

Wednesday, October 28, 2020

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held October 28, 2020, by video call, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 5:34 p.m. Present were members Chair John Weldon, Secretary Bobbi Brown, Joseph Sokolovic, Joseph Lombard, Albert Benejan, Sybil Allen, and Jessica Martinez. Chris Taylor joined the meeting subsequently as noted.

Mr. Weldon said the meeting is related to the resignation of Vice Chair Hernan Illingworth, which occurred via e-mail yesterday morning.

Mr. Weldon said the board would have to elect a new vice chair to ensure succession planning purposes and establish a timeline to fill Mr. Illingworth's position on the board.

Mr. Weldon said the city charter and the board's bylaws state that the board has 30 days to solicit and select someone to fill the vacancy. If that does not take place, the mayor has the responsibility of filling the position.

Mr. Weldon said he had a proposed timeline based on past procedures when Mr. Bradley and Mr. Walker resigned. He said Mr. Illingworth indicated he remained a Democrat, so the seat needs to be filled with a Democrat.

Mr. Weldon said he contacted the registrar of voters to confirm the party affiliation of Mr. Illingworth and all other board members. He said he did not receive a response from the registrar of voters today, so he asked each board

member to identify their party affiliations. Identifying as Democrats were Ms. Allen, Mr. Benejan, Ms. Brown, and Ms. Martinez. Identifying as Republicans were Mr. Lombard, Mr. Weldon, and Mr. Sokolovic. Mr. Weldon said he was assuming Mr. Taylor remained a Republican. He said the composition of the board was such that Mr. Illingworth's seat would be filled by a Democrat.

The first agenda item was election of a vice chair. Mr. Weldon said votes could be submitted to Ms. Valle online or members could make an oral vote at the meeting.

Mr. Weldon said it was important to have officer roles consistently filled, particularly given the problems that would result if he was incapacitated.

Mr. Sokolovic nominated Ms. Brown for vice chair. Mr. Weldon noted Ms. Brown, if elected, would have to vacate the office of secretary, and there would have to be a vote for that position at another time.

Mr. Lombard nominated Mr. Sokolovic for vice chair. Mr. Benejan nominated Ms. Martinez for vice chair.

Mr. Sokolovic said he would decline the nomination.

Ms. Valle said a form to vote was sent to each member's Board of Education e-mail address.

Ms. Martinez and Mr. Lombard said they could not access the link. Mr. Weldon said they could vote orally.

Mr. Taylor joined the meeting.

Mr. Taylor said he was able to access the e-mailed ballot. Ms. Valle confirmed she received five e-mailed ballots.

Ms. Allen voted orally for Ms. Brown. Mr. Lombard voted orally for Ms. Brown. Ms. Martinez voted orally for Ms. Martinez.

Ms. Valle read off the electronic ballots. Voting for Ms. Martinez were Mr. Benejan and Mr. Taylor. Voting for Ms. Brown were Mr. Sokolovic, Mr. Weldon, Ms. Brown, and Mr. Lombard.

Mr. Weldon said the vote was 5-3 in favor of Ms. Brown.

The next agenda item was to establish a timeline and process to fill the board vacancy created by Mr. Illingworth's resignation.

Mr. Weldon said he sent everyone a copy of a proposed timeline, process, and solicitation advertisement.

Mr. Weldon said the proposal is applications must be received by November 18th. They will include a resume and a cover letter. From November 18th to the 20th the superintendent's office would schedule interview times with applicants at a Special Meeting on November 23rd. There would be an executive session to discuss the interviews and a vote in public session at the Regular Meeting on November 23rd to select the new board member. The selected applicant would be sworn in on that day and begin attending meetings.

Mr. Weldon said the superintendent's office would verify the Democratic party affiliation and forward resumes to the

board members as they come in. Board members could ask one question of each applicant during the interview.

Mr. Weldon read the proposed solicitation advertisement. It noted the selected individual will fill the vacancy until November 30, 2021. Applicants are required to be a registered voter and a resident of Bridgeport. Only applicants affiliated with the Democratic party will be considered and such affiliation must be in effect for not less than 90 days as of the date of the appointment to the board, with the exception of first-time voter registrants.

Mr. Weldon's proposal described the duties of board members and the process for applying for the position.

Mr. Sokolovic said because the opening is for a Democrat more time may be needed for interviews. He suggested leaving the exact time of interviews of November 23d to be determined. The other board members did not indicate any objection or questions.

Mr. Weldon said typically there is one advertisement in the *Connecticut Post* as well as the district's website, but he would leave that up to the superintendent. Mr. Sokolovic requested the *Post* and other community organizations with paywalls provide free advertisements.

Mr. Weldon said he believed there would be enough publicity by those interested in the board to make people aware of the opening.

Ms. Allen moved "*to follow the timeline and process as outlined by Mr. Weldon just now with the caveat that there will be no specific time determined at this point for the*

*interviews.*” The motion was seconded by Mr. Benejan and unanimously approved.

Mr. Weldon asked Ms. Brown to send him an e-mail resigning her position as secretary. He suggested a short meeting to elect a secretary on Friday. There was a discussion of the timing of the meeting. It was agreed to hold the meeting this Friday at 5:30 p.m.

Mr. Sokolovic moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Benejan and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod