

Monday, March 12, 2018 [Corrected]

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held March 12, 2018, at Bridgeport Regional Aquaculture Science & Technology Education Center, 60 St. Stephens Road, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 6:33 p.m.

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

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

### **RECOGNITIONS:**

Dr. Johnson said in honor of Black History Month the Bridgeport Chapter of the NAACP sponsored an essay contest on the life and legacy of Carter G. Woodson. Harding student Karim Alveranga, Alexandra Vazquez of Central High, and a Grade 8 student from High Horizons Magnet School, Emani Sevance, were chosen as submitting the best essays. Dr. Melissa Jenkins, director of literacy, said Carter G. Woodson was the founder of black history.

Emani read her essay. She said Mr. Woodson was born in 1875, at a time of segregation. He received a doctorate from Harvard. She said she was motivated by his life to graduate from an HBCU college.

Karim Alveranga said Woodson was the second African-American graduate from Harvard and was the author of *The Miseducation of the Negro*. He said Woodson created Black History Week, later expanding into Black History Month. He said it was the personal responsibility of him and his peers to do our best at everything we do. He said at Harding we read a daily announcement about heroes, heroines and pioneers who contributed to black history. He said his goal is to gain entry to Johns Hopkins University and to become a

neuroscientist. He said he agreed with Woodson that there was not much discrimination against superior talent.

Dr. Jenkins acknowledged Ms. Vazquez for being the other first-place winner.

Dr. Johnson said Dr. Jenkins and Alicia Robinson planned for many months the black history celebration held at City Hall, which had wonderful performances by the children. Members of Carter G. Woodson's family were present at the event.

Security Guard Gilbert James from Park City Magnet School was honored. Principal Terese McGuire recognized Mr. James for helping a female student who began choking during lunch. He administered the Heimlich maneuver and spoke to the students and kept them calm.

Dr. Johnson said the Classical Studies Magnet Academy cheerleading squad won the elementary division at a competition held in February at Danbury High School. The cheerleaders performed a cheer for the board and audience.

Principal Helen Giles said the team was formed in October and November by Christina Hatchet. The team practices very hard every Tuesday night. Ms. Hatchet said the program is funded by the parents of the cheerleaders.

## **STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS:**

Jarrisa Collado of Central High reported on her school. Among the items she highlighted were SAT preparations, boys' basketball advancing to the second round of the state tournament, the successful Family Literacy Night and the March focus on attendance.

Dafne Hernandez of Bridgeport Military Academy reported on her school. Among the items she highlighted were tomorrow's Black History celebration, a student who received a scholarship to Bryant University and a student committee that will lead a walkout and remembrance ceremonies for Stoneman Douglas High School victims.

Stella Fajimolu of Bassick High reported on her school. Among the items she highlighted were the SAT testing, the girls' basketball team's loss in the first round of the state playoffs, the boys' basketball team's number three ranking in the state, and a financial aid for college event.

Mr. Weldon said Spanish translation services were available.

Jeniell Edmonds of the Aerospace School at Fairchild Wheeler reported on her school. Among the items she highlighted were the Quarter 2 awards, increased overall performance across the school, the finalists from the school who went to the state science fair, and the students selected to attend Math Con finals in Chicago in May.

Elena Bell of the IT School at Fairchild Wheeler reported on her school. Among the items she highlighted were Exhibition Day, SAT testing for juniors on March 21st, faculty research day and the public library's distribution of library cards to all students

Shanoye Ho-Sang of Harding High reported on her school. Among the items she highlighted were the boys' basketball team's first round victory in the state tournament and their loss in the second round to Enfield, tryouts for spring sports, the five students who performed at the Kennedy Center in Washington last weekend, and after-school enrichment.

Numa Chowdry of the Biotech School at Fairchild Wheeler reported on her school. Among the items she highlighted were the school's receipt of a merit award from the Magnet Schools of America, the upcoming SAT testing, students who competed in the state science fair, and March 14th's student-led walkout.

Mr. Sokolovic invited the student reps to attend the Students & Families Committee meetings, the next one being on March 15th.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Crystal Aquirre, a Harding High student and a youth leader at Make

the Road Connecticut, spoke on the issue of mental health in the schools. She said the schools do not publicize the availability of mental health help for students. She said teachers and faculty should be trained to be sensitive to mental health students. She added that Dr. Johnson met with her group and agreed to walk with her to school in order to understand what they have to go through.

Mr. Weldon said Dr. Johnson had distributed to the board a summary of her discussion with Make the Road Connecticut.

