

Monday, February 12, 2018 [Corrected]

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held February 12, 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, Joseph Sokolovic, Sybil Allen, and Maria Pereira. Secretary Jessica Martinez and Dennis Bradley arrived subsequently as noted.

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

RECOGNITIONS:

Dr. Johnson introduced the High Horizons Magnet School Chorus under the guidance of Ms. Ramirez. They performed the song "Lift Every Voice and Sing" for Black History Month.

Ms. Martinez arrived at the meeting.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS:

Dafne Hernandez of Bridgeport Military Academy reported on her school. Among the items she highlighted were a visit to the Stepping Stones Museum on forensic science, students who participated in the science fair, the promotion ceremony covered by Chanel 12 News, an invitation to the color guard to participate in the Juneteenth Parade, the school's excellent attendance record, Valentine's Day cards made for veterans, and a patch being designed for the International Space Station,

Mr. Bradley arrived at the meeting.

Angelo Rodriguez of the IT School at Fairchild Wheeler reported on

his school. Among the items he highlighted were the school's recognition by the Connecticut Department of Education as a school of distinction and the end of the semester on January 31st. Emily Niveló of the IT School highlighted the awards assembly on February 23rd and the upcoming exhibition day on March 14th.

Anyira Barnes of the BioTech School at Fairfield Wheeler reported on her school. Among the items she highlighted were students' awards at the district science fair, their upcoming participation in the state science fair and the recognition of the school as a school of distinction by the Connecticut Department of Education.

Shanoye Ho-Sang of Harding High reported on her school. Among the items she highlighted were fundraising to cover prom costs, the annual Black History Month activities, students who recorded an original song by music teacher Ms. Graham and who will travel to Washington, D.C., to the Kennedy Center, and the wrestlers who qualified for the Class M tournament.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Charlie Fernandez, a Bassick High student and a youth leader with the Make the Road Connecticut, said his immigrant mom works hard to support him and his sister. He said his school is literally falling apart and he needs more meetings with guidance counselors and more up-to-date books and technology.

Dattailiah Williams, an 11th grader at Bullard Havens, said she was a youth leader in Make the Road Connecticut. She said the group addresses the change they want to see, including lack of preparedness for college and the consequences for being late to school. She said she knows what it's like to be discriminated against and not get equal opportunity in school. She said recently only certain selected students were helped with Housatonic Community College financial aid and other opportunities.

Angel Martinez, a youth leader with Make the Road Connecticut, said we're working on a campaign called Walking Towards a Better Future. He said a lot of people in his life haven't had a chance to have an education or an opportunity to finish their education. He said

better supplies, computers, and more opportunities were needed in the schools.

Albert Benejan, PTSO president at Bassick High, said there will be an anti-bullying workshop on February 22nd at the school. He said if the district's budget had to be cut the cuts should take place at the top. He said more security and more custodians were needed. He said we deserve a new Bassick High. He said people are entering Bassick and leaving without checking in at the security points. He thanked Mr. Bradley for helping parents at Bassick.

Crystal Mack said survivor skills for life were needed and she decried the racial mess and the immigration mess. She described the flu situation as a deadly epidemic. She said she met a graduate of Harding High, Audrey Clark, who was involved in *Brown vs. Board of Education* and was featured in a movie on BET. She added that Dr. Byron Williams has been a breath of fresh air at Bassick High.

JoAnn Kennedy quoted Matthew 24:24. She thanked Mr. Bradley for the \$700 donation to the Dunbar cheering squad, which will go towards the purchase of uniforms. She said at the Facilities Committee meeting board members said they had images of students on their phones, which they were sharing without parents' permission. She said a parent recorded a fight and sent it to several people, including Channel 12's Frank Recchia. She said this is not reality TV; it's school with children. She said the Facilities Committee should stop referring to children as criminals and wild animals.

James Meszoros said he was the son of Marge Schwartz, who volunteered for the board for over forty years. He said his mother worked in Jefferson, Roosevelt and Bassick High. He said a plaque dedicated to his mother at Roosevelt School was removed because it could not be displayed in a classroom. He asked the board to look at the issue.

