

Wednesday, October 24, 2018

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STUDENTS AND FAMILIES COMMITTEE OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held October 24, 2018, at Bridgeport City Hall, 45 Lyon Terrace, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 5:09 p.m. Present were members Chair Joseph Sokolovic and Maria Pereira. Committee member Ben Walker arrived subsequently as noted.

Ms. Pereira moved to approve the minutes of the meeting of June 21, 2018, with edits. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic. The motion was unanimously approved.

Ms. Pereira moved to approve the minutes of September 13, 2018. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and approved by a 1-0 vote. Ms. Pereira abstained.

Ms. Pereira moved to approve the minutes of September 26, 2018, with edits. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

The next item was discussion and possible action on the magnet school policy.

Ms. Pereira noted items in the current draft policy that did not match her notes. She said there should be something in the policy about Bridgeport Military Academy, Fairchild Wheeler and Discovery to provide information to parents, even though there are no entrance criteria except a blind lottery.

Mr. Walker arrived at the meeting.

There was a discussion of where to list the reference to those schools. It was decided to leave the reference as it is in the draft, but to also add Discovery Magnet.

Some typographical errors were noted.

There was a discussion of the notification letter about potential reassignment. Mr. Sokolovic said he believed the letter should go out as soon as the student receives a grade of D.

Ms. Pereira noted students removed from magnet schools have to be tracked by race, gender and ethnicity.

There was a discussion of the appeal process. Mr. Walker noted it was a 40-day process and the student would remain in the magnet school while the appeal was going on.

Mr. Walker described the decision of the superintendent in the appeal as final even if the board has an role in an appeal. Ms. Pereira said the board has the ultimate authority, not the superintendent.

Ms. Pereira said such an appeal should be the ultimate decision of the board. Mr. Walker said the board's ultimate authority is hiring or firing the superintendent. He noted state statutes give the board the ultimate authority for or against firing an employee. Ms. Pereira said the board makes decisions on expulsion, even though this board delegates that authority.

Mr. Walker said the board should never be involved in this type of decision. Ms. Pereira said it was in the control transfer policy. Mr. Walker said he was opposed to it being there as well.

Mr. Sokolovic and Mr. Walker urged the appeal provision be eliminated from the draft.

Mr. Sokolovic said we are all excellent debaters could go back and forth all night on this. He asked if there was a motion to strike the appeal process Ms. Pereira said she would bring it back in at the regular meeting and lobby for her position.

Ms. Pereira said Mr. Walker voted for an appeal provision in the control transfer policy. Mr. Walker said he voted for a lot of things in the control transfer policy to get it through. He said he would not vote against something if he agreed with 99 percent of the policy.

Mr. Walker said if parents are allowed to go over the superintendent's head to the board the same issues that are raised by certain board members who answer to their constituents would continue. He said the board should not second-guess the superintendent on mundane issues like this.

Mr. Sokolovic said he would seek to amend the policy in front of the full board himself. He said in order to put it before the full board the committee had to act. He noted on some issues the vote went 2 to 1 against him and in some cases it went 2 to 1 against other committee members.

Mr. Walker moved that the fourth bullet indicate that the superintendent has final say on this and the last two bullets should be stricken.

Ms. .Pereira said Mr. Illingworth was already with her and she would get Ms. Martinez. She added “you have no respect for parents.”

Ms. Pereira said she was one who pushed this through and did the majority of the work on it.

Ms. Pereira left the meeting.

Mr. Walker moved “*we strike bullets four, five and six, and replace bullet four with the superintendent’s decision is final.*” The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

There was a discussion of how to phrase the magnet school entrance policies. Mr. Sokolovic said the first reference should be to Central Magnet and there should be separate language for Discovery Magnet.

Assistant Superintendent Janet Brown-Clayton said Bridgeport Military Academy was an open choice school and could not have entrance criteria. Mr. Sokolovic said it should be a separate section including the boot camp requirement. Ms. Brown-Clayton said there was discussion of a provision allowing the students to complete the boot camp at a different time during the year if they failed to do so during the summer.

Mr. Walker suggested a provision indicating all Discovery graduates are automatically qualified to enter Fairchild Wheeler.

There was a discussion of entry into Bridgeport Military Academy(BMA). Ms. Brown-Clayton noted it was a blind lottery process and the requirements of 30 percent suburban enrollment do not apply. She said the seats are available to out-of-district students after all Bridgeport applicants have been given seats.

Mr. Sokolovic asked if the BMA students do not complete the boot camp if that constitutes a deselection process. Mr. Walker suggested wording calling for completing boot camp and the failure to do so would result in deselection. Mr. Sokolovic said he didn't think that situation ever came up. Ms. Brown-Clayton said she would inquire into the issue tomorrow with CES.

Mr. Walker said he didn't believe the policy could be approved by the board in time to be in place for the current application process to magnet schools. He added he was reluctant to change the rules in the middle of the year.

The next agenda item was on the sibling policy. Mr. Sokolovic noted Discovery Magnet could not have a sibling policy. Mr. Walker suggested adding a sentence to that effect.

Ms. Brown-Clayton said when she resubmits the policy it will include a policy number for high school magnet, elementary magnet, and a policy for the sibling policy. She said she would have the revised document to the committee before the next meeting.

The next agenda item was on community forums. Ms. Brown-Clayton said she had no information to present.

Mr. Walker moved to postpone the item and send it back to the superintendent for clarification. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic.

Mr. Sokolovic said there was discussion that the goal was to schedule ten meetings.

The motion was unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was discussion and possible action on a new permanent agreement regarding the Child Nutrition Program .

Mr. Walker moved that *“we enter into a permanent agreement(Ed-099) to participate in the state Child Nutrition Program designating Superintendent Aresta Johnson and Chief Financial Officer Marlene Siegel as authorized signer of the federal claims.”* The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic.

Vincent Esposito, acting director of the nutrition center, said approval was needed by the full board as required by the state Department of Education. He said the full board had to agree that it was a permanent agreement for all the past years and the superintendent would sign off on a continuing agreement.

In response to a question, Mr. Esposito said the agreement gives the district the ability to opt out of serving breakfast, fresh fruit and supper if the board deems it appropriate. He said the only federal mandate is lunch.

Mr. Sokolovic said he saw this as pro forma and it is something we are approving every year anyway. He said it

would streamline the process. Mr. Esposito said that was the case.

Mr. Walker suggested when the motion is made at the board that the reference to Dr. Johnson and Ms. Siegel be changed to superintendent and chief financial officer.

Mr. Esposito said he has been the only claims prepared ever for the district in the last forty years. He said it involves documenting the daily food served and uploading to a state website. It is then approved by the chief financial officer. The district receives reimbursement based on the submissions.

The motion was unanimously approved

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

The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod