

Thursday, March 18, 2021

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STUDENTS AND FAMILIES COMMITTEE OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held March 18, 2021, by video conference, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 5:01 p.m. Present were Chair Albert Benejan, and members of the committee Joe Sokolovic and Bobbi Brown. Board member Sybil Allen was present.

Ms. Brown moved to approve the committee's minutes of February 18, 2021. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on Columbus School. Mr. Benejan said he attended a meeting at the school with Supt. Testani. He said the group consisted of three teachers, three parents, himself, and a community member, Angel Resto.

Herminio Planas, executive director of elementary education, said the meeting was held on March 3, 2021, from 11:45 to 12:15. He said the summary of the meeting was the staff and parent survey received 316 responses, of which 142 voted to change the name of the school, with 171 voting no. The three teachers and three parents said they would be in favor of changing the name. The principal said she would follow the voice of the survey data. All agreed that if the name were to be changed that all would be in support of a change if the name was a local person that directly impacted Columbus School in a positive way.

Ms. Brown asked what this meant for the next steps. Mr. Planas said he believed they want to continue the conversation.

In response to a question, Mr. Planas said there were about 522 students in the school and about 70 percent response rate.

Mr. Sokolovic said it seemed in essence everybody will go with what the board decides to do. He proposed sending the matter back to the committee to come up with three names, including Columbus if desired, and the board could make a decision, including to keep the current name. He said a lot of people don't really know who is Columbus because of the way they've been taught throughout time.

Ms. Brown said she would like to hear the reasoning behind any names proposed for the name of the school. Ms. Allen said she agreed and she said people should have a choice.

Mr. Benejan said he was part of the committee and listened to everyone. He said as a parent and a leader he had to respect what the parents wanted in the survey. He said he was the one who proposed that if the name is changed it should be someone who did something for Bridgeport schools.

Mr. Benejan said the principal was going to survey the community around the area of the school and then update Supt. Testani.

Mr. Sokolovic moved *"to have the committee send us three prospective names, and feel free to include Columbus or not, and the reasoning behind each."* The motion was seconded by Ms. Brown and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on PAC and PTSO expenditures. Mr. Benejan said there were two weeks left to spend the money.

Carli Rocha-Reaes said the elementary schools have gone from 59 percent of money used to 84.7 percent and high schools went from 39 percent use to 59 percent. She said 17 elementary schools have spent 90 percent and up of their budgets. Three high schools are at 99.7 percent and above.

Ms. Rocha-Reaes said she is continuing outreach as the deadline approaches. She said school administrators were presented with this report.

Mr. Benejan said he reached out to a lot of the parent leaders on Facebook. He said he was working with Central High School and a lot of the money has been spent there. He said he suggested items they could order.

In response to a question, Ms. Rocha-Reaes said the roundtable meetings with the superintendent have been held online. Ms. Brown said she would like to receive a reminder of the meetings so she can participate.

Mr. Sokolovic said Skane and Park City Magnet are both at zero percent spent. In response to a question, Ms. Rocha-Reaes said Skane just recently was able to establish a PAC and an SGC. She said she has not been in direct contact with the PAC president, but will reach out. Mr. Sokolovic suggested a tone to use with those schools to convince them to take action to spend the money. He suggested Ms. Rocha-Reaes give the schools a suggested list or a filled out P10. He noted he had a vested interest in Park City Magnet.

Ms. Rocha-Reaes said she would reach out to the PAC president. Mr. Sokolovic said he would as well.

In response to a question, Ms. Rocha-Reaes said she provided information to the PACs on vendors and what other schools are spending their money on. Ms. Brown suggested the schools be provided with suggested items for expenditure on filled out forms, with the schools having the option of make another choice.

Mr. Sokolovic said the PACs that have not spent anything yet cannot be considered functional and these actions were needed to get them over the hump this year.

Mr. Benejan said when PACs hold new elections he will provide donations he has received of items like bookbags.

The next agenda item was on the Parent Convention. Mr. Benejan said a committee was needed for the convention and about eleven parents signed up. He said he would provide the names to Ms. Rocha-Reaes. He said he was going to try to hold a Zoom meeting with them. He said he e-mailed Nadira Clarke to ask her to provide a list of vendors that can be used. He noted \$18,000 needed to be spent.

Ms. Brown said she would like to help in any way she can with the convention. She urged that parents who are not tech savvy be engaged as well. Mr. Sokolovic suggested that if goody bags are distributed that the first ones go to the registered people who actually attended.

The next agenda item was a report on the Achievement First Bridgeport Academy charter school. Mr. Benejan said he was on the committee of the school. He reported the

principal, Samantha Lucky, wrote a letter that he shared with the committee. He said he found the letter very professional.

Mr. Sokolovic noted the board had no authority over charter schools. Ms. Brown said she appreciated the letter. Mr. Benejan said he was glad there was some communication with the school since he was on the committee.

The next agenda item was on Make the Road, a group of moms. Mr. Benejan said he and Mr. Testani have been meeting with the group in order to have a good relationship and have communication with everyone. He noted Make the Road had concerns about the schools and the bilingual department. He said Supt. Testani answered questions. Mr. Benejan said he informed them if they communicate very professionally and very nice we can work together. He noted Dr. Fabian also met with Make the Road.

Mr. Benejan thanked everyone for their help and participating in the meeting.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 5:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

*Approved by the committee on April 22, 2021*