Colleen Briganti, a literary coach, said she was one of the remaining ten literacy coaches in the district. She said cutting the literacy coaches is not a viable solution to budget issues. She said the coaches cost \$1 million out of the \$240 million budget. She said the coaches provided state-mandated professional development, attend teaching planning, review student data, model literacy strategies, mentor new teachers and long-term subs, and engage in intervention options.

Alfreda Profit said the kids did an amazing job for the Black History program. She said her son loves sports and dance. She said Dr. Williams was doing a great job at Bassick.

Chaila Robinson urged there be recognition of parents at the meetings. She also requested there be a simple e-mail to acknowledge the parents who speak and express concerns at board meetings. She reported on a parent who said she felt very belittled and disrespected by the district office she called concerning an issue with her son.

Mary Tracy spoke on safety in the schools. She said the board laid off the SROs, but she is seeing new SROs. She said the old ones should have been kept. She said police officers should walk around in the schools.

Clyde Nicholson said principals have a lot of responsibility and should run their schools. He said people were trying to undermine the work of the principal at Bassick. He urged the principal be given a chance to do his job. He said he has heard similar attacks on Supt. Johnson.

Crystal Mack said the children were familiar with the SROs who used to work in the school buildings. She said schools are not a jail facility. She praised the black history play at Bassick and she questioned why Channel 12 and the news media were not there. She urged the board to remember what they're signing off on.

Chelimar Felix Garcia, a student at Bassick, said a gym teacher at the school said inappropriate things to her and she reported the incident to Mr. Benejan. She said she called her mother and then her father called the school's principal. She said her family did not receive a return phone call. She said other students also began to speak up as well, particularly about the constant references to sexual things.

Ms. Pereira asked Dr. Johnson to have someone step into the hall to speak to the student. Ms. Allen said she didn't see the how teacher got away with this if the principal is checking the lessons plans of the teacher. Mr. Weldon said the personnel office should be allowed to look into the matter.

Tammy Bogdanyi said she attended a wonderful Facilities Committee meeting at BMA last week. She said she heard the school was being considered as a facility to house Classical Studies Magnet Academy. She said BMA has been through five administrations and three or four different buildings. She encouraged the board to look for other locations for Classical Studies.

Albert Benejan, PTSO president at Bassick, said without parents there is no board, no schools and no principals. He said the Parent Convention would be held on May 30th at Housatonic Community College. He said the school needs more security and more custodians. He said he was a person with a disability, but the school does not have a ramp. He said he was unable to walk around the school to sign in. He said the election for PTSO at Bassick is being run wrong.

Mr. Bradley arrived at the meeting.

Ladondra Maddox, a member of Faith Acts, thanked Mr. Lischner for taking quick action. She said she was working with Principal Douglas at Claytor Magnet.

Sam Simons, the development manager for T-Mobile in the state, said he oversees the location and construction of cell sites. He said T-Mobile would like to reiterate its interest in the site at Hallen School. He said the proposed rent is \$30,000 a year, payable monthly, with a three percent increase annually. He said the company could bypass an option agreement and go straight to a lease agreement, with payments to commence when all zoning and other permits are in place. He said he would like to continue discussions about the lease with the city attorney's office.

Ms. Pereira asked that the matter come back to the Facilities Committee. She requested the Hallen School parents and staff be notified. Mr. Weldon said the contract was currently with the board's counsel. Mr. Simons said his point was to let the board know T-Mobile was interested in the property and was committed to trying to resolve the issues.

Karen Jackson said she was speaking as a parent. She said her son does not qualify for bus transportation. She said she was confused by the coding system that was used because it differs from Google Maps. She described the walk her son must make to arrive at school at 7:15. She also urged the board vote to bring back the District PAC.

JoAnn Kennedy highlighted positive things at Bassick High. She said she bought two books for Dr. Johnson for reading over spring break. She praised the books of Sophronia Scott, *The Unforgivable Love* and *This Child of Faith*, and described Ms. Scott's recent visit to Bassick and the fundraising event at Barnes & Noble.

### **APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES:**

Ms. Pereira moved approval of the minutes of the Regular Meeting of February 26, 2018 with corrections. The corrections were noted. The motion was seconded by Mr. Walker. The motion was approved by a 7-0 vote. Voting in favor were members Walker, Weldon, Illingworth, Martinez, Bradley, Allen and Sokolovic. Ms. Pereira and Mr. Taylor abstained.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS/REFERRALS:**

Mr. Taylor reported on the Facilities Committee. He said Bridgeport Military Academy will not be moving and he wants to make sure they get their washer and dryer and toilets. He said he wanted to make sure that Ms. Carbone's science teacher gets her stools. He said he would like to put the T-Mobile contract on the agenda of the next meeting.

