

Monday, March 25, 2019 [Corrected]

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held March 25, 2019, at Cesar Batalla School, 606 Howard Avenue, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 5:33 p.m. Present were Chair John Weldon, Vice President Jessica Martinez, Secretary Joseph Sokolovic, Joseph Lombard, Hernan Illingworth, Maria Pereira and Sybil Allen. Chris Taylor arrived subsequently as noted.

Supt. Dr. Aresta L. Johnson was present.

The first agenda item was discussion and possible action concerning the E-Rate contracts.

Jeffrey Postolowski, director of ITS, was present.

Ms. Martinez noted Mr. Postolowski had previously presented the matter at the Finance Committee.

Ms. Martinez moved to "*pass this E-Rate.*" The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic.

Mr. Postolowski said the contract covered fiber plant and Internet connectivity. He said every year requests are submitted to the federal government as part of the E-Rate program and they pay 90 percent of the bill.

Mr. Postolowski said CEN is typically the winner in school districts in Connecticut on the Internet side and Crown Castle typically wins the fiber contract.

The motion was unanimously approved.

Ms. Pereira raised a point of order that under the bylaws the chair has sole discretion to cancel a regular or special meeting if in the chair's judgment it is deemed that doing so would be in the best interests of the public, staff or board members as it relates to inclement weather, potential lack of a quorum or lack of sufficient information to efficiently conduct business. She said none of these apply tonight and asked if Mr. Weldon violated his own board policy. Mr. Weldon said he did not and it was not a topic of discussion at a special meeting. He said he was ruling that he followed the policy.

Mr. Taylor arrived at the meeting.

The next agenda item was on an MOU with Dr. Melissa Jenkins.

Dr. Johnson noted the MOU was presented in the Personnel Committee and included the dollar amount for Dr. Jenkins performing two supervisory roles in pre-K and as literacy director. The agreement expires at the end of June 2019.

Dr. Johnson said Dr. Jenkins was on her way to the meeting.

Ms. Martinez said she will follow the team on this, however, a lot of staff members in the district are doing a lot more with less such as the athletic directors. She said if this is done for Dr. Jenkins, the board may have to compensate other staff members accordingly.

Mr. Sokolovic said this was an additional role that is defined in the BCAS contract. There is a separate job title for the

director of early childhood. He said the early childhood position had been eliminated.

Mr. Weldon said the precedent is already there that when people are in union-classified jobs and they take on an added responsibilities their union typically tries to negotiate something.

Mr. Illingworth said he agreed a lot of staff are doing more with less and he questioned rewarding one person and not others. He said he didn't know where the money was coming from and he was opposed.

Mr. Taylor said he would not be supporting the proposal. He said it was an insult to everybody else that's picked up the slack in the district, including paras, cafeteria workers, teachers, security officers and principals. He said he didn't believe anybody should get any special treatment.

Ms. Pereira said there was precedent for this when Michael Testani was paid additional money for taking on an additional role. She said Dr. Johnson and Terri Carroll, who were not in a union, got additional money when there was a merger of positions.

Ms. Pereira said two whole departments were merged into one position. She said the athletic directors in the high schools had been given additional money for picking up responsibilities from the district athletic director. She said the board saved over \$100,000, plus benefits, by eliminating the director of early childhood. She said Dr. Jenkins picked up all that work for \$8,000.

Mr. Sokolovic said we're not spending \$8,000, but we're saving over \$120,000. He said the work had been picked up

by Dr. Jenkins in good faith. He said good faith needs to be rewarded.

Mr. Weldon said the only difficult part he has is typically this would be done at the beginning of Dr. Jenkins assuming the additional responsibilities. He noted she had been doing the work for six months.

Mr. Sokolovic said Dr. Jenkins taking on the role without an agreement in place should be rewarded.

Ms. Pereira said Dr. Jenkins wanted to be compensated, but the BCAS union was objecting to the arrangement and looking to negotiate something else. She said Dr. Jenkins was caught in the middle of the fight. Dr. Johnson said it was correct that the union did not want to advocate for Dr. Jenkins at that time.

Dr. Johnson noted Dr. Jenkins holds the certification for early childhood as well as the literacy certification. She said Dr. Jenkins had done an outstanding job, especially in filling all pre-K seats. She said the union has since had a change of heart and came forward with the MOU.

Ms. Martinez said she honored Dr. Jenkins for taking on the role without getting the compensation. She said \$8,000 seemed like a tiny amount to sacrifice given the amount we are saving.

Ms. Pereira said early childhood and literacy have a synergy that makes sense to consolidate. Dr. Johnson said she knew Dr. Jenkins held the early childhood certification and asked her to work with her on this.

Ms. Martinez moved “*to pass the MOU with Dr. Melissa Jenkins.*” The motion was seconded by Ms. Pereira.

The motion was approved by a 6-2 vote.

Voting in favor were members Allen, Martinez, Pereira, Sokolovic, Weldon and Lombard. Mr. Illingworth and Mr. Taylor were opposed.

Mr. Taylor said his constituents contacted him about rumors about Dr. Johnson leaving. Ms. Pereira said the matter was not on the agenda.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 5:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

Approved by the board on April 8, 2019