Ms. Pereira said she did not know of any policy that prohibits a plaque from being displayed, however, naming a room after a person would require the creation of a committee. She asked the board be provided with information.

APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES:

Mr. Illingworth moved approval of the minutes of the Special Meeting of January 16th, 2018. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bradley. The motion was passed by a 8-0 vote. Voting in favor were members Weldon, Illingworth, Sokolovic, Pereira, Martinez, Allen, and Bradley. Mr. Taylor abstained.

Ms. Pereira moved to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 22, 2018 with edits. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bradley.

The motion was passed by a 8-0 vote. Voting in favor were members Weldon, Illingworth, Sokolovic, Pereira, Martinez, Allen, and Bradley. Mr. Taylor abstained.

Ms. Pereira moved to approve the minutes of the Special Meetings of January 22, January 27 and January 29, 2018. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bradley and unanimously approved.

COMMITTEE REPORTS/REFERRALS:

Mr. Sokolovic referred to the Facilities Committee Policy 7550 to explore money-making opportunities for naming facilities.

Ms. Martinez said the Finance Committee meeting was cancelled due to inclement weather.

Mr. Sokolovic referred an item to the Governance Committee concerning possibly creating a policy or bylaw regarding the handling constituent complaints by board members. Ms. Pereira said she believed such a policy existed and she will look for it.

Mr. Taylor referred an item to the Teaching and Learning Committee regarding curriculum on students dealing with the Bridgeport Police Department in light of Jayson Negron. He said he didn't think we train the officers; maybe we can train the children.

Mr. Illingworth said the Personnel Committee would meet on February 14th.

Mr. Sokolovic said the Students & Families Committee met on February 8th and discussed changes to the magnet school and sibling policy. He said we were unable to come to a compromise and the policy will be sent back to Dr. Johnson for some possible changes. After again consulting with the magnet school principals, it will be presented to the committee in April. Until such time the current magnet school policy remains in effect and should be adhered to by all parties.

Mr. Sokolovic said there was also lively and informative discussion of parental involvement at the school PAC level. The District PAC was also discussed, but progress will be slow due to mistrust created by past events. A discussion took place with PAC presidents who were at the meeting.

Mr. Sokolovic said the committee also discussed sharing tables and said he would like to add the matter to tonight's agenda.

Ms. Pereira moved *"to add to the agenda discussion and possible action on sharing tables in our cafeterias."* The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

Mr. Sokolovic said the next meeting will be on March 8th.

Ms. Pereira said share tables are being done nationally. She noted many Bridgeport students are at or below the poverty line. Food that children don't want are put on the share tables for other students to take. She said many of the elementary schools have share tables, but we want to make it a mandate throughout the district.

In response to a question, Dr. Johnson said she was not aware of any issues regarding the share tables. She said she could solicit input from principals.

Mr. Taylor said he would like to see input from principals before this was crammed down their throats. He added he supported the concept.

Mr. Weldon said he believed principals should have the right not to

implement the sharing tables if there is an operational issue.

Ms. Martinez said she was in favor of holding principals accountable for implementing the plan.

Ms. Allen said in her experience the principals supervise the behavior of children in the cafeteria, not the food. She said she thought it was terrible when the sharing tables were eliminated.

Dr. Johnson said she knew of the use of a sharing table at Batalla School in the cafeteria.

Mr. Bradley noted fast-food establishments now have locked trash facilities because people got sick from food contained there and sued. Mr. Sokolovic said there are state guidelines about which food can be shared. Food that is open or needs to be temperature-controlled cannot be shared.

Ms. Allen said in her past experience years ago food was disposed of after each lunch wave.

Ms. Pereira said the rules on share tables are not complicated and we have to think of our kids who literally go home at night and don't get dinner and depend on the school for their main source of sustenance.

Ms. Pereira moved *"to add share tables in all of Bridgeport Public Schools, adhering to the Connecticut State Department of Education's guidelines."* The motion was seconded by Ms. Allen and unanimously approved.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT AND AGENDA:

Dr. Johnson said The District at a Glance listed some of the business and community partnerships that the district has. She said many are managed by the school volunteer office under the direction of Anne Gibbons.

In response to a question, Dr. Johnson clarified that the Lone Pine Foundation had been supporting the math program and is going to

fund 80 substitutes.