In response to a question, Mr. Taylor said Principal Soares and Ms. Underhill are running a tight ship at Bridgeport Military Academy. They have purchased a washer and dryer and a solution was found to hook it up. Some unusable toilets will be replaced.

Dr. Johnson said the central office reached out to Ms. Carbone about the stools for High Horizons; Ms. Carbone has responded to the e-mail correspondence and it is moving forward.

Mr. Sokolovic said he had concerns about what occurred at the Facilities Committee meeting regarding information technology. He said Mr. Postolowski was instructed to prioritize certain projects in front of other projects, such as Waltersville being brought to the front of the line. He said it was a dangerous road for the committee to go down to reallocate resources when Mr. Postolowski is advocating against making changes. He suggested asking Mr. Postolowski if he was comfortable with making the change or if it was just undue pressure from the committee.

Ms. Pereira said it was important to note that no committee can make decisions for the full board. Whatever happens in committee has to come to the full board for decision.

Mr. Taylor said he meant he would not support BMA moving and noted Ms. Pereira's comment.

Mr. Weldon said Mr. Postolowski was not directed to do anything. There was a committee consensus and he subsequently reached out to Mr. Postolowski to explain that he was not being directed to do anything.

Mr. Taylor said Mr. Sokolovic, who was present at the meeting, did

not say anything at the committee level, but is now bringing it out in a public board. He said Mr. Postolowski wasn't ordered to do anything. He said all he gets is excuses from everybody not to do something and the children suffer. He said it was a simple fix and if Mr. Postolowski can't handle it, the board should find someone who can. He said Mr. Sokolovic should have brought this up at the meeting instead of sitting there twiddling his thumbs.

Mr. Sokolovic said he did speak at the meeting and Mr. Illingworth raised it as well. He noted he was not a member of the committee and did not have a vote, but was now bringing it up before the full board.

Mr. Weldon said Mr. Postolowski had his own understanding of what was important to the committee, but also with the understanding that it's up to him to prioritize his own work.

Mr. Illingworth said the issue revolved around power receptacles on the floor of the computer lab. He said he believed it was just an ask to see how much it would cost for an electrician to do the work.

In response to a question, IT director Jeffrey Postolowski said after discussion with Dr. Johnson there was a plan to overhaul the room and address the problem as time permitted. He said, as he discussed in committee, what we need to do is weigh the different priorities throughout the district. He said the only action he took was to evaluate where we are.

In response to a question, Mr. Postolowski said in his opinion there are other areas in the district that require attention first.

Mr. Taylor said this was being blown way out of proportion; it was a simple fix at Waltersville School. He said per usual the board wants to use bureaucratic red tape and nothing gets done. He said the board has a competent electrician on staff that he's spoken to that can get the power to the computers. He offered to personally pay for a wireless router if it was needed at Black Rock School. He said all he hears is excuses not to do something. He said he was also willing to hire an electrical contractor out of his own pocket to fix it.



Mr. Walker said we are a policy-making board, who hires a superintendent who hires people like Mr. Postolowski. He said he trusted Mr. Postolowski to prioritize what needs to be done first. He cautioned the board members against making statements that might be perceived as a demand.

Mr. Weldon said his impression was they were letting Mr. Postolowski be aware of something. He said if it appeared to be some sort of a directive, that was a misimpression.

Ms. Pereira made a follow-up referral on the SROs at athletic events to the Facilities Commission. Mr. Taylor said he thought we agreed were not paying for the coverage. Ms. Pereira said that never passed the full board. She noted Dr. Johnson met with Chief Perez and he stated it was not possible to stagger shifts.

Dr. Johnson said Chief Perez indicated staggering shifts was not an option.

Ms. Pereira asked that Dr. Johnson report back to the board on the total expenditure for the police department to cover athletic events.

Mr. Illingworth said Sgt. Collazo reported on the hiring of additional SROs. He wondered if this created the ability to stagger shifts.

Ms. Martinez reported on the Finance Committee. The next meeting will be on March 14th. She said MGM will make a presentation and there will be an effort to see if the board can obtain financial support from MGM.

Mr. Weldon said the Governance Committee will meet on March 19th

Mr. Walker reported on the Teaching and Learning Committee. The next meeting will be on March 20th.

Mr. Illingworth reported on the Personnel Committee. He said the committee would meet on March 21st.

