potential books cost up to \$100 and the publication of date of 2008 is more recent than alternatives. She said conversations that might be uncomfortable would come out of the book. She said another comparable text was used by Dr. Anekwe in teaching a similar course.

Jay Lipp said Dr. Canton from Connecticut College was consulted on the choice of the text. He said the book covers a lot of different perspectives and has online resources as well.

Mr. Bradley said he wanted to make sure we had a Western Hemisphere perspective on the issue of race. Dr. Santacapita said the first section of the book covers races and racism; the second section covers current issues. She said the book was vetted through Dr. Canton. Mr. Lipp said Chapter 6 covers the American point of view. He said the Los Angeles district has had an ethnic course as a graduation requirement since about 2009.

Mr. Bradley said when he advocated for the course the thinking was we were going to get unification. He said this was important for those who take the course. Dr. Santacapita said giving students DNA tests, if permissible, has been explored as part of the course. She noted Ms. Bhushan, director of science, and Ms. Robinson, director of performing arts, were added to the committee.

In response to a question, Mr. Lipp said costs for the texts are being investigated with a bulk bookseller. Dr. Santacapita said about 800 books were needed. She said the book did not come in hardcover and life expectancy is about three to four years.

Dr. Santacapita said other committee members were Mr. Lipp; Dr. Anekwe, director of Central Magnet; Mr. Morton, a social studies teacher; Ms. Robinson; Mr. Graf, principal of Central High; and Dr. Canton of Connecticut College.

In response to a question, Dr. Santacapita said the academic consultant will get a fee. Mr. Taylor asked why money was spent on a consultant on top of all the educated people on the committee.

Dr. Santacapita said she was told a consultant was necessary as part of the grant that was received. The consultant can receive up to \$5,000 for this school year.

Mr. Taylor said our kids always get cheated out of money by a consultant or a private contractor. He said he was concerned that

people of all races had equitable input into the selection of the book; he said Dr. Santacapita did a fine job.

Mr. Taylor said there was a lot of talent in the district and the \$5,000 could have been used to put a playground in.

Dr. Johnson said the expenditure was grant-funded specifically for this purpose. The grant required the district to build in technology, textbooks, and professional development. She said we would not have been able to use these dollars for a playground.

Mr. Taylor said it seems like somebody else always gets the grant. He said we all know how to manipulate a grant; if we don't, he'd be happy to teach how to do so. He said he was tired of seeing the money leave the district and then the administration gets chastised. He said he was tired of the lack of fiscal irresponsibility.

Ms. Martinez asked about the demographics in Los Angeles and Philadelphia compared to Bridgeport. She also asked about the response of students in Philadelphia and Los Angeles. She said everything sounds great because the curriculum is current and it ties in the arts, science and history

Mr. Lipp said the course is semester-based and paired with the existing civics course. He said in regards to demographics that Philadelphia has a higher African-American population than Bridgeport as a percentage, while Los Angeles has a higher Latino and Asian percentage.

Mr. Sokolovic said he loves the book, the way the course is structured, and the holistic approach which will prepare African-Americans and Latinos for the future.

The motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Walker said the committee would next meet on March 20th.

Mr. Taylor said he had a referral to Teaching & Learning Committee. He said in light of the slaughter of Jayson Negrón by the Bridgeport

Police, which has hit his heart with tremendous grief, we can train our students how to interact with the police. He said he would like to see discussion about this in the committee. He said nowhere in this country is it a crime punishable by death to be driving a car without a license that is allegedly stolen.

Mr. Illingworth said the Personnel Committee met on February 14th. Civil service testing was discussed. The last testing took place before 2012. He said there were a lot of provisional appointments in the district and the civil service department of the city has indicated it will start testing in April for Custodian I positions.

Mr. Illingworth said vacancies in the district were also discussed, along with long-term subs. He said the committee was concerned about the practice of not filling vacant positions with a certified teacher. Long-term subs are used to save money, and the committee would like to refer the matter to the Finance Committee to look at how it is budgeted. He said vacancies that occur in the April to June time period may be appropriate for long-term subs, but otherwise the district should make every effort to fill every teaching position.

In response to a question, Mr. Illingworth said the costs of the civil service exam would be at no cost to the board.