Ms. Pereira asked if the reference to arrival/dismissal guidelines was in response to the Make the Road students who have complained they're late for class because of long lines to get into the schools. Assistant Superintendent John Lischner said it was not directly related to that, but to the traffic patterns of students in the morning.

Ms. Pereira said she wanted to be sure the positions of chief financial officer and liaison for building construction were to be posted. She said those positions had been filled on an interim basis for six to eight years. She said the superintendent asked the board to wait before posting the positions because the end of the year was not an opportune time to post the jobs.

Dr. Johnson said modifications have been made and she is ready to move forward if that's still the direction of the board.

Ms. Pereira said permanent people were needed in those jobs. She said she had nothing but respect for Ms. Siegel and Mr. Wallack and they should be encouraged to apply. Mr. Taylor said he agreed.

Ms. Pereira said the board voted under Ms. Rabinowitz to post the positions. She said Dr. Johnson asked the board to delay the request at the end of last year so there would be a broader range of candidates available.

Mr. Bradley said there were eight partnerships with for-profit institutions and he suggested there be more robust partnerships.

Ms. Pereira said she was amazed because she didn't realize how many partnerships the districts had.

Mr. Bradley said nonprofit organizations are fine and dandy, but for-profit agencies have a lot more skin in the game, and suggested there be more outreach to them.

Dr. Johnson said she met with the president of the Bridgeport Regional Business Council. She said she thought the meeting went quite well and she will be attending the monthly Chamber of

Commerce meetings to nurture the relationship.

Dr. Johnson said there was discussion about the casino proposed to come to Bridgeport. She said the Board of Education should be a part of the conversation around the casino the way other stakeholders across the city have been. She urged the board seek its piece of the pie and ask those proposing the casino what they plan on doing for the public schools. She said this took place in Springfield.

Mr. Bradley said he was encouraged to hear about the superintendent's meeting. He said one thing he learned from being a legislative aide to Congressman Himes was the need for reciprocity; he urged we tell the casino people what we can do for them as well.

Mr. Sokolovic said we need to get in on the ground level with a host community agreement with a casino if it in fact comes. This will allow the host community to make certain demands such as putting money in a lockbox.

Ms. Pereira said the district now had 183 students from Puerto Rico, with the largest quantity at Luis Marin. Dr. Johnson said the district is staying ahead of this, including partnering with the city for additional resources for families.

The next item was on logos to be considered for the Bridgeport Public Schools. Dr. Johnson said enlarged versions had been provided to the board. She said the intent is not to completely replace the city seal, which could be relocated or used as a watermark.

Mr. Taylor asked if it was the board's position to break away from the city umbrella. Ms. Pereira said the board does not get its power from the city. She noted the matter was started as an artwork contest.

Mr. Weldon said this was kind of a first step in a branding initiative and hoped it was not an effort to divorce ourselves from the city. He noted we receive funding from them.

Ms. Martinez said Dr. Johnson satisfied her concerns at the last meeting. She said we are one city and the board is a department of the city. She said we don't want complete sovereignty or to burn

bridges. She said there was a new City Council and a new board and so far we've been working well together.

Mr. Weldon said he believed we're picking an image we can work with and leaving the final decision on the decision to Dr. Johnson and her staff.

Mr. Taylor said we're treated like a stepchild. The police department gets a \$110 million budget and we have to beg for scraps. He said he will shut his mouth when the city funds the board equally with the police department.

Dr. Johnson said this was a student contest led by Ms. Robinson. She said she would like to recognize a winner tonight because the students have been waiting to learn the winner.

Ms. Martinez said she had several conversations with the City Council members and they are more than willing to support us. She said she supported the logo contest.

Mr. Taylor asked if the board could caucus on the decision. He said he did not have a preference.

There was a show of hands of board members; five members preferred logo number 1.

Dr. Johnson reported that the community forums on the budget were held. The superintendent said she and Ms. Siegel will meet with the Ken Flatto and Mr. Nkwo tomorrow to discuss the 2018-19 budget request approved by the board. She said the budget gap is \$13 million, or \$15.7 million with the restoration of paraprofessionals.

Ms. Pereira said the mayor held a press conference to say that there was a budget surplus. She said given the board asked for \$3.4 million last year and was given \$357,000, while being given zero in the prior year, she would like to see if the board can get a chunk of the surplus.

Mr. Illingworth moved *"to ask the mayor to hand over the surplus to the students of the Bridgeport Public Schools."* The motion was

seconded by Ms. Pereira and unanimously approved.

Mr. Illingworth moved approval of personnel Items 1 to VI. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic.

In response to a question, Dr. Johnson said the only information she had on a matter was a resignation letter was submitted by the principal of Columbus School, effective June 30th. She added the job will be posted this week to ensure access to high-quality candidates.

The motion was passed by a 7-0 vote. Voting in favor were members Weldon, Illingworth, Martinez, Sokolovic, Pereira, Allen and Bradley. Mr. Taylor abstained.

In response to a question, Dr. Johnson said she met with Chief Perez twice. She said the chief indicated staggered schedules for SROs were not possible.

Dr. Johnson said she has learned that in other districts such as Waterbury, Hartford and New Haven that the board picks up security costs for sporting events. She said the chief agreed to a joint conversation about the sporting events.

Ms. Pereira said under the city charter and state statute any goods or services provided valued at \$25,000 has to go out to bid. The police department can't force us to fork over a hundred thousand dollars. She said going out to bid would keep the pressure on the police department. She said the board previously had SROs working staggered shifts to cover sporting events. She said this was continued outrageous behavior by the police department.

Mr. Taylor said if we're one big happy family, why are we getting a bill for police services. He suggested the board explore providing its own security. Ms. Pereira said the board has its own security guards at athletic events. She said police officers were probably only needed at the more challenging games. Mr. Taylor suggested we double our security force and cut ties with the police department.

Mr. Illingworth noted there was a police officer at the last Personnel Committee meeting. He said he was sure we're going to get billed for

that, but he did not understand why an officer was there. Mr. Weldon said he asked Dr. Johnson about this.

Dr. Johnson said the police indicated they did not know why the officer was at that meeting. Mr. Sokolovic said the officer reported to him that he was asked to be there, he was on straight time and it was in his sector.

OLD BUSINESS:

The next item was an update on the T-Mobile contract. Dr. Johnson said the documents had been reviewed by Atty. Dolphin of Shipman & Goodwin. She noted the contract language called for an increase once every five years, not every year.

Alan Wallack said the proposed contract was with the city attorney's office previously. Dr. Johnson said it went from there to Shipman & Goodwin. Mr. Wallack said he met with Ms. Siegel and the assistant city attorney. He said T-Mobile was also trying to put the antennas at Kennedy Stadium. He said the assistant city attorney advised that the contract not be signed.

Mr. Wallack said the prior assumption was a three percent increase each year. T-Mobile wants to pay \$100 a year for five or six years before proceeding. He said he viewed that as a placeholder to stop other mobile companies from using the site.

In response to a question, Mr. Wallack said the roof of Hallen School was structurally sound. T-Mobile would be responsible for any damage to the roof caused by the antennas. He said he had not heard of leaks at Hallen after the recent rainstorms.

Ms. Pereira said this was a joke and noted she did not vote for it originally. She said for \$100 a year they are blocking a competitor from taking the space. Mr. Wallack said, in essence, T-Mobile is requesting a 30-year contract.

Ms. Pereira noted that a hundred percent of the staff was against the proposal as well as many of the parents. She said the length of the proposed contract was in violation with the city charter.

Mr. Wallack said the board would not be billed by the city attorney for review of the contract. He suggested the matter be played out with the attorneys. He said he and Ms. Siegel do not do the actual negotiations. He agreed the proposed contract was nothing like what the board discussed.

In response to a question, Mr. Wallack said originally the monthly rent would be about \$3,000 with an automatic increase each year. Mr. Weldon said he would be inclined to just call it off.

Mr. Taylor said he couldn't imagine any further contract with T-Mobile because they haven't come in good faith. He suggested we call Verizon or another competitor.

Mr. Sokolovic suggested an RFP be considered for interested parties. Mr. Wallack said it was one of the highest points in the city.