In response to a question, Frank Chester, chief talent officer, said the last communication from the city Civil Service was that a test will be

administered in April for Custodian I.

Mr. Sokolovic reported on the Students and Families Committee. The next meeting will be on March 15th. He said District PAC issues would be discussed.

### **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT AND AGENDA:**

Dr Johnson said a school security forum was scheduled for tomorrow and will be rescheduled if weather does not permit.

Dr. Johnson said the Minds in Motion at Discovery Magnet School was extremely well attended. This year, unlike in the past, there was an overwhelming representation from Bridgeport students.

Principal Jay Lipp and teacher Len Lavallee reported on a Fairchild Wheeler group that will be traveling to Costa Rica in the April break. Mr. Lavallee said he distributed a packet to the board members. Nine students from the Biotech and Aerospace schools and two chaperones will travel for eight days. The students range from sophomores to seniors.

In response to a question, Mr. Lavallee said there are some concerns about Zika in Costa Rica, mainly affecting pregnant women. Mr. Lipp said the State Department website includes a caution about an active volcano, but the group will not be anywhere near it. He said the crime rate in the areas to be visited are minimal.

Mr. Lipp said the detailed releases used for a trip to Brazil can be also used for this trip. Dr. Johnson said she was sure they would be completed in time.

Mr. Walker said the students who went to Brazil did not report to the board via blogs and e-mails. He encouraged every effort be made to create a daily blog during this trip.

Mr. Lavallee said the company provides an international cellphone to communicate with parents.

Mr. Walker said it looks like a very thorough job was done in

preparation for the trip.

Mr. Taylor said he was confused. He thought the board just made policy. He said when he does something, it's not policy.

Mr. Bradley said it would be nice to have more information on the insurance provided by World Strides in terms of policy limits and per person/per incident information.

Ms. Martinez moved "*to approve this trip.*" The motion was seconded by Mr. Taylor.

The motion was approved by a 5-1 vote. Voting in favor were members Illingworth, Weldon, Sokolovic, Martinez and Taylor. Ms. Pereira was opposed. Mr. Bradley and Ms. Allen abstained. Mr. Walker was not present in the room.

Dr. Johnson asked that the permission slips be submitted within the next seven school days.

Ms. Pereira moved to approved personnel items II to VI. The motion was seconded by Ms. Martinez. The motion was approved by a 7-0 vote. Voting in favor were members Allen, Bradley, Martinez, Weldon, Illingworth, Sokolovic and Pereira. Mr. Taylor abstained. Mr. Walker was not present in the room.

Regarding Item I, Dr. Johnson said the agenda item included the appointment of Dr. Ricardo Rosa, the former math director, as a math teacher at Black Rock School at \$91,818 a year. Dr. Johnson said the item also included the appointment of Ms. Doherty, a retired Bridgeport educator, as a math teacher.

Dr. Johnson said the district has looked for certified persons for these slots and was not able to find anyone. In response to a question, Mr. Chester said he was not aware of any long-term subs teaching math at the high school level.

Ms. Pereira said you either work or you retire. Dr. Johnson said Dr. Rosa retired in the fall of 2017. Ms. Pereira said she liked Mr. Rosa, but it was the broader issue of double-dipping and asked if that was

fair to taxpayers, especially for elementary math teachers. Dr. Johnson said math certification was for Grades 7 to 12. She said the district has looked for teachers and has not been able to fill these slots even though it is March.

Dr. Johnson said the appointments do not end June 30th and they will be considered new people in those positions.

Mr. Taylor said he agreed with Ms. Pereira. He said this is why the district is broke and hemorrhaging cash. He said this has been a past practice and Mr. Wallack is living proof of it.

Ms. Pereira moved *"to approve Roman numeral I with the caveat that Rita Doherty and Ricardo Rosa are effective through June 30th, 2018, and that in order for them to continue into next year it needs to come back to this board."* The motion was seconded by Ms. Allen.

Ms. Pereira noted it was hard to find teachers at the end of the school year and we have to think about what's best for the students. She said her daughter had nine different math teachers in the 7th grade, a critical foundation year for high school math.

Mr. Taylor said he doesn't know how diligent a search the board makes for teachers. He said it's easier to just hire one of your friends back. He said he sees right through this and it is a sham pleading.

In response to a question, Dr. Johnson said the hiring freeze did not apply to shortage areas.

Ms. Pereira said she wanted to remind Mr. Taylor that we significantly underpay our teachers compared to every surrounding town, as much as \$10,000 less for starting teachers. She said there are exceptions to every rule and urged the board make an exception until June 30th.

