

Wednesday, May 23, 2018

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TEACHING AND LEARNING
COMMITTEE OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION,
held May 23, 2018, at Bridgeport City Hall, 45 Lyon Terrace,
Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 5:33 p.m. Present were members Chair Ben Walker and Joseph Sokolovic. Board member John Weldon was present.

Mr. Walker said the sole agenda item was on advanced career pathways for Bassick High.

Former Board Chair Joe Larcheveque said during his tenure on the board one of the major priorities was renovation or replacement of Bassick High. He said state Rep. Steve Stafstrom first broached the topic of looking at an advanced manufacturing high school. The idea was brought to the director of the advanced manufacturing program at Housatonic Community College, Richard Dupont. Mr. Dupont already has a relationship with Bassick with an advanced manufacturing program.

Mr. Larcheveque said there is a large demand for manufacturing jobs and not a lot of skilled labor to fill the demands. He said the governor signed a provision into law which puts state support behind manufacturing jobs.

Mr. Larcheveque said the hope was to make Bassick a true intradistrict advanced manufacturing high school. Graduates would be job-ready on the day they graduate.

Mr. Larcheveque said he hoped the board would take a bold vision and look at creating Bassick as a true advanced manufacturing campus. He said the board saw a glimpse of success with the Career & Craftsmanship school, especially in getting students to attend school more regularly than in comprehensive schools. He said if

students on the West Side did not want to go to Bassick, they could choose to go to one of the other comprehensive high schools

Rep. Stafstrom said he had been involved in the Black Rock School expansion, the construction of Claytor Magnet, and the rebuild of Central High. He said the amount of bonding for school construction at the state level has gone down significantly and is now somewhere in the range of \$150 million, which is only slightly greater than the cost of the Bassick project. He said a very compelling case would need to be made to the state for Bassick because of the many recent school projects in Bridgeport.

Rep. Stafstrom said no one disputes Bassick is in total disrepair, but a compelling case was still needed. He said the state economy is evolving from what has driven the economy for forty years – financial services. He said a lot of those jobs have not come back since the 2007-08 recession. He said Connecticut had recovered all of the private sector employment pre-recession, but not public sector employment.

Rep. Stafstrom said there are 15,000 manufacturing jobs in the state that are unfilled. He said United Technologies announced today it alone has 9,000 jobs to fill. Employees like engineers and people can work in CAD are needed. He said today's manufacturing is cleaner and more computer-driven than such jobs in the past. He said exposing students to manufacturing at an early age will show them this is a possible path into good-paying jobs.

Rep. Stafstrom said Sikorsky was facing increased demand to produce Black Hawk and the new heavy-lift helicopters.

Mr. Larcheveque said he spoke to Sauda Baraka about this and she was very excited and noted the possible connection to the STEAM theme at Claytor Magnet.

Rep Stafstrom said the West End was the focus point of manufacturing in Bridgeport. He said the entire neighborhood could be recreated beyond a new Bassick.

Richard Dupont of Housatonic Community College said he had been involved in the advancement of the manufacturing in 2002. He said the larger manufacturers employ about 250,000 people statewide and smaller manufactures(those with less than 500 employees) employ even more.He said 9,000 jobs were announced with Pratt & Whitney.

He said he watched the first students from Bassick who went into advanced manufacturing learning by their interest in technology. He said it is a career pathway, not a job. He said it is possible to break cycles of poverty with jobs, some of which pay up \$70,000 a year to start. Additionally, employers will often pay employees to go back to school. He said Dr. Broadie assured him HCC was committed to the project.

Mr. Dupont said tonight the fifth graduating class in advanced manufacturing would be recognized. Nine students made the dean's list.

Mr. Dupont says he serves on every manufacturing committee in the state and the outreach program of the state Department of Education. He urged the board members visit the campus and watch how hard the students work in the program.

Mr. Larcheveque said he saw a presentation at a board meeting in the past by Mr. Dupont. He said a board member asked why can't every student have the opportunity to experience this.

Rep. Stafstrom said dedicating Bassick to advanced manufacturing would open opportunities to partner with businesses and request grant funding from the private sector partners.

Mr. Larcheveque said the board had often gone to the City Council and the state to push for more funding. He said the board would be more effective approaching the state with the likes of the president of Housatonic and the president of Sikorsky who are making commitments to work with the district.

Rep. Stafstrom said it could be more than a request for a new building, but a true partnership with the board, the city, the state and the private sector. He noted Sikorsky has a spending requirement in

the community under an arrangement with the state. He added the Sikorsky South End facility is expected to remain open.

Mr. Dupont said Sikorsky is committed to community-related development and this is a competitive situation right now. He said this is an opportunity to get to the table quickly.

Mr. Dupont said for every job we create or retain in manufacturing there becomes an opportunity to retain and create at least three non-manufacturing jobs.

Mr. Walker said he was fully on board on this. He said he had always wanted to demystify the idea that everyone had to go to college. He said he also wants to increase the magnet potential in our schools.

Mr. Dupont said he was giving his personal commitment on behalf of HCC to drive the project.

Mr. Sokolovic asked if there were educators available to teach the courses and if the certification requirements would be the same.

Mr. Dupont said four-credit programs at the community colleges require a master's degree. He said the vocational-technical model has been looked at, which has been approved by the Board of Regents, to take people with related experience and teach them to teach.

Mr. Walker said it was important to maintain neighborhood schools. He said he wanted to be sure that we do not ignore students that are more interested in liberal arts.

Mr. Larcheveque said his only concern is if advanced manufacturing is not the major overarching focus of the campus it may jeopardize the funding and the opportunity to sell it as such.

In response to a question, Mr. Larcheveque said the magnet concept was similar to Claytor Magnet with neighborhood students accepted first. He suggested staying away from the term liberal arts in favor of STEAM.

Mr. Walker suggested we go with the plan we have here, but we have an approach for someone who does not fit into advanced manufacturing.

Rep. Stafstrom said in order to sell this and to do it the right the school has to be predominantly advanced manufacturing with the other pathways more peripheral.

Mr. Walker said the liberal arts should almost be considered an asterisk.

Mr. Sokolovic said he was worried about pigeonholing a student into the manufacturing pathway. He noted he was a blue collar worker himself.

Mr. Larcheveque said when he brought up the concept some people have told him that it will just be another vo-tech school like Bullard Havens or Platt Tech. He said those schools serve a wide variety of trades and skills, but this approach is aimed at manufacturing.

Rep. Stafstrom said if the vo-tech schools were meeting the demand, there be wouldn't be 15,000 unfilled jobs in the state.

Mr. Walker said we have debated the title of pathway on several occasions. He said when it was first introduced to the committee he wasn't sure of the approach of the pathways. He said the title should be revisited. Asst. Superintendent Christiana Otuwa said she agreed.

Mr. Walker said manufacturing should be in the title somewhere despite the presence of culinary, construction and medical pathways.

Mr. Larcheveque said there are advanced manufacturing titled schools in districts in Philadelphia, Charlotte, and Erie, Pennsylvania.

In response to a question, Rep. Stafstrom said if we sell it as an economic development project, not just school building project, there is a great chance for success. He said we should go to state Department of Economic and Community Development first and have them come up with us to the Department of Education. He said hopefully Sikorsky and Mr. Dupont and the Board of Regents will go

with us, along with the Bridgeport Regional Business Council and the manufacturers' association.

Rep. Stafstrom suggested once the plan is in place by the board, it should be shopped locally before the approach to the state is made.

Mr. Weldon said the board needed to come to a consensus of how we're going to market this, so the staff can revise the document to be used. Mr. Walker said the board had to approve a curriculum document.

Dr. Williams said taking the medical magnet component out will focus things on advanced manufacturing.

Ms. Sokolovic asked about the sustainability of the program. He said the school would probably need three or four new specialists to teach courses.

Mr. Larcheveque said if the program was tacked onto a standard comprehensive school there would be a need for additional teachers. But if the advanced manufacturing concept is used the faculty could be more heavily concentrated in STEAM and the advanced manufacturing, which would be more a shifting of resources

Rep. Stafstrom said since the state was picking up 80 percent of the tab for a renovation it is even a harder sell to the state. Dr. Otuwa said she believed the city had agreed to the 20 percent funding. Mr. Weldon said an architect is doing a feasibility study as to whether to renovate Bassick as new or build a new building.

Mr. Walker said if we don't get the pathway approved it may set us back a year. He said that was one of the reasons he invited Mr. Weldon to the meeting.

Mr. Larcheveque said there had been unofficial conversations with some businesses about the approach.

Mr. Walker said for him a light bulb going on moment was the Career & Craftsmanship School presentation a few years ago and the great

improvements made in the students' attendance and their desire to be in school.

Mr. Larcheveque said one of this saddest days was when we had to cut the Career & Craftsmanship program.

Mr. Walker said the program should be a no-brainer and a slam duck, but he would not predict what the board would do. He said it would be great if the speakers could attend Tuesday's board meeting.

Mr. Larcheveque, Rep. Stafstrom and Mr. Dupont left the meeting.

Mr. Walker said the item had already been submitted to the agenda of the board's regular meeting. Dr. Otuwa said Dr. Williams would be the principal presenter at the board meeting. Mr. Walker said Mr. Larcheveque and Rep. Stafstrom could perhaps lead off with the genesis of the program.

Dr. Byron Williams, principal of Bassick, said the document presented to the committee incorporated all the changes from last week. He noted the School Governance Council wholeheartedly supported the approach.

Dr. Williams noted the reduction in projected students to one thousand.

Mr. Walker said from the discussion tonight leaving medical careers in was okay, but he suggested removing the liberal arts as a pathway, although it should be noted it would be available to students who want it. He said we can't require a student to go to another school except in the case of severe disciplinary problems or a special education need.

Mr. Sokolovic noted all students would have the same core graduation requirements, so these were more like elective pathways.

Mr. Walker said there are communities where every school has been made a magnet school, which is the opposite of neighborhood schools. He said he did not favor that approach.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

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