Mr. Sokolovic, chair of the Students & Families Committee, said the next meeting will be on March 8th. He said he was glad to see spaces are being filled on PACs and PTSOs and hoped we can come together and avoid conflicts.

Mr. Bradley said the issues brought up today about graduation should be considered. Mr. Weldon said he didn't know how realistic it was for this year's graduation. Mr. Sokolovic said the matter could be discussed at Students & Families and then sent to the Finance Committee to consider the costs.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT AND AGENDA:

Dr. Johnson said she reached out to MGM to try to get Uri Clinton to the Finance Committee meeting. He is scheduled to appear on March 14th before the committee.

Dr. Johnson said she attended the networking meeting of the Bridgeport Regional Business Council. She said a representative of PSEG discussed some opportunities for students who are not going on to college. The information has been shared with guidance counselors.

Dr. Johnson said the 2015-16 Accountability Index ranked Bridgeport at the lowest position of five similar districts with a rating of 56.4. The new Accountability Index for 2016-17 has Bridgeport in the number two position among the five districts rated.

Supt. Johnson said the African-American studies course embedded in the grant is an opportunity for parent outreach. The possibility of holding five community forums throughout the city has been discussed to keep parents engaged and informed.

Dr. Johnson said on March 14th high school students across the nation are planning a walkout to recognize the victims of the incident in Florida. She said the goal is to support the students and to work with the teachers and administrators to come up with a plan to be supportive. She said on Thursday, Scott Appleby and this team will address the administrative council to have a plan for that day and for security in general.

Mr. Taylor said he appreciated the outreach to MGM, but he understood the gaming rights in Bridgeport were to be up to public bid. He said it was not appropriate to meet with MGM, in a city known for public corruption, before the bid has been solicited.

Mr. Weldon said the objective stated at the last meeting was that the board start taking a more proactive approach with anybody who comes into our city to make any type of development. He said he viewed MGM as just the first one and others could have the same opportunity.

Mr. Taylor said his concern was to have an open, transparent bid process.

Mr. Sokolovic said it was a good idea to reach out to MGM. He said

MGM presented to the City Council and the board should have a voice at the table. He said the idea was to show us what you can do for our city and see what the board can get out of the matter. He said he was not pro or con casino, but it would be a good idea to have the conversation.

Mr. Bradley said he was in support of conversations with MGM and said he was glad the superintendent was being aggressive in this area.

Mr. Illingworth said he supported hearing from MGM.

Dr. Johnson said the Fairfield County Chapter of The Links, Inc. had a partnership with the district. She said she asked them to give a brief overview of their work in the district. She noted that Geraldine Johnson, the first black superintendent in Bridgeport, was a member of The Links. She said she welcomed the expansion of the partnership, including the scholarship opportunities for students.

Sheryl Battles, president of the Fairfield County Chapter of The Links, said the African proverb of if you want to go far, go together, was appropriate to the work of The Links, which is an organization of nearly 14,000 professional African-American women. She said nationally members contribute more than 500,000 documented service hours annually to communities in 41 states. The chapter gives about \$12,000 in college scholarship annually.

Ms. Battles there have been a number of initiatives with Geraldine Johnson School, including literacy enhancement, STEM and arts appreciation. She said she was excited about the superintendent's request that the partnership be extended to other schools. She said there was a book donation, facilitated through Scholastic Books, where 650 books were distributed. She added there have been parent seminars on cyber-bullying.

Ms. Battle said the national poster contest for The Links mentioned by Mr. Walker will spread from Johnson School to the entire district. She added that there will be an initiative for teachers to help students use technology to create a literary magazine. She also described a health initiative around heart disease and the importance of exercise.

There will be a seminar for parents and students on financial literacy.

In response to a question, Ms. Battles said the name of the organization comes from the concept of a chain of friendship and service.

Mr. Sokolovic thanked The Links for all they do for our students.

Dr. Johnson said the next item was the presentation of the district's strategic plan. She said it had previously been presented in executive session.

Assistant Superintendent Christiana Otuwa said the planning for the strategic plan started in 2017. She said the district's vision for the district was created under Dr. Johnson. She said the mission is to model excellence and equity in education for all children at every level by focusing on quality instruction and providing efficient systems and structures in schools to sustain a culture committed to success.

