

Friday, April 27, 2018

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held April 27, 2018, at Bridgeport City Hall, 45 Lyon Terrace, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

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

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

The sole agenda item was the budget gap. Mr. Weldon said at the last special meeting the board expressed a desire to have certain items explored for savings, primarily contracted goods and services and costs related to central office.

Dr. Johnson said a budget gap plan was e-mailed to board members a few days ago.

Ms. Pereira said she hoped the board would set the ground rule that no idea is a bad idea and that nobody pass judgment because there's not a single thing that anybody's going to propose that is good for our children, parents and community. She said we were forced into this situation and we have to find \$13 million in savings.

Mr. Weldon said priorities needed to be set.

Ms. Pereira said she spent hours preparing for the meeting. She said she had been e-mailing with Ms. Siegel the entire day about suggestions.

Mr. Illingworth said the cuts have to start at central office. He noted some of the positions were brought back after previously being cut.

In response to a question about bumping rights, Dr. Johnson said assistant principals whose positions were eliminated would have the right to bump other assistant principals and those last into those positions would possibly go back into a teacher position. She said in the case of bumping a teacher the salary would only reduce by \$1,000 the first year. She said certifications also weigh into the process.

Mr. Illingworth said in that scenario the only money being saved is the salary of the teacher that was bumped. He asked if the savings numbers put forward were concrete.

Mr. Bradley arrived at the meeting.

Dr. Johnson said at some point such an employee would go back to a teacher's salary, the high end being about \$90,000. She said as we think about the current budget gap we need to think about sustainability because things will not improve next year.

Elizabeth Maurer, manager of budget and financial reporting, said she could get more information on how the \$900,000 figure for the assistant principal cut was determined.

Mr. Illingworth said at some point many years ago assistant principals worked ten months. He said that amounts to around \$20,000 per assistant principal. Dr. Johnson said that would be subject to negotiation with the BCAS union. She said in 2018-19 the negotiation process with BCAS will begin again. Ms. Pereira said the BEA negotiation process would not take place next year. Dr. Johnson said some assistant principals are currently ten months.

Mr. Sokolovic noted his school has 536 students and has been without an assistant principal for two years, while the metrics have increased. He said he would be inclined to put the instructional coaches ahead of the assistant principals.

Ms. Pereira said the current budget was just posted by Ms. Siegel on April 26th.

In response to a question, Ms. Maurer said the projected deficit of \$6 million for the current fiscal year was the result of an accounting issue with MUNIS.

Ms. Pereira said until the board gets to \$13 million nothing should come off the budget gap plan.

Dr. Johnson recommended the board start with the draft document from April 24th to help guide the conversation. In response to a question, she said the plan now includes two assistant superintendents, the athletic director, and the facilitator of the National Network of Partnership Schools.

In response to a question, Ms. Maurer said there were 38 music teachers, some of which are shared between schools. Dr. Johnson said music is an elective and also part of the state's accountability index.

Mr. Illingworth said music was not a requirement at the elementary level. Dr. Johnson noted the Turnaround Arts program requires a turnaround arts director for the six schools that participate.

Nadira Clarke, director of grants development and management, said the position is a director of visual and performing arts as well as program director of Turnaround Arts for the district. She said the district will be signing an agreement to add Bryant School to Turnaround Arts and this requires a local program director.

In response to a question, Ms. Maurer said there are two family and consumer science teachers, one of whom is retiring. Dr. Johnson said the teachers were at Harding.

Ms. Martinez arrived at the meeting.

In response to a question, Dr. Johnson said the \$352,000 line item for homebound is students who have medical issues that prohibit them from coming to school. Teachers provide lessons and work for the students.

Ms. Pereira said she did not believe the district was mandated to

have athletics. Dr. Johnson said we have to have physical education.

Ms. Pereira said it would be a disturbing suggestion but she would recommend eliminating all athletics if we have to. She said many other districts have pay to play, although it would not be good for a community like Bridgeport. She asked the board consider choosing educators and classrooms before athletics.

Dr. Johnson noted athletics are opportunities to get scholarships to college. She said her son played organized sports at school from the time he was four.

Ms. Pereira said the elimination of athletics and the director would save about \$1 million. She said if we give parents time they can engage in fund-raising and the like by the fall.

Ms. Martinez said she was uncomfortable with removing athletics and the arts due to its impact on students' future. She said she was in the marching band and played softball at Central High.

There was a discussion of the way to proceed through the budget.

Mr. Weldon noted the city's contribution and furlough days were wildcards.

In response to a question, Ms. Maurer said based on enrollment projections and other factors it is believed the consolidation of teacher positions will result in a reduction of six positions throughout the district.

Ms. Pereira moved to "*approve the consolidation of teacher positions.*" The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

Ms. Martinez moved to "*approve the seven items listed under district office.*" The motion was seconded by Mr. Bradley.

Mr. Bradley said he believed we could do without the director of performing arts and the arts could be run school to school and classroom to classroom. He said the early childhood director, the

director of psychology, the nursing director, and the assistant in the nurse's department could also be eliminated. Ms. Maurer said the assistant was a clerical position. She said the director of nurses supervises nurses, administration of medicine throughout the district and evaluates requests regarding homebound students. Dr. Johnson said the director does extensive work with medically fragile students also.

In response to a question, Ms. Maurer noted there were 36 nurses in the district. Mr. Bradley questioned whether a director was needed to manage 36 people.