Mr. Taylor said he believed you can hire some teachers out there for \$91,000. He said he would approve of the hires until June.

The motion was approved by a 8-1 vote. Voting in favor were members Bradley, Allen, Taylor, Martinez, Weldon, Sokolovic, Walker and Pereira. Mr. Illingworth voted in opposition.

## **OLD BUSINESS:**

The next item was on discussion and possible action on the legal services RFQ. Mr. Weldon said information was provided by the superintendent concerning past legal bills.

Ms. Pereira said she thought we were looking at hiring in-house attorneys. Mr. Weldon said one does not prevent the other. He said how much the board uses an outside provider is up to the board.

Ms. Pereira said the board debated whether the city attorney language was going to be inserted in the RFQ. She asked if the RFQ included giving the city attorney a say in the choice. Mr. Weldon said the previous motion to include the language failed.

Mr. Illingworth moved *“to discuss and possible action on the RFQ for outside legal services.”* The motion was seconded by Ms. Martinez.

Mr. Illingworth said we should explore the cost to hire our own attorney because we do pay a lot of money for legal services, but we will need outside counsel. He said the current contract expired last May and urged the board see what happens with the RFQ and then the board can make a decision.

Ms. Pereira said this firm has charged us as much as \$92,000 for one month of legal representation, which was outrageous. She said a bigger concern was the language that the city attorney wants in the RFQ that they have a say in our attorney. She said statutes are clear that the city cannot spend one dollar of Board of Education money.

Mr. Weldon said the language was hashed out between the board's business manager and City Attorney Bohannon.

Mr. Taylor said he had purchase orders and the board paid Koskoff, Koskoff, Bieder \$700,000 on November 2nd, which wasn't included in the bills that Dr. Johnson provided. He said the board also paid \$50,000 to Pullman & Comley; \$60,000 to Levin & DeLuca and \$125,000 to the Norwalk Law Group. He said this amounted to another \$1 million that wasn't disclosed to the board. Ms. Pereira said

we knew about the \$700,000.

Mr. Taylor said this was money not going to the kids.

Mr. Bradley said the RFQ allows three board members, the chief talent officer and a member of the city attorney's office to be on a committee to vet the RFQs. The board will vote as to who we want to have the contract.

Mr. Illingworth said that's exactly what we did three years ago. Ms. Pereira said three years ago the city attorney did not sign the contract. She said in the RFQ it is stated that the city attorney's office is intending to sign the contract. She said three years ago the contract was signed by Ms. Baraka and Shipman & Goodwin only.

Dr. Johnson said from her best recollection that the city attorney wanted to be at the table, but not sign the contract.

It was noted the board members had not received the RFQ in their packets for the meeting. Mr. Illingworth said the RFQ was in the board packet for the February 12th meeting.

Ms. Pereira said the RFQ says the evaluation committee will score the proposals. The committee will consist of the board as a committee of the whole, the Bridgeport city attorney, the superintendent or designee, chief financial officer, executive director of human resources, manager of business operations, and chief of specialized instruction.

Mr. Bradley said it clearly says the committee is going to rate the responses and then it will be brought to the board for the final decision.

Ms. Pereira noted the 12/21/17 version of the RFQ did not have language about the city charter. She said she was fine with this version.

Mr. Bradley said we are equivocating on this on the basis that the city attorney is allegedly going to take over this board and tell us who we're going to hire. He said that's not actual, legal or what's before

us. The board is going to select its own attorneys.

Mr. Walker recommended the matter be postponed because it is not clear which version of the RFQ the board is voting on.

Mr. Illingworth withdrew his motion.

Mr. Illingworth moved to postpone the matter to the next regular meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Martinez and unanimously approved.

Ms. Pereira requested the RFQ be provided to the board in the next packet.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

The next item was on the Connecticut Department of Education addendum to agreement for child nutrition programs. Sharlene Wong, director of food and nutrition services, said every year the board is required to vote whether they would like to participate in the healthy foods certification program. The district has participated since 2006. The program regulates the food sold to students outside of the reimbursable meals. The district gets approximately 10 cents per lunch served.

In response to a question, Ms. Wong said the board loses \$320,000 if it does not approve the agreement.

Ms. Wong said a second vote would determine whether or not to have a waiver to serve items that are not on the healthy food certification list thirty minutes after school for things such as athletic events or fundraisers.

Mr. Walker moved "*we approve the agreement for the Child Nutrition Program, the HFC.*" The motion was seconded by Ms. Martinez and unanimously approved.