Bill Morton, part of the Strategic Plan Committee, said the first printed copies of the plan have been distributed to the board. Core beliefs for students and teachers and leaders have been established.

Dr. Otuwa said four foundation pillars were developed: student achievement, curriculum and instruction, recruitment and retention, and parent, family and community engagement.

Dr. Carmen McPherson said overall student achievement is to ensure that our children's education is culturally responsive and that will ultimately prepare our students for college and/or career, and will allow for the achieving of special objectives such as closing the achievement gap and reducing disparities between the achievement of students in terms of gender and race. Another objective is to exceed the statewide assessments in numeracy, literacy and science. An attendance rate of 93 percent or more at all grade levels is another objective.

Stephen Douglas said the next goal is to ensure that students are participating in career-related internships and community services.

Students participated on the committee and spoke about these issues.

Mr. Douglas said other goals include graduating high school within four years, improve our graduation rate to 85 percent or higher and to reasonably address the financial needs of the district and maximize the resources that we have.

Mr. Bradley said as a person who gives out a lot of high school internships he finds students are really not equipped to do basic clerical functions such as understanding the alphabet proficiently enough to file or understand basic grammar.

Dr. Otuwa said there were action plans in the strategic plan on how to achieve the objectives being presented.

Rebecca Feola said she led the curriculum and instruction group. She said other members of the team were Angela Bhushan and Herminio Planas.

Ms. Feola said standards were developed. She said all schools in the district should be learning to the standards. She said the approach is hands-on and inquiry-based. She said we over-test, but we do need data from students.

Ms. Feola said the key to professional development is collective action and communication. She said she didn't want to hear anyone competing in Bridgeport, but coming together as a community. She said she was a proud parent of two kids in the Bridgeport Public Schools.

Sarhanna Smith, principal of Read School, spoke on pillar three, recruitment and retention. Other committee members were Frank Chester, Lissette Colon, Ron Rapice, and William Rice.

Ms. Smith said the subcommittee was important to her because she learned during her path to becoming an administrator that one of the most important things to focus on who is being hired to work in her school.

Delores Mason, National Network of Partnership Schools district facilitator for parent engagement, said one pillar will be focused on parent engagement. The goal is to create welcoming environments, communicate regularly and transparently successes and efforts to improve positive outcomes. She noted many parents are receiving positive e-mails from teachers and administrators. The district newsletter is oriented towards positive information.

Ms. Mason said every family at Harding High is contacted on a regular basis.

Ms. Mason said school-based action plans will be further developed to expand opportunities for student success, parent engagement and school improvement. She said there will be expansion of opportunities that demonstrate cultural awareness, restorative practices, RULER, social-emotional learning, dual enrollment, project-based learning and common instructional framework.

Ms. Mason said team members included Bill Morton, Rose Jones Clark and Mary Pat Healy.

Dr. Otuwa said Dr. Johnson indicated that the budget has to be embedded in every pillar. She noted the district created the strategic plan itself and did not pay anyone.

Mr. Bradley said he came from a military background via undergraduate education and his father's service in the Army. He said he believed in total discipline, not just in the big things. He noted students today complained about the enforcement of uniform policies. He said he was frustrated by what he sees as a lack of adherence to the smaller policies, which creates a lack of a buy-in to the greater mission statement of the district.

Mr. Bradley said it was important to have a sense of accountability with students, staff and administrators. He said Ms. Feola gave a great presentation. He asked how a sense of accountability was being implemented.

Dr. Otuwa said since she has been here in August Dr. Johnson has been constantly drilling that through our heads. She said the strategic

plan includes action plans to get us to where we need to go.

Mr. Bradley said he would like to see consequences for not following plans. He said retention of teachers had been a big problem in the district. He said he suggested requiring in the contract that teachers live in the city when they start working for the district.

Dr. Johnson said different things were being looked at with the human resources department. She said she asked Mr. Illingworth to look at the hiring policy in the Personnel Committee. She added that we are definitely holding people accountable, which may be a new direction in the district.

Mr. Taylor said his opinion of teachers and administrations has changed since coming to the board. He said he now knows there is a lot of talent here. He asked at what point do we hold the parent and student accountable. He said it seemed like in dealing with children we had all bark and no bite. He said Title X needed to be rewritten because the district did not have the same issues as Fairfield or Westport. He added that he turned 180 degrees from thinking that teachers and administrators were lazy. He apologized to everyone for that, although there are some that he's not particularly satisfied with. He said the faults in student achievement were caused by a lack of parent involvement and holding students accountability.

Mr. Bradley said as a policy-maker one of the things that frustrates him is seeing high school kids in the criminal court system and the lack of programs to target the problems of local gangs. He said from growing up in an urban area there are things that will not be solved by hugs and the RULER program.

Dr. Johnson said there is a stakeholder group in collaboration with Leon Smith, the Juvenile Review Board and RYASAP where those conversations take place. She said she has suggested developing a flow chart for administrators to address what services are in place that are tailored to our children. She added that Mr. Taylor was right that teachers and administrators do an outstanding job. She said oftentimes parents may not be pleased with the outcome of holding students accountable but she will support principals as long as the process is fair.

Dr. Johnson said there will be a Learn to Live initiative in the district from the National Coalition of One Hundred Black Women in April.

Mr. Bradley said teachers who understand the intricacy of our community and the gangs can more effectively target the problem by identifying the leaders of gangs.

Dr. Johnson said not only living in the community was important, but seeing the parents in the retail stores or elsewhere.

Mr. Sokolovic said the toughest pillar seemed to be retention. He said teachers can drive ten to fifteen minutes away and get a large raise in another district.

Dr. Johnson said there was a conversation today about the difficulty of finding school psychologists because of higher salaries in other towns. She said that really needed to be looked at. She meets once a month with teachers who have been recognized as Beard award winners and they have come up with great ideas about a pilot program for new teachers. She added she also meets with the BEA and another group of teachers.

Ms. Martinez said she participated in the strategic plan as a parent leader. She said she had a problem with some of the action plan items and the lack of a timeline to implement them.

Dr. Johnson said it was a three-year plan from 2017 to 2020. She said the action steps will have action steps and check points to show progress.

Ms. Martinez said principals had autonomy, but she had an issue with the possibility of principals fudging numbers or not correctly disciplining children. She said she did not fully believe in expulsions and suspensions, but we also want to make sure we hold teens accountable.

Dr. Johnson said she has spoken with the instructional leadership team in regards to accurate metrics and said we're looking at the data ourselves. She said she has shared some concerns with assistant

superintendents to monitor on a more frequent basis.

Ms. Martinez said some of our teachers and principals have had a lack of support for too long. She commended them for staying here. She noted it took an entire community to write the strategic plan. She said she was excited about the plan.

Ms. Martinez said it was not fair to say parents don't care. She said she has learned to become engaged in her son's education. She said when her son was in second grade she didn't know a PAC existed or what a home-school coordinator was. She said once a parent is empowered with knowledge they can move forward by being a partner.

Ms. Martinez said not all schools are welcoming, and this includes language barriers. She said this was a beautiful start on the issue and said she would like to be a partner.

In response to a question. Dr. Johnson said right now she is requesting approval of the plan tonight, but next steps concerning future meetings have not been decided yet. She said timelines for each action item will be established.

Ms. Martinez suggested the committee members continue to meet to ensure that this is happening. She said perhaps board members would like to be part of that.

Dr. Johnson said the district data team will be revived once the strategic plan is approved in order to monitor the plan.

Mr. Illingworth said he appreciated the amount of time and work that went into the plan. He said after being on the board this is about the third strategic plan he has seen. He said we know where we want to go, but we tend to lack a little bit in how we're going to get there.

Mr. Illingworth said he would like to see the challenges faced for each goal and action plan. He said creating welcoming school was a huge item. He said three or four years ago there was training to make schools more welcoming, but the next day there was resistance from folks and it was stopped.

Mr. Illingworth said he would like to see a written section on evaluation of the progress on the pillars. He said he loved strategic plans, but most oftentimes they are created, approved and they sit on the shelf, which was not fair to stakeholders and the people who have contributed a lot of work to create the plan.

Dr. Johnson said the state reached out to the district to ask if there are schools open to receiving training on welcoming schools. She said this time we're going to be relentless in that process. She said she knows what it's like to be outside a school in the rain ringing a bell to get inside, which tells her how parents are being treated. She said the assistant superintendents have selected the schools to receive the training.