Mr. Bradley said in the talent office there are three people who make over \$100,000. He said we could perhaps do without the assistant director.

Mr. Bradley said a lot of corporations had outsourced payroll functions.

Mr. Sokolovic said cutting the arts director was not a good idea because the position is covering the six Turnaround Arts schools. He said with NGSS(Next Generation Science Standards) turning STEM into STEAM the arts are going to be integral.

Mr. Weldon asked if arts needed its own standalone director as opposed to it falling under an assistant superintendent. Ms. Clarke said the Turnaround Arts director was per diem in that position, although the district is required to have a full-time person, and she is essentially performing three jobs. She said they wanted a full-time individual standalone person for Turnaround Arts and we just didn't have the money.

Ms. Pereira said the district used to have a director for visual arts and a director for performing arts and it was merged into one position and then totally eliminated. Ms. Maurer said the position was covered fully by the Alliance Grant.

Ms. Pereira said we're probably the largest district in the state that doesn't have a director of guidance, which is critical for getting students into college. She noted the director was eliminated in

November.

Ms. Pereira said psychologists were critical and the director should not be eliminated. She said we don't need more police and security guards, instead the district should have more social workers and psychologists. Ms. Martinez said we have RULER. Ms. Pereira said a principal is not a licensed psychologist and questioned how they could evaluate psychologists.

Mr. Bradley said there are people who supervise doctors who aren't doctors. Ms. Martinez said she agreed with all of Mr. Bradley's suggestion except the visual and performing arts director.

Ms. Martinez said she was a champion of RULER, which is paid by a grant, but it is not being used throughout the district. She said she sat in on a meeting related to a student being bullied and saw an ineffective central office administrator.

Mr. Bradley noted the court system asks for lay people to determine whether doctors have committed an act of malpractice or a criminal act. He said principals should evaluate psychologists.

Mr. Sokolovic said he agreed with going line by line through the suggested cuts and seeing which ones the board agrees with.

Mr. Weldon asked if everyone was comfortable with the proposed district office savings.

Mr. Illingworth noted the instructional coaches were supervised by the directors. He wondered if the content directors such as the math director were needed.

Dr. Johnson said what would be lost would be math support. She said Mr. Planas and the directors and coaches do the curriculum and professional development. She said cutting both would directly impact instructional programs in schools.

Mr. Bradley said for the last twenty or thirty years the district's performance in measurable components has been getting worse. Dr. Johnson said math had not gotten worse in the last year.

Mr. Bradley said there are be core subjects that should have a director, but every single department did not need a director. He said if we can't measurably see a difference in having a director or not having a director, then why not invest that money elsewhere. He noted Mr. Planas was a brilliant principal who did a great job with students.

Ms. Pereira asked who was going to provide professional development, which teachers need and want, and who is going to develop and oversee curriculum. She said these positions were critical. She said Common Core was an example of new curriculum that had to be developed.

Ms. Martinez said the district had a core of teachers and assistant superintendents who were involved in strategic planning. She suggested they could create curriculum.

Ms. Pereira said she was very concerned about losing two assistant superintendents. Dr. Johnson said she was concerned as well. She asked if we're looking at assistant superintendents who supervise building principals or the position that oversees all curriculum and instruction. She said one person cannot supervise thirty-plus schools.

In response to a question, Dr. Johnson said the assistant superintendents are not covered by the BCAS contract.

Ms. Pereira said she would accept a compromise of one assistant superintendent. Ms. Martinez said she did not agree.

Ms. Martinez asked what previous superintendent had four assistant superintendents. Ms. Pereira said Dr. Ramos had four. Dr. Johnson said the prior administration had four positions. She said under Supt. Rabinowitz the four assistants were herself, Ms. Marshall, Ms. Newton and Ms. Carroll. She said Ms. Carroll had the same function as Dr. Santacapita does now and the other three supervised the schools.

Mr. Bradley said nobody gets fired or held accountable at the school level. He said the supervising of schools was not happening. Mr.

Bradley said no one was supervising the nurses.

Ms. Maurer said the nursing director supervises the nurses and reports to the state on nursing services to non-public schools, as well as overseeing occupational therapists. Mr. Weldon said this was a very technical area where you would want to be very cautious.

Mr. Bradley said professions that require licenses, such as attorneys, receive strict scrutiny. He said we had never seen a report as to someone not doing their job as a nurse.

Ms. Pereira said a principal supervises up to 40 certified staff members in every school. She said she disagreed with Mr. Bradley. She said nurses were restored to the budget due to litigation concerns. People who were not medical professionals were using asthma inhalers and insulin pens.

Ms. Martinez noted nurses have to attend continuous medical learning annually.

Ms. Pereira said the district had to provide nurses to parochial schools. Dr. Johnson said when a nurse is out, Ms. Earley goes to a school to provide support when needed. She also follows up on missing medications.

In response to a question, Dr. Johnson said the assistant superintendents evaluate the principals and provide support to principals for traumatic events, instructional support in classrooms, operational and management support, and assistance with grants. She said it was the whole gamut of operations, including instruction and professional development.

Ms. Martinez said it sounds like it's too many people doing the same job.

Mr. Weldon said putting aside the assistant superintendent over teaching and learning, there are three superintendents overseeing the schools in a sector of the city. Dr. Johnson said it was 12 to 13 schools each. Mr. Weldon said if two were eliminated, one assistant superintendent would supervise all the schools.