Mr. Walker moved that "*we apply for the waiver, the exemption, so that our students may participate in the after-school part of this program.*" The motion was seconded by Ms. Pereira and unanimously

approved.

Ms. Wong said there needed to be a beverage waiver should the board wish to serve things like Gatorade, soda or hot cocoa for after-school events.

Mr. Walker moved that "*we approve the beverage waiver.*" The motion was seconded by Ms. Martinez and unanimously approved.

Mr. Taylor moved "*to add to the agenda possibly discussing the PTSO election with Bassick until we do an investigation of what's going on over there.*" He said he did not hear one positive thing from anybody that spoke about Bassick. The motion was seconded by Ms. Allen.

Ms. Pereira said several persons spoke positively about Bassick tonight.

Mr. Sokolovic said the board had no place in interfering with any elections on the parent level.

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

Mr. Taylor said he had reservations about deciding anything with Bassick. He said he heard about a sexual harassment that weighed heavy with him. He said Mr. Nicholson said someone was undermining Dr. Williams. He said we should look into things before any type of election takes place in Bassick.

Ms. Martinez said the PTSO elections at Bassick have been organized by the administration, which put together a committee. She said the elections are supposed to be parent-led. She said the election should be postponed in order to organize it correctly. She said there was never a prior election from 7:00 in the morning until 7:30 at night. She also raised questions about the ballot. She said the wrong person had been in charge of the election and it is now the board's place to take action.



Mr. Illingworth said the situation was tricky. He said he was concerned about the feedback that he received that indicates the elections are being run to make sure one person does not remain as president. He said he received a call from a staff member that indicated the principal has made comments that the main thing is to get a certain PTSO president removed.

Mr. Illingworth said most principals want nothing to do with PAC elections. He said the principal has tried to dictate from the top down the parameters of the election, including creating a nominating committee.

He said the parents should decide how to create a fair election.

Ms. Pereira said a sexual harassment complaint has nothing to do with a PTSO. She said board policy indicates the principal is responsible for a functioning PAC and PTSO. She said Bassick's PTSO only had two members, not the nine called for. She said there's nothing in the school PAC or PTSO bylaws that indicates how the nominating committee is created.

Ms. Pereira said due to the weather forecast it was unlikely the election would take place tomorrow in any event. She cautioned the board against interfering.

Mr. Sokolovic said the District PAC bylaws indicate the superintendent is required to facilitate and ensure the creation of a functional District PAC advisory council, a PAC for each K-8 school and a PTSO for each high school. He said this was traditionally done through the home-school coordinator, a position which no longer exists, but who was a district employee.

Mr. Sokolovic asked if anyone could speak on the Priority Grant requirements for parent engagement received by high schools.

Dr. Johnson said she wanted to help Bassick in the process, including creating a slate that was more legible and to set up shifts for the election process so that will be clean, equitable and fair. She said the process is designed to create equity.

Ms. Martinez said the parent engagement policy said the board and

superintendent must ensure that there is a functioning PTSO and PAC. She said we must ensure democracy and a fair process. She said the ballot that was created is not correct because one of the candidates listed for president is not running.

Ms. Martinez said some great things are happening at Bassick along with some serious concerns such as this election. She said they are trying to remove a particular parent now. She said she wanted to be present for the election.

Mr. Illingworth said the process was dictated by the principal without any input from parents. He said a principal should not make remarks about removing a parent from office.

Ms. Pereira said only parents vote in the election, so they make the decision.

Ms. Pereira asked how the election was rigged. Ms. Martinez said she would forward the ballot to Ms. Pereira. Mr. Illingworth said he was not saying it was rigged, but the integrity is in question.

Mr. Illingworth noted the policy about naming the Claytor School was not followed and an exception was made. He said that was an example of certain exceptions and this is another one.

Mr. Walker said he agreed there should be a fair procedure. He said Mr. Sokolovic had taken on the issue in his committee. He said the same rules should apply to all schools. He said it looks like the board is interfering in the procedure and it should not step into a process that has been going on for months.

Ms. Martinez said as a leadership team, Mr. Weldon, Mr. Illingworth and herself, have been in communication with Dr. Johnson about our concerns over Bassick High. She said the weather was going to cancel the election in any event.

Ms. Martinez moved *“to postpone the elections and to have an election from 4:00 to 8:00 with an assistant superintendent or Dr. Johnson or a central office staff member rather than any Bassick High School staff member, parent, community leader. It has to be*

*central office staff.*" The motion was seconded by Mr. Illingworth.

Ms. Pereira asked about parents who need to vote in the morning. Ms. Martinez said the parent engagement events are not typically in the morning. She added that PTSO elections had never been held for such a long period of time.

Mr. Sokolovic moved *"to amend the motion to include the same timetable that we have now, from 7:30 to 7:30."* He said we're trying to get more people to vote, not less people. He said all the parents are not going to be available during the shorter period for the election. Mr. Walker seconded the amendment.

Ms. Martinez said Dr. Johnson just shared with her that she has organized staff members that can oversee the elections that are not tied to Bassick.

Ms. Martinez said she was prepared to amend her motion to hold the election over the longer period of time.

Mr. Illingworth said he could support that, but *"he requested that central office reprint the ballots with the right parents on it, in different colored paper, and that each ballot is numbered."* He said he proposed that as an amendment. Mr. Walker seconded the amendment.

Dr. Johnson said when she met with staff last week the ballot was recreated and she identified staff to cover the twelve-hour window in three-hour shifts.

Mr. Taylor said a young lady came to the board and said she was sexually harassed and it doesn't really seem to bother anybody here. Ms. Martinez said we don't take that up here.

Ms. Pereira said she asked the superintendent to have staff speak with her and to contact her parents. Mr. Taylor said he did not realize that was done.

The vote on Mr. Illingworth's amendment to have the ballots reprinted, numbered and on a different colored paper was approved

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

The vote on Mr. Sokolovic's amendment to retain to 7:00 to 7:00 time period was approved by an 8-1 vote. Voting in favor were members Walker, Sokolovic, Weldon, Illingworth, Martinez, Taylor, Bradley and Allen. Ms. Pereira was opposed.

Ms. Martinez moved to amend her initial motion *"to not just exclude those staff members that will be overseeing this to central office, but leave it to the discretion of Dr. Johnson to staff it with who she knows is not staff at Bassick high school."* Mr. Sokolovic seconded the amendment. The amendment was approved by an 8-1 vote. Voting in favor were members Walker, Sokolovic, Weldon, Illingworth, Martinez, Taylor, Bradley and Allen. Ms. Pereira was opposed.

The main motion left was to postpone the election, at the time designated in the amendment, and to staff the election with administrative staff not tied to Bassick. Ms. Martinez said the motion would allow Dr. Johnson to reschedule the election at her discretion.

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

Mr. Walker moved *"to accept the RFP for the early learning center at the new high school being constructed at 379 Bond Street."* The motion was seconded by Ms. Pereira and unanimously approved.

Dr. Johnson thanked Ms. Vidal and Mr. Young for staying in attendance until we got to that item.

Ms. Pereira moved that *"we form a naming committee for the new high school being constructed at 379 Bond Street."* The motion was seconded by Mr. Bradley.

Mr. Illingworth asked for clarification on the policy on naming committees. He said he was concerned that the prior committee formed did not have any community meetings. He said this is a huge

deal and the committee should have multiple community meetings on this.

Mr. Taylor said Warren Harding was probably the worst president in U.S. history. He said his phone has rung off the hook with alumni who didn't feel this was advertised clearly. He said he had not received one call in favor of changing the name of Harding. He said we're late in the game. He added that his City Council people, Ms. Martinez and Mr. Newton, said they wanted to address the board on the issue. He said Mr. Newton said he was not in favor of changing the name of Harding.

Mr. Taylor said Harding had some great alumni, including Ms. Pereira. He said he was a man of the people and the people in his district said no.

Ms. Pereira said tonight's discussion was only about naming a committee. She said 73 percent of respondents to a *Connecticut Post* poll were against changing the name of Harding when it was proposed by Mayor Finch. She said Harding was a terrible president, but people don't love the school because of the president. She said graduates included Wes Matthews, John Bagley, Charles Smith and Geraldine Johnson, the first black female superintendent in the state.

Ms. Pereira said she liked Obama as a president, but his education policies nationally were a huge failure. He was very big on early childhood education and she said she would support naming the early childhood education center at the school after President Obama.

She noted his education secretary, Arne Duncan, was a close second to Betsy DeVos.

In response to a question, Alan Wallack said the plaque for inside the building has been ordered; the sign on the outside is still in design.

Mr. Taylor said he wanted time for Harding graduates and residents of the 138th and the 139th to weigh in before we name a committee.

Mr. Illingworth said he agreed and wanted to make sure we have true community involvement. He said the board could hold a public

hearing on this subject.

Mr. Bradley said the rules require the board to establish a committee to name a school. He said the committee would flesh out appropriate names by gathering input.

Mr. Bradley said a state prosecutor was in attendance who wanted to address the issue, who also indicated that Coach Bagley was open to the school being named Obama High. He said the point of the motion was to create the committee.

Ms. Pereira said she spoke to Mr. Bagley and he is totally opposed to renaming the school.

Ms. Pereira moved *“to suspend the rule, not to appoint a naming committee for the new high school.”* The motion was seconded by Mr. Taylor.

Mr. Bradley said there was no reason to suspend a rule to allow the community at large to voice their opinion about naming a school. He said it was the board’s obligation to hear what the public has to say.

Mr. Taylor said he has known Kevin Dunn all his life and added he used him as a lawyer in private practice in the past. He said Mr. Dunn did not go to Harding. He said Mr. Bradley seeking political office was sounding like a dictator. He said he was in favor of giving the public an opportunity to give their opinions. He said Harding High pride runs deep.

Mr. Sokolovic said he agreed with Mr. Bradley on creating the naming committee to avoid what is happening right now, with board members attached to certain names. He said the naming committee would give the board three names. He said right now we’re biasing the committee.

Mr. Taylor said it was not a bias and that was an outright lie.

Mr. Sokolovic said the board could hold a community forum as part of the community input. He said the name of the school is not going to affect the educational outcome of one student and the board should

not take up so much time on this issue.

Ms. Martinez asked why people would be upset with the agenda item when their advice can be part of the process. She said the process to be followed was going to be very organized.

Mr. Walker said if we suspend the rules we would need the board to sit as a committee of the whole and the chair would have to organize the public gatherings.

Ms. Pereira withdrew her motion. The withdrawal was seconded by Ms. Martinez.

The motion to name the naming committee was approved by a 8-0 vote. Voting in favor were members Pereira, Walker, Sokolovic, Illingworth, Weldon, Martinez, Bradley and Allen. Mr. Taylor abstained.

Ms. Pereira moved *"to form a naming committee for the early learning center at the new high school being constructed at 379 Bond Street."* The motion was seconded by Mr. Bradley and unanimously approved.

The next item was on establishing a naming committee to name the Central High gymnasium. Ms. Pereira said naming committees were for new construction, not renovations. Mr. Weldon said this came from the school itself to the superintendent's office.

Neil Kavey, retired director of athletics, health and physical education for the district, said Mr. Coleman, the athletic director, Principal Graf and Chris Johnson, director of athletics, were not available tonight.

Mr. Kavey said the wording of the item is incorrect. The gymnasium is the Ed Reilly Gymnasium. It is named after a legendary Central coach. He said Mr. Coleman's proposal was to name the court after Coach Barry McLeod, who has been the Central coach for 26 years. He said Coach McLeod was one of the greatest basketball players to come out of Bridgeport, an All-American player in college who was drafted by the Chicago Bulls. He started as an assistant coach at Sacred Heart and at Central has over 300 career wins, three league

championships, three state championships, and has been a mentor to hundred and hundreds of student athletes. He said Coach McLeod taught in the district for 36 years prior to retirement.

Ms. Pereira said she didn't know if there was a policy about renaming something that was not new construction.

Mr. Kavey said courts are named by putting the name in the floor. He said that had been done at the University of Bridgeport and the issue would come up at Harding as well in the future. He said the proposal was a collaborative idea from Central and Mr. Johnson on the district side.

In response to a question, Alan Wallack said the cost would not be covered by renovation costs. He said the cost might a couple thousand dollars or under.

Mr. Wallack said he believed the board voted in the past to name the court at Harding after Charlie Bentley. Ms. Pereira said she did not remember that.

Mr. Sokolovic said the budget was tight and it would have to come out of a classroom somewhere. He said it would have no impact on educational outcomes.

Mr. Weldon said paying for it is another issue and a fundraiser could be held. In response to a question, Mr. Kavey said he believed the funds could be raised for the expense and he could bring the idea to the Central administrators and Mr. Johnson.

Ms. Pereira moved *"to add to the agenda discussion and possible action to establish a committee to name the Central High School basketball court."* The motion was seconded by Mr. Walker and unanimously approved.

Ms. Pereira moved *"to establish a naming committee for the Central High School basketball court."* The motion was seconded by Mr. Walker. The motion was approved by an 8-1 vote. Voting in favor were members Pereira, Walker, Illingworth, Weldon, Martinez, Allen, Bradley and Taylor. Mr. Sokolovic was opposed.



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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

*Approved by the board on March 26, 2018*