Dr. Johnson said when the work began in June 2017 there was consideration of the strengths of the districts and the challenges being faced. She said action steps and timelines will be presented in an understandable format.

Ms. Martinez said she was a certified trainer in RULER. She said she loved it. Dr. Johnson said the district was applying to the Tauck Foundation again to continue to fund RULER.

Ms. Martinez said RULER is no longer being used in the 8th grade at John Winthrop, which she said was alarming. She said students who feel loved will show up for school.

Ms. Martinez said she agreed kids need teachers that look like them, but her son had been blessed with white teachers who didn't live in Bridgeport who were excellent. She said Commissioner Wentzel is looking to work with organizations, teachers and principals on changing the certification process in Connecticut.

Dr. Johnson said the district had representation on a state committee for minority teacher recruitment.

Mr. Taylor left the meeting.

In response to a question, Dr. Johnson said the administrators saw a

presentation of the strategic plan similar to tonight's. She said the principals will roll out the document to the teachers. She added that five community forums are planned for parents, which will include breakout sessions.

Mr. Bradley said the board had to have a Truman mentality where we say the buck stops here. He said whether it collects dust or not depends on how aggressive we want to be about changing the school system. He said when he was chair there were conversations about incentives to attract teachers to live in the city and offering discounts.

Ms. Allen moved "*to approve the strategic plan as presented by Dr. Johnson and her staff.*" The motion was seconded by Mr. Bradley and unanimously approved.

Mr. Walker moved "*approval of personnel items on the consent agenda, Items I to V.*" The motion was seconded by Ms. Allen and unanimously approved.

OLD BUSINESS:

Mr. Illingworth moved "*approval of the 2018-19 school calendar.*" The motion was seconded by Mr. Bradley and unanimously approved.

The next item was the naming of the Harding High School football field.

Dr. Johnson thanked Principal Dane Brown for getting the committee together. The three names submitted for consideration are John Lewis, former Harding student, teacher, athlete, football coach and athletic director; Ed Gee, a former Harding football player and Tony Elliott, a former Harding football player.

Mr. Brown said a building-based committee was assembled and met twice in February at Harding. Other committee members were Andrew Grasso, athletic director; Shavonne Davis of the PTSO; two junior football players, Coleman Adams and Greg Andre; Alan Wallack; Ralph Ford; and Gerard Pugh.

Mr. Brown said the recommendation from the committee is to name

the field after John Lewis. He said the possible names were submitted by the members of the committee.

Dr. Johnson said submitting three names was in accordance with the board policy. Mr. Brown said the field is currently named Hedges Field, after a former principal. Dr. Johnson said Mr. Hedges was the first Harding principal.

Ms. Allen said she knew Mr. Lewis, but did not know Mr. Gee. She added Tony Elliott went from Harding to play in the NFL with the New Orleans Saints. She said she was in favor of naming the field after Mr. Elliott.

Mr. Illingworth thanked Mr. Brown for putting the committee together. He said he was shocked to see how fast the three names were submitted. He said normally community meetings are held on naming facilities. Mr. Brown said the meetings were at Harding with two community members present. Mr. Illingworth said the community needed to be a big part of the process. He said the naming of Geraldine Johnson School was handled with community input.

Mr. Weldon asked if it is possible to go into the community and promote this to a greater extent.

Mr. Brown said other persons also suggested via phone calls the field be named after Mr. Lewis. He said the second meeting held was very productive.

Ms. Allen asked if the matter could be deferred and greater research into the candidates take place. Mr. Weldon said the community at large should have an opportunity to weigh in because the school was not going to open until later this year.

Mr. Bradley said he heard from several people who played for Coach Lewis and he was a no-nonsense person who walked the hallways with a paddle. He said he agreed we should make sure the process is handled with due diligence.

Mr. Bradley said there had been debate about renaming Harding as it starts new after President Obama. He said this would be the first

school in the nation named after President Obama. He noted President Harding was marred by a lot of scandal and issues. He said naming of the school could inspire a lot of kids.

Mr. Sokolovic moved *“to postpone the naming of the Harding High football field to a later time to give a chance to the committee to reach out.”* The motion was seconded by Ms. Allen and unanimously approved.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

Approved by the board on March 12, 2018