Ms. Martinez said they could figure this out and do with less. Mr. Weldon said if Dr. Johnson has less resources it will get worse.

Ms. Pereira moved to amend the motion on bullet number two that *“we change that to the elimination of one assistant superintendent.”* The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic.

Ms. Pereira said she didn’t know how the board could hold Dr. Johnson accountable if they’re not listening to what she’s saying she needs. She noted the superintendent came up with \$600,000 in cuts in central office after taking cuts in the prior two years.

Ms. Martinez said the board would still hold the superintendent accountable. She said she was looking for what least impacts the classroom.

The amendment was approved by a 5-3 vote. Voting in favor were members Walker, Sokolovic, Weldon, Allen and Pereira. Voting in opposition were members Illingworth, Martinez and Bradley.

The motion as modified to approve the items in bullet two was approved by a 7-0 vote. Voting in favor were members Pereira, Walker, Illingworth, Sokolovic, Weldon, Martinez and Allen. Mr. Bradley abstained.

The next item was on instructional coaches.

Ms. Martinez moved *“to approve.”* The motion was seconded by Mr. Walker.

Ms. Pereira noted this item would save \$2 million.

The motion was unanimously approved.

Ms. Pereira said none of these were good cuts.

The next item was on assistant principals at the elementary level for \$900,000, a reduction of six.

Mr. Sokolovic moved “*to approve assistant principal reductions by six.*” The motion was seconded by Ms. Pereira.

In response to a question, Dr. Johnson said there was no language in the contract prohibiting these reductions.

Mr. Weldon asked if this item would save \$900,000. He said in the first year the salaries would only go down by \$1,000. Ms. Maurer said she was certain the savings would occur immediately, but she needed to check on how.

Mr. Weldon noted the cuts would make principals’ jobs more difficult.

Mr. Illingworth said he felt strongly about this issue. He said we just heard an argument that the superintendent needed support, but this would deprive principals of support. He said the number one priority had to be students, not adults. He said it was not fair to go by a number without looking at the specifics. He said he did not believe one principal could handle Dunbar School alone. He said we’re sending the wrong message.

Mr. Sokolovic said none of these cuts are good, but academics have not suffered in at least one school without an assistant principal. He said cutting the academic coaches could impact performance.

Ms. Allen said when she was in the school system principals appointed a head teacher in charge when absent from the building and they can act as people who help principals.

Ms. Pereira said all this is terrible and every school should have an assistant principal, but learning doesn’t happen in the assistant principal’s office. She said the instructional coaches give support to teachers who teach students.

Mr. Illingworth questioned Ms. Pereira advocating for an assistant superintendent over athletics.

Ms. Martinez said she wanted to hear from principals themselves on this issue. She said Waltersville and Barnum are in the area of Crescent Crossing and more children will be in the school, some

overnight. She said assistant principals ensure structure, guidance and love. She said it would not be easy to put the assistant principals back into the budget even if we reprioritize.

Ms. Pereira said many K-8 schools under 500 students do not have assistant principals. Ms. Martinez said she would rather shut a school down than remove the assistant principal. Ms. Pereira said a lot of studies show closing schools decimates property values and disrupts communities.

Ms. Pereira said role of the assistant superintendents goes directly to education while athletics does not.

Mr. Bradley said leaders that we admire lead from the front. He said the leaders perched up in central office don't make an impact on the day-to-day lives of students and teachers. The ones on the ground, like principals, make a direct impact on students. He said cutting assistant principals did not make sense. He said the thought of cutting at Dunbar was a scary thought.

Dr. Johnson said schools like Hall, Edison and Beardsley have pretty high numbers and only have a building principal. A lead teacher steps in when the principal leaves. There is no additional compensation provided for the lead teacher.

In response to a question, Dr. Johnson said Read, Blackham, Batalla and Marin have two assistant principals due to population size. Ms. Pereira said there are K-8 schools that do not have assistant principals. She said no principal is going to say they can do without their assistant principal.

Mr. Illingworth said every school had to be looked at individually. He again noted Dunbar is a troubled school.

Mr. Sokolovic suggested a per diem assistant principal be provided for three schools and the remaining three assistant principals float through the schools of concern. Ms. Pereira said she was considering an amendment to exempt Dunbar from the cut. Ms. Martinez said Waltersville and Madison were also concerning.

Mr. Walker said if we eliminate the 500 student provision and eliminate six elementary school assistant principals, the superintendent could decide which schools they would be removed from. Dr. Johnson said she was fine with that.

Michael Testani was recognized. He said Black Rock, Hooker, Cross, Dunbar, Madison, Waltersville were the six schools affected. Mr. Illingworth noted Cross was an area of concern also. Ms. Pereira said Hooker did not need an assistant principal. She said Ms. Siegel created the formula for assistant principals when she came to the district.

Mr. Illingworth said he was concerned about the total savings of the item since the assistant principals would be able to bump teachers.

Dr. Johnson said Ms. Clarke called Ms. Siegel about this \$900,000 savings projected. She said it is based on \$150,000 per person, including benefits, along with attrition.

Mr. Walker moved to amend the motion *“to strike ‘register few than 500’ from line item four.”* The motion was seconded by Ms. Pereira.