Dr. Johnson said the school community believed they were going to receive \$30,000 and they put together a plan. She suggested waiting until we hear back from Shipman & Goodwin. Mr. Taylor said he would not continue running up the bill with Shipman & Goodwin and suggested moving to an RFP.

Mr. Bradley said there should not be an emotional component of scrapping a deal because it was a business proposition. He suggested a contract be presented to T-Mobile while understanding that competitors might very well be interested in the site.

Ms. Pereira said it was critical the contract be kept at three years due to the provisions of the city charter.

Dr. Johnson said with Shipman & Goodwin's involvement we're in a position to say what we want while being poised to walk away.

The next item was on Board of Education school building fees. Dr. Johnson said this was previously presented and some items have been updated and corrected.

In response to a question, Robert Hammond said there had not been

a request to rent the athletic fields in quite a few years. He said the hourly rates in the document represent a three percent increase.

In response to a question, Mr. Hammond said rentals had been pretty quiet recently, but typically church groups and community groups rent district facilities.

Mr. Taylor asked whether it was worth the district's effort and work to rent the facilities. He wondered if it was just aggravation to break even. Mr. Hammond said there are usually not problems from the rentals.

Mr. Bradley said a lot of policies are in response to schools discriminating in allowing certain groups to use facilities. He said the policies were developed for transparency.

Mr. Illingworth said it was important for the community to be able to use the schools for events, and the fees are designed for the district to break even, not to make revenue. Ms. Pereira said community schools are the hub for a community and being partners with the community.

Mr. Illingworth moved *"to waive the second read of the policy."* The motion was seconded by Ms. Pereira and unanimously approved.

Ms. Pereira moved *"to approve the revised use of school facilities policy."* The motion was seconded by Mr. Illingworth.

Mr. Taylor said he just wanted to make sure we weren't operating at a loss as a fiscally responsible person. He said he was not opposed to the motion.

The motion was unanimously approved.

The next item was on the legal services RFQ.

Ms. Martinez moved *"to issue the RFQ for legal services with the modifications agreed to by the city attorney's office and the manager of the business operations on December 21st, 2017; and with the modification that the selection committee be comprised of (1) two*

members of the Board of Education as appointed by the chair; (2) the superintendent of schools; (3); the chief financial officer; (4) the chief talent officer; (5) the manager of business operations; (6); a representative of the Bridgeport city attorney's office; (7) the chief of the specialized instructional reform." The motion was seconded by Mr. Bradley.

Ms. Pereira said that was a very large committee and she did not understand why the city attorney was needed. She said the previous board made sure the city attorney did not sign the last contract. She said this is the city trying to exert influence over the board. She reported Shipman & Goodwin's legal opinion was that no language is required regarding the city charter in the RFP. She said the board already voted to go out for an RFP and only received one response. The board then moved to more widely advertise the RFP. She said it was disturbing that the city attorney directed the purchasing agent not to post the RFQ without city charter language.

Mr. Illingworth said he was part of the whole exercise three years ago, which included three board members, the superintendent and Atty. Bohannon, who was very helpful. He said a large committee interviewing the firms could be convoluted.

Ms. Pereira said the highest monthly bill last year from Shipman & Goodwin was \$92,000. She said Shipman & Goodwin was supposed to provide a savings to us when we hired them. She said from a three-year study she did of legal bills there have been no savings from Shipman & Goodwin.

Mr. Taylor said he could hire a Harvard graduate, a paralegal and some underlings for much less. He said it was an astonishing amount of money for Shipman & Goodwin.

Ms. Pereira said she believed the line item for legal services was \$1 million, but it would be much higher this year because of litigation.

In response to a question, Marlene Siegel, chief financial officer, said for 2015-16 basic representation costs for Shipman & Goodwin and cases covered by Pullman & Comley were \$770,300. In 2016-16, the figure was \$941,000. This year, through December, the amount is

\$302,000.

Mr. Taylor said he now sees why the board is broke. He said this needs to be addressed immediately, including a cost analysis. He said it was an exorbitant amount of money to spend on counsel that he didn't think was that good.

Mr. Bradley said we were trying to be a sovereign board and having nothing to do with the City of Bridgeport, but on the other hand we get upset when we see large billings. He said the city attorney's office could handle the board's legal services for nothing.

