

Monday, June 2, 2025

MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING OF THE
BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held June 2,
2025, at Harding High School, 379 Grant Street,
Bridgeport, Connecticut.

Present were members Chair Jennifer Perez, Vice Chair Joseph Sokolovic, Akisha Cassermere, Andre Woodson, and Maritza Estremera Jimenez. Robert Traber, Willie Medina, Secretary Albert Benejan Grajales, and Christine Baptiste-Perez* joined the meeting subsequently as noted.

*remote participation

Interim Supt. Royce Avery was present.

The meeting was called to order at 6:39 p.m.

Nick Caruso of CAFE noted this was the sixth meeting of the board for training.

Chris Horan was introduced for his presentation

Mr. Traber arrived at the meeting.

Mr. Horan said he has worked with Mr. Caruso and Jody Goeler of CAFE in the area of communications as applied to the board.

Mr. Medina arrived at the meeting.

Mr. Horan said his agenda would include lessons he has learned over the years from working in the Boston public

schools; a small group exercise on public confidence; and improvement of communications from the board to constituents.

Mr. Benejan Grajales arrived at the meeting.

There was a segment when the board members introduced themselves and why they joined the board. Mr. Horan described his background.

Ms. Baptiste-Perez joined the meeting.

The small group exercise was held for board members to discuss which factors influence public opinion/perception about a school district.

Mr. Horan discussed board meetings as communications moments or opportunities.

There was a discussion of the “blame game” or finger-pointing. Mr. Horan said the public views the board and the superintendent as one big entity. There was a discussion of budget issues and delivering bad news. Mr. Horan said what the public cares least about is probably who is responsible for a crisis.

Mr. Horan described his work in the city of Holyoke, Massachusetts, where the state took over the district for ten years.

Mr. Horan discussed the district's website, social media and board behavior. There was talk about public forums to be held by the board.

Mr. Horan asked board members to reflect on what they learned tonight that can strengthen their effectiveness on the board, and what action steps they plan to take.

Ms. Perez said the board would be holding public forums in the future.

Mr. Horan discussed the importance of the communications office.

Dr. Avery said he would be meeting with the Commissioner of Education soon, and he will provide feedback on how things are going, including the training.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

Approved by the board on June 18, 2025