The amendment was approved by a 5-3 vote. Voting in favor were members Walker, Sokolovic, Weldon, Allen, and Pereira. Voting in opposition were members Illingworth, Martinez and Bradley

The main motion was now to eliminate six assistant principal positions at the superintendent’s discretion.

Ms. Martinez said she was not comfortable with this, pointing to what the teachers said at the City Council meeting. Mr. Bradley said twenty families could move into Dunbar tomorrow.

Ms. Pereira moved to amend the motion that we eliminate six assistant principals at the superintendent’s discretion on the condition that if funding is restored, this is the first item reinstituted back into our budget. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic.

Mr. Bradley questioned whether the paraprofessionals should be first. Mr. Sokolovic said the board should get through cuts first before

prioritizing what comes back.

Ms. Pereira withdrew her amendment. Mr. Sokolovic seconded the withdrawal, which was unanimously approved.

The main motion was to eliminate six assistant principals at the discretion of the superintendent. The motion failed by a 5-3 vote.

Voting in opposition were members Illingworth, Weldon, Allen, Martinez, and Bradley. Voting in favor were members Walker, Sokolovic and Pereira.

The next item was transportation, Grades 5 to 8, increase the limit from 1 mile to 1.5 miles, for a savings of \$822,000.

Ms. Martinez moved *"to approve."* The motion was seconded by Mr. Walker.

Ms. Pereira noted she was the one who recommended this originally. She said she circulated to the board the state guidelines on transportation. She said the state statute provides certain distances at which students must be transported depending on their grade level.

Ms. Pereira recommended moving K to 3 students to 1.25 miles, leaving Grades 4 to 8 at 1.5 miles, and leaving students over age 14 and enrolled in Grades 9 to 12 at 2 miles. She said this would add to the projected \$822,000 savings.

Mr. Weldon said his concern was that these savings are put squarely on the backs of students. He said the board hears from students at every meeting on the dangerous walking and physical environments.

Ms. Pereira said when this was in committee we repeatedly asked the police department to provide us with specific data or examples of serious criminal offenses that happen between 6:30 and 8:30 in the morning and from 2:00 to 4:00 in the afternoon. She said the police never provided any such information.

Ms. Martinez said she recalled an incident a few years ago of a near

abduction close to Harding and the same occurred yesterday in Stratford. She described an incident where a Fairchild Wheeler teacher described the biggest problem as students being late in long security lines.

Ms. Pereira noted how far she walked to Harding High as a student without a gloves, scarf or winter boots. She said students are going to face a lot more difficulty in life than walking 25 minutes to school. She said due to high obesity rates in the city our children should be walking.

Ms. Martinez said she trusted the voice of students and teachers. Mr. Bradley said he had made his political bones in the East Side and East End for almost a decade. He said he sees kids who don't even have a bed or a kitchen table, some with a dad in jail or without a father at home. He said the only safe community they have are the schools. He said he was not going to cut from the pockets of families or students. He said busing was one of the only luxuries our students have. He said we need to get harder on central office.

Ms. Pereira said learning doesn't happen on school buses. She said the state's own recommendations fit perfectly within Ms. Siegel's proposals.

Mr. Bradley said we had found almost \$3 million of cuts at central office that we haven't addressed yet.

Mr. Illingworth said there were good points on both sides of this issue, but he said we are still unwilling to focus on the top. He said he would not sacrifice any more for the children unless positions that don't directly impact our students are addressed.

Ms. Pereira moved to amend the motion *"to make sure it is 4th through 8th Grade and not 5th through 8th Grade because that's what the state recommendation is."* Mr. Walker seconded the amendment.

The amendment was approved by a 7-1 vote. Voting in support were members Weldon, Illingworth, Martinez, Pereira, Sokolovic, Walker and Allen. Mr. Bradley was opposed.

Ms. Pereira said children are resilient and this did not affect learning. She said she heard happy children walking to Hooker School outside her house.

Ms. Martinez said she heard gunfire outside her house two days ago. Ms. Pereira said when she was in high school the Latin Kings were prevalent on the East Side.

In response to a question, Dr. Johnson said there are times when cars follow students to school which are reported to the district. She said those incidents involve high school students who are able to describe the vehicle.

Dr. Johnson said this one is tough for her because it is difficult enough for students to get to us. She said some really tough decisions had to be made.

Mr. Bradley said as a person of faith you can't reap where you have not sown. He said before we demand excellence of our children in academics we first have to invest in them. He said we would be sending the message they don't matter if they had to walk more to school.

The motion failed by a 6-2 vote. Voting in opposition were members Illingworth, Sokolovic, Weldon, Martinez, Allen and Bradley. Voting in favor were members Walker and Pereira.

The next item was the school operating allocation, a reduction from \$20 to \$15 per student, for \$105,000.

Ms. Maurer said this is the school operating allocation; each school gets \$20 per pupil. This is not the \$30 card that teachers are given. She said it is used for school activities, to pay custodial overtime, buying supplies or a bus trip.

Mr. Sokolovic moved to approve "*item six for 20 to 15 per pupil allocation.*" The motion was seconded by Mr. Bradley.

Mr. Sokolovic said there are a lot of things captured here that people

might not realize. Some principals kept their kindergarten paraprofessional in their school through this allocation.

Dr. Johnson said whatever the money is being used for would have to be cut if this line item passes. Mr. Sokolovic said this is a direct impact on students.