Ms. Pereira said the Durant, Nichols firm was the board's law firm for over thirty years. She said the firm was politically connected to the city and the board was prevented from going out to bid. She said the city will not pick up litigation that specializes in education. She said a specialized firm was needed.

Mr. Bradley said the vast majority of legal items presented to the board in executive session are common civil complaints that do not require specialized attorneys.

In response to a question, Dr. Johnson said the district goes to the city attorney's office for some questions.

Mr. Illingworth said in the past the city attorney's office has guided the board in the wrong direction. He said this was one reason why Shipman & Goodwin was hired. He said another reason was the training to be provided to district personnel to reduce litigation.

Mr. Sokolovic said he could see the value to the board having its own legal representatives, particularly with potential issues with the city, while the city could handle a lot of boilerplate issues.

In response to a question, Dr. Johnson said Shipman & Goodwin had provided special education training and sexual harassment training to staff.

Mr. Taylor said a wise man is leery of strange gifts. He noted the city will give us legal representative at no charge, but not police

protection. He said he didn't feel comfortable relying on the city attorney's office when we might be politically opposed.

Ms. Pereira said she had a problem with a reference in the RFQ that called for an agreement with the city attorney's office. She asked where that language came from. Dr. Johnson said she believed the city attorney's office inserted the language, not Mr. Pires. Ms. Pereira noted the city wasn't contributing a penny to the board's legal bills.

Mr. Taylor said he believed the board could hire two attorneys and a paralegal, without benefits, for under \$300,000 a year.

Ms. Pereira said because the costs were so large she agreed with Mr. Taylor that we should look at having an attorney and paralegal that report to the superintendent, but said benefits should be paid to such staff.

Mr. Taylor said he wanted to retain the ability to fire them if they were not producing. He said we could retain the ability to hire other attorneys for specialty matters.

Mr. Illingworth said he believed outside counsel would still be needed for litigation items. Mr. Bradley said the board would have to look at the amount of legal matters pending. He said he did not want to see a hired board attorney who basically became a gatekeeper funneling out work to other lawyers. He said we should tread lightly because the Housing Authority tried the same thing and had difficulties. He said there would always be legal expenses, but most likely there are firms out there that could provide the services for less.

Mr. Weldon said how outside counsel is managed is key to this also.

Ms. Pereira said the recent large case that the board had involved work by five attorneys of Shipman & Goodwin because there were five board employees referenced in the matter.

Mr. Taylor said the board's contract was a cash cow and they could submit bill after bill with no scrutiny, and we have no idea if the hours were truly billed. He said in-house counsel could handle the board's caseload.

Ms. Pereira asked that the board be provided with an analysis of the nature of the board's legal matters broken down by category over the last two years.

Ms. Pereira said this should be looked at as an option; even a savings of \$200,000 would be important.

Mr. Bradley said one attorney can handle a lot of cases at a time. He said it was a good idea to see where the volume of work is coming from.

Ms. Pereira asked if Ms. Martinez was willing to withdraw her motion while this was investigated. Mr. Weldon said we could do both at the same time.

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

Ms. Pereira moved that "*the board get three years' worth of analysis broken down by category of how many litigation matters we've had by subgroup and the cost.*" The motion was seconded by Mr. Bradley and unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS:

Ms. Pereira moved to approve the 2018-19 school calendar. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

Mr. Illingworth move to approve the Delta-T contract. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic.

In response to a question, Dr. Johnson said the contract was reviewed by Shipman & Goodwin.

Mr. Bradley said the board went with a more expensive alternative on this bidding process. He said he did not know why we would ever go for a more expensive option for substitute teachers.

Supt. Johnson said the contract was for special education substitutes. Ms. Siegel said the contract is for primarily for substitute paraprofessionals and primarily in the special education area, not teachers. She said we provide substitute paraprofessional services for extended or long-term absences. Occasional absence are not covered.

Ms. Siegel said since the services are in a specialized area, we need a company that has extensive experience in the area and has an established pool of candidates.

Ms. Martinez left the meeting.

Ms. Siegel said both companies met basic qualifications, but it was the decision of the committee that Delta-T was superior in this particular area to Source 4 Teachers. She said a substitute paraprofessional through Delta-T costs \$20.50 per hour; the Source 4 Teachers' bid was lower.

In response to a question, Ms. Siegel said for this year about \$600,000 will be spent in this category. She said the expense includes temporary services to fill vacancies. She said deficit prevention mode includes a hiring freeze which involves placing highly qualified substitutes into vacancies. She said cost is not the only factor; the needs of our students are paramount in any consideration of a contract.

Ms. Siegel said Delta-T has been providing services to the district and it was determined by the committee that it was the superior bidder. In response to a question, John DiDonato, chief of specialized instructional reform, said he was a member of the committee and based on the presentation and the track record as reported to him by principals that there were training aspects of the presentation that were superior with Delta-T.

Mr. Taylor said the new board should revisit the issue and see what the cost differences are.

Ms. Pereira said as someone who read every word of both bids, the difference between the proposals was significant. She said as

somebody who is a penny-pincher, Delta-T should get this contract. She said the Source 4 Teacher submission did not mention IEPs once in their proposal. She said it is critical that we have people who are knowledgeable in this area due to litigation. The substitutes have to make sure the IEP is followed.

Ms. Pereira said the district had had major issues with Source 4 Teachers, including a substitute who did not have legal paperwork to work in the United States who sexually assaulted students.

Mr. Bradley said we're hearing general lofty ideas with no specifics. He said when the issue was discussed earlier he gave the example of a Mercedes dealership which would provide the features of different models, while the people who have sat on the committee have not given specific language on why more money should be spent on Delta-T.

Mr. Illingworth said there are some issues with Source 4 Teachers. He said when it comes to educating special needs student there isn't a dollar amount.

Mr. Bradley said there had been allegations of special education children being abused in the district. He wondered if any of the incidents involved Delta-T personnel.

Mr. Illingworth said oftentimes we budget for a certified teacher in a classroom and if the teacher leaves during the school year, we fill the position with a long-term substitute to save money. He said this was especially an issue in special education.

Mr. Sokolovic said we can't be penny-wise and pound-foolish. If we accept a lesser quality product or company and they mess up, it exposes the board to liability. He noted costs may only be 20 to 25 percent of the factors that go into the selection of a vendor. He said this RFP was vetted by a committee that looked at five or six attributes and rated the proposals.

Mr. Bradley said he'd like to hear specifics, not vague terms, as to why this firm was the better choice. He said the board had not heard the specifics on why it was better.

Mr. DiDonato said the one area where Delta-T was much stronger was in their training program. They had a stronger presentation in how comprehensive and informed their training program was in terms of current legislation and good practice. He said this aspect led him to come to his opinion. He added Delta-T was stronger in the area of professional development.

Mr. Taylor said he hadn't see proof in the pudding. He said If Delta-T is willing to match the competitor's price he wouldn't have a problem awarding the contract.

Ms. Pereira said she was stunned at the incompetent proposals of Source 4 Teachers

Ms. Pereira moved "*to approve the Delta T contract.*" The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic. The motion was approved by 5-2 vote. Voting in favor were members Illingworth, Pereira, Weldon, Allen, and Sokolovic. Voting in opposition were members Bradley and Taylor.

The next item was on the substitute teacher staff services RFP. Dr. Johnson noted the Source 4 Teachers' contract will expire.

Ms. Pereira moved "*to approve the proposal to substitute teacher staff services RFP.*" The motion was seconded by Mr. Illingworth.

Mr. Taylor asked if Source 4 Teachers would be precluded from bidding on the RFP due to the molestation incident. He wondered why this would be the case. Ms. Pereira said Mr. Taylor just wanted them to get the previous contract. Mr. Taylor said he would remove his foot from his mouth now.

Mr. Weldon said he believed all qualified firms would be allowed to make a submission, but any past performance would factor into the scoring.

Mr. Sokolovic asked the RFP be reviewed to include the total number of schools covered.

The motion was unanimously approved.

Ms. Pereira moved “*to establish a naming committee for the new Harding High School football field.*” The motion was seconded by Ms. Allen and unanimously approved.

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

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

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

Approved by the board on February 26, 2018