Mr. Walker agreed it was a direct impact on students and teachers. He said if this money is reduced, teachers will have to pay even more for supplies. He said it was a 25 percent cut per pupil for a very small gain.

Mr. Illingworth said he was concerned about the board's priorities and noted the impact to students and teachers.

Ms. Pereira said the reduction per school would be \$2,837, although the metric was not accurate because it is based on a per-pupil basis.

Mr. Walker said having lived with an elementary teacher for a number of years he has noticed they wait until the sale flyers come out so they can buy the cheap-o craft products. He said it was a large impact for a small gain.

The motion was unanimously defeated.

The next item was on overtime in the facilities department restricted by 25 percent based on a weekly cap strictly enforced.

Mr. Sokolovic moved "*to approve Item 7.*" The motion was seconded by Mr. Bradley.

Ms. Pereira said she wanted to know how this would work because we are so understaffed in facilities. She said the district had only one painter and one glazier.

In response to a question, Dr. Johnson said facilities had always asked for additional staffing, but we're just not in a position to do that. Mr. Weldon said the facilities department would argue that the reason for the overtime spending is because of short staffing. Ms. Maurer said there had been discussions and meetings with facilities every

four to six weeks to discuss overtime.

Mr. Sokolovic said he assumed there would be less maintenance on the new Harding High than the old building.

Ms. Pereira said she just wanted to know if it was realistic. Ms. Maurer said we believe there's room for improvement and efficiencies.

Mr. Bradley moved *"to approve number 7, overtime Facilities restrict overtime to 25 percent based on a weekly cap strictly enforced."* The motion was seconded by Ms. Pereira.

Mr. Illingworth said he was concerned because facilities had been cut year after year. He said there are real maintenance issues at schools that impact students. He said other districts such as Stamford outsource maintenance. Ms. Maurer said that is a collective bargaining issue. Ms. Pereira said that had been a disaster in Chicago.

Ms. Martinez asked if there was a way to get in-kind services from the city. Ms. Pereira said the city refused to pick up the board's trash.

Mr. Weldon noted the administration was indicating it was a realistic cut.

In response to a question, Dr. Johnson said it should not affect parent events. She added she didn't want the board to think that we would not address emergencies when they arise.

The motion was approved by a 7-1 vote. Voting in favor were members Walker, Sokolovic, Weldon, Allen, Martinez, Pereira and Bradley. Voting in opposition was Mr. Illingworth.

The next item was supply and service items in the facilities department, a six percent reduction, in the amount of \$150,000.

Ms. Pereira moved *"to approve number 8, supply and service accounts, facilities, six percent reduction, totaling \$150,000."* The motion was seconded by Ms. Martinez.

Ms. Maurer said the figure came from the six percent number discussed at the last special meeting. Ms. Pereira noted facilities always complained they don't have enough supplies. Ms. Maurer said a considerable amount of supplies had been reduced over a period of years.

Mr. Sokolovic said since the overtime is being cut in theory less supplies would be needed. He added that the lack of supplies could also hurt students.

Mr. Weldon said he was comfortable with the overtime cut, but this is just an academic exercise without any thought. Mr. Walker said he was in favor of the cut since it was small.

Ms. Maurer said the total budget for supplies is close \$3 million. The number includes contracts for landscaping and heating because it includes services.

The motion was approved by a 7-1 vote. Voting in favor were members Walker, Sokolovic, Weldon, Allen, Martinez, Pereira and Bradley. Mr. Illingworth was opposed.

The next item was on Title II-Aa, grant continuation, FY19 funding is unknown.

Ms. Clarke said Ms. Siegel's projections had assumed Title II-A was going to be cut. About three weeks ago notice was received that it was not going to be cut. She said the district is still waiting for official notice on the level of funding.

Ms. Pereira said Ms. Siegel originally projected \$500,000 less.

Mr. Weldon said Items 9, 10 and 11 are things we have no control over.

Mr., Bradley moved "*to approve items 9, 10 and 11.*" The motion was seconded by Ms. Martinez.

In response to a question, Dr. Johnson said she agreed with the

characterization by Ms. Pereira that the BEA was so livid over Mr. Taylor's remarks that they've walked away from the furlough day item. Mr. Weldon said we can continue to raise the issue to the extent we can.

In response to a question, Ms. Maurer said longevity payments are made to every union, amounting to an annual payment of between \$890,000 and \$1 million.

Ms. Pereira noted the AFSCME and NAGE contracts are negotiated on the city side. She described it as a real long shot. Dr. Johnson agreed with that characterization.

Mr. Sokolovic said after the union had come out so strongly against these items that it may seem as insulting to come back again with them.

Dr. Johnson said the intent is to continue to have dialogue with the bargaining units. She said the public hearing on Monday will give the board a chance to convey its true sentiments about how it feels about teachers and how to work together.

Ms. Martinez said she spoke to Mr. Peluchette and told him the board did not stand with the comment that was made. She said she agreed with Mr. Peluchette's response in the *Connecticut Post*. Ms. Pereira said Mr. Peluchette's said Mr. Taylor's apology was not accepted by the delegates of the union.

In response to a question, Dr. Johnson said a meeting with the BEA and its executive board with the board might be helpful. Mr. Sokolovic described that as negotiating in public, which is not a good idea. Dr. Johnson said she viewed it as bridge-building.

Ms. Pereira said under the Freedom of Information Act we don't have to notice a meeting with the BEA to negotiate a contract and it is not open to the public.

Mr. Illingworth said if the teachers don't see sacrifices in other areas they would not step up. He said the way to entice them is to make other cuts.

Ms. Pereira said the board had to cut \$40 million in the last five years and teachers have not been cut. She noted Westport just issued 150 pink slips.

Mr. Weldon suggested moving away from the three items for now. Ms. Pereira suggested approving it, but not counting it in the number of the total cuts the board had approved.

The motion was approved by a 7-1 vote. Voting in favor were members. Mr. Sokolovic was in opposition.

Item 13 was on the Bridgeport Learning Center(BLC), to consider assessment and potential structural modifications to generate savings of \$1.5 million.

Ms. Pereira moved “to *approve Item 13, Bridgeport Learning Center, \$1.5 million in savings,*” for discussion. The motion was seconded by Ms. Martinez.

Ms. Pereira said this is a wonderful program that deals with needy students. She said special education had been a problem for the district, although it was calming down and money is being saved in special education legal fees.

Dr. Johnson said she had had preliminary discussions with Ms. Siegel about this, but further conversations with Mr. DiDonato and the BLC supervisor were still needed. She said she was not requesting action on the item.

In response to a question, Ms. Maurer said there are between 65 and 70 students at BLC. Dr. Johnson said the staffing costs are about \$3 million, including supervisor, social worker, secretary, psychologist and teachers.

Mr. Walker said it costs the district about \$86,000 for out-of-district placements. He said if we close this school we’re looking at \$5.6 million to place the students. He said he did not see it as a cost savings.

Mr. Walker said he was an advocate for working with the city to acquire a property such as Jewett Avenue to bring out-of-district students back for cost savings.

Dr. Johnson said she was not looking for a vote, but the item was brought forward for the board's awareness. She noted Mr. DiDonato created this program. Ms. Pereira said she would need more information before agreeing to this item.

Mr., Bradley said he understood money follows the child in special education. He said we needed more in-district special education because it would generate income. He said if Edison and Hall Schools were merged it would free up another building to bring special education students into the district.

Ms. Pereira moved to withdraw the motion. The motion was seconded by Ms. Martinez and unanimously approved.

Dr. Johnson noted there was a potential city contribution of \$1 million on the document. She described it as a hope. Ms. Maurer said we were hoping to put continued pressure.

Ms. Pereira said the board was receiving additional funds from the state. Ms. Maurer said the amount was \$1,152,899.

Ms. Pereira said at the last City Council Budget & Appropriations Committee they were looking at trying to give us \$1.5 million.

The next item was curriculum renewal: redeploy funds committed to curriculum renewal currently to deficit reduction.

Dr. Johnson said instead of renewing curriculum the \$400,000 would go into deficit reduction. She said the items referenced are books' online licenses that are up for renewal. She said this did not include the new courses or the Next Generation Science Standards books previously approved. She said the science textbooks were renewed this year both for hard copies of the books and online.

Dr. Johnson said there is a curriculum cycle that the district goes through of implementation, piloting and rewriting curriculum. The

process would not take place in 2018-19.

Mr. Walker said none of these cuts are good. He said the big item would be teachers missing out on training. He said if the superintendent and the staff were recommending it he would vote for it.

The motion was unanimously approved.

The next item was on deficit prevention mode, hiring freezes, etc., for \$850,000.

Ms. Maurer said as happened this year there is no sub coverage budgeted in the month of September. She said no substitute coverage would be provided for May and June.

Ms. Pereira said she had concerns about this. She noted teachers who need personal days or bereavement or a health issue.

Dr. Johnson said principals will have coverage for PPTs and for some standing monthly meetings that a cadre of teachers attend. She said it was being done with the hope that everyone can come to work and when they are not in school that the school can pull together.

Ms. Pereira said she could see implementing the policy in June, but not May. Mr. Walker said he did not believe personal days for teachers roll over. Dr. Johnson said teachers get four personal days per year.

Ms. Pereira expressed concern about how children would learn if their teacher was out.

Ms. Maurer said the teachers who resign would not be replaced by a permanent teacher, except in shortage areas, after January 2019. Dr. Johnson said the BCAS executive board felt comfortable with the January date.

Mr. Illingworth and Ms. Martinez noted the issue had been discussed in committee.

Dr. Johnson said the date would be after the second marking period, at the end of January. She said this was not written in stone, but was the result of the preliminary conversation with BCAS because she wanted to give BCAS a chance to weigh in on the discussion.

Dr. Johnson said in May 2015 \$348,000 was spent on substitutes, \$460,000 in May 2016 and \$575,000 in May 2017.

Mr. Walker said March and May are probably the biggest months for teacher absences because there's no holiday during March and May. He said in elementary schools there are arrangements to split up classes when teachers are absent. He said this proposal bothers him a lot but said he would vote for the item.

Ms. Maurer said regarding hiring permanent replacements for teachers who resign during the school year that part of the argument has always been that after a certain point you're very hard pressed to find a qualified candidate at that time of year.

Ms. Pereira said there is a glut of elementary teachers and those vacancies that occur after January should be filled.

Mr. Walker said hiring teachers was a very seasonal business and the pool of applicants in April is slim. He said the proposal does touch the classroom closer than he wants to, but he believed the staff would do its best to be in attendance. He said it was less egregious than some of the cuts that have already been made.

Mr. Sokolovic said his son had not received any permanent academic damage by occasionally have his class split due to teacher absences.

The motion was approved by a 7-1 vote. Voting in favor were members Weldon, Martinez, Pereira, Walker, Sokolovic, Allen and Bradley. Voting in opposition was Mr. Illingworth.

Mr. Illingworth said our priorities are totally wrong.

Ms. Maurer said the current total of approved cuts was \$5,811,499, which included the \$1 million from the City Council.

Mr. Bradley said what was missing was a mission statement about what we're trying to accomplish as a school district. He said Bridgeport was known for the tired, huddled masses of America, like the Statue of Liberty. He urged the district be one that welcomes children with special needs. He said that could be started by merging Edison and Hall.

Ms. Pereira noted the merger option would only save \$100,000.

Mr. Bradley said once we have that school opened the special education students could be brought back to the district. Ms. Pereira said we would have to fund the program and the building would have to be ADA compliant. She said Mr. Bradley was talking about some of the oldest schools in Bridgeport. Mr. Bradley said he did not think it would require that much to make the building ready.

Ms. Pereira said Hall and Edison would have to have an elevator under the ADA.

Mr. Illingworth said if Classical Studies moved that building could be used for special education. He said we looked into this years ago where the district did not get state reimbursement for students sent to The University School because it is not accredited. He said Dr. Kelleher was willing to work with the University School to get accredited and they didn't want to.

Dr. Johnson said having a regionalized special education program had been discussed for many years which is why the Catholic Center property was being pursued. She said a lot of community conversations would be needed to create a program or to close Hall and Edison.

Ms. Pereira said when Ms. Rabinowitz was the superintendent the former Speaker of the House committed \$5 million to regionalization and then took it away. That money would have covered the startup costs.

Ms. Pereira said after the community uproar Supt. Rabinowitz said it was not worth merging Hall and Edison for \$100,000.

Ms. Pereira asked if the board could receive a cost analysis of Mr. Bradley's suggestion of outsourcing the payroll department. She said the board still needs the chart by bargaining units and the last day to issue a pink slip.

Ms. Pereira said the city benefits from the Internal Service Fund. She asked if there had ever been a cost analysis to withdraw from it. She said it was one of the number of ways that the city does some dishonest and unethical things. She said an audit under the Fabrizi administration regarding the Internal Service Fund used the word "theft."

Ms. Pereira said the purpose of the Internal Service Fund is health-care benefits and workers' comp.

Mr. Sokolovic said his suggestion encompassed health-care benefits in every department and agency. He said they were astronomical. He suggested working with the union by offering a sweetener. He said a lot of the board's employees were married and had a secondary health plan they could get on.

Ms. Maurer said the union contracts except for BEA and BCAS already have health buyouts. She said the amounts were nominal. Mr. Sokolovic said such a provision would shift health benefits out of our budget and onto somebody else.

Mr. Sokolovic moved that *"we authorize the superintendent to ask for a contractor reopener with the BEA in respect to health benefits and offering a sweetener to defer their health benefits for a period of a year."* He noted the standard language is already there in the contract.

Mr. Weldon said Mr. Sokolovic wanted the administration to explore providing incentives to BEA employees who elect to be placed on a spouse's health insurance.

Mr. Walker seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Sokolovic noted the AFSCME president was on the board's

payroll for \$56,000. Ms. Pereira said it's part of the contract and the same for NAGE.

Mr. Sokolovic left the meeting.

Ms. Pereira suggested we look at the Internal Service Fund and outsourcing of the payroll department.

In response to a question, Dr. Johnson said Fairchild Wheeler has three principals and two assistant principals. Ms. Pereira asked why there couldn't be one principal and several assistant principals. Ms. Maurer said she believed that was the original intent when the school was established.

Dr. Johnson said it would be a savings. Ms. Maurer said the federal grant for Fairchild Wheeler expired. Ms. Pereira said under Supt. Vallas the three principals may have been mandated under the grant.

Ms. Pereira said the legal costs are constantly out of control. She said things had gotten worse under Shipman & Goodwin. She noted there were \$291,000 in costs which have nothing to do with major litigation. She said we could save \$100,000 there. She noted there was an ad hoc committee that would be working on this.

Ms. Pereira said the budget indicates 68 security guards. Ms. Maurer said some guards are covered by grants. Ms. Pereira said the board was paying \$68,000 per security guard, which is a lot of money. She said security guards to the district were added when SROs retired, but now there will be more SROs through a federal grant. Ms. Pereira said perhaps every high school could lose one guard.

Mr. Illingworth said this was a good time to do this because of negotiations with NAGE.

Ms. Pereira said security guards should only be employed for ten months. Dr. Johnson said she wanted to bring that item to NAGE because guards are not needed at every school during the summer.

Ms. Pereira asked information be provided by the administration including when the contracts expire.

Ms. Pereira said the Parent Center was pretty much vacant. Dr. Johnson said the lease expires in December 2018. Ms. Pereira noted the board voted to renew the five-year lease option under Supt. Vallas because it was a great price.

Mr. Bradley said the landlord would have an obligation by law to find another tenant to limit his exposure if the board gave notice of intent to vacate. Dr. Johnson said the landlord was informed that the board would not be renewing in December.

In response to a question, Ms. Maurer said the board was still making \$60,000 yearly payments to the city for retrofitting the building.

Ms. Pereira said she was really nervous about utility costs. She said the budget projections has a \$53,000 deficit in Aquarion, \$35,000 in WPCA, and \$1.6 million electricity.

Ms. Maurer said those figures were an old version. She said the deficit was a little over \$1 million. She said she believed the IT department installed timers to turn computers off. She said there was a UI increase and usage is high.

Mr. Bradley said there were opportunities through the Connecticut Green Bank for renewable energy. He said with the use of thermal loops unneeded energy could be sold by the district. He suggested Sam Wilson as someone to consult in this area.

In response to a question, Ms. Maurer said the utilities rates are negotiated by the city. Ms. Pereira said the board had more buildings than the city. Ms. Maurer said at one time John Cottell was the city expert on utilities.

Mr. Illingworth asked if there is any way with sensors that schools' lights could be turned off overnight and on weekends.

Ms. Maurer noted there were upfront costs to establishing energy-saving devices. She said the facilities department has worked with UI to get rebates on small programs.

Ms. Pereira asked if the district could get a company to do a free assessment for savings on utilities. Mr. Bradley said thermal companies will come in and put in equipment with no upfront money.

Ms. Pereira said some schools have solar panels on them. Ms. Maurer said these were a questions for facilities.

Ms. Pereira said someone should call UI to challenge the bills since they are so exorbitant.

Ms. Pereira said the board was spending \$375,296 on leased property rentals. She said the board should never spend money on this. The properties include the Parent Center, the Classical Studies annex, the Adult Education building on Kossuth Street, and the Connecticut Avenue building for facilities and the police department.

Ms. Pereira said BMA should move to the old Harding High, particularly since it will cost \$150,000 to mothball the building. Classical Studies' two buildings should move to the swing space, which would get the board out of the St. Peter's lease.

Mr. Illingworth said we deemed Harding High not adequate for our high schools, so we would be saying it's adequate for these students. Ms. Pereira said the Harding building would give BMA a field and gyms to do drills, and since the Bassick renovation would not start for three years, that would leave three years to find a permanent home for BMA. Ms. Pereira said BMA had one of the lowest enrollment numbers in the city.

Ms. Pereira suggested moving Adult Education, where we're paying an exorbitant lease, from Kossuth Street to the Classical Studies building.

Michael Testani was recognized. He said the Classical Studies building is not on a bus line, which is an issue for the adult education students. He said for every dollar spent on the adult education lease, we're getting a dollar and a half back.

Mr. Bradley said as a person who grew up in a military home it is a badge of honor to do more with less. He supported moving BMA into

the old Harding building.

Ms. Pereira said Mr. Wallack was going to do a cost analysis on this and he indicated part of Harding would be cordoned off if this move was made.

Mr. Illingworth said the main building on Linwood for Classical Studies was a perfect building to expand the special education program. He noted it is ADA compliant.

Ms. Martinez said the Classical Studies building should be torn down. She noted major problems with the gymnasium floor. She said it is not good for the current students and would not be good for special education students.

Ms. Pereira said it was much more cost-effective to renovate buildings than to build new buildings due to state reimbursement.

Ms. Pereira said the district only had to give 30-days notice to get out of the St. Peter's lease, which would lead to \$100,000 of savings.

Mr. Weldon said we had accomplished a phenomenal amount of work tonight. He suggested the board e-mail the suggestions to other members and Dr. Johnson with the eye of reconvening with some information we can really talk about.

Mr. Weldon said the board was at \$5.8 million of cuts.

Mr. Bradley said we keep looking at all these cuts, but these are opportunities to clean house. He said even if we were running a surplus we should be implementing things like utilities changes.

In response to a question, Dr. Johnson said the superintendent's vehicle was returned to where it was supposed to go to. She said she didn't know if it was leased. Ms. Pereira said if it was not leased, it should be sold.

Ms. Pereira asked if there was any way to push more costs into the Nutrition Department. Ms. Maurer said we have maximized what we can do by state and federal law.

Ms. Pereira asked about the board employee in the purchasing that is paid \$50,000, plus benefits. Dr. Johnson said the employee handles everything from the Board of Education side. She said there were discussions about moving the person to Lyon Terrace after receiving extensive training.

Mr. Bradley asked if the city is already doing this function for free, why are we paying another person. Ms. Maurer said the employee issues purchase orders and requisitions. Dr. Johnson said it is a full-time position, but ultimately she will be placed at Lyon Terrace.

Dr. Johnson summarized the requests of the board: outsourcing payroll, the last day for layoff notices, contract expiration dates, cost analysis to withdraw from the Internal Service Fund, health benefits and exploring incentives for BEA and spousal health insurance, Fairchild Wheeler principal, security guards and contract negotiation regarding working for ten months, information from Mr. Wallack on the Parent Center and moving expenses, free assessment on utility savings and thermal loops with Sam Wilson and the Connecticut Green Bank as resources, and also solar panels and the savings.

Ms. Pereira recommended that one position at early childhood be eliminated. The department cost the district \$70,000 by not filling all the pre-K slots.

Mr. Bradley said this was clearly someone not doing their job, with year after year of vacancies, year after year of being deficient. He asked what we need them the employees for.

Mr. Walker moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Illingworth and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod