

Wednesday May 21, 2025

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held May 21, 2025, at Bridgeport City Hall, 45 Lyon Terrace, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

Present were members chair Jennifer Perez, Willie Medina, and Maritza Estremera Jimenez. Board members Joseph Sokolovic and Albert Benejan Grajales were present.

Interim Supt. Dr. Royce Avery was present.

The meeting was called to order at 5:32 p.m.

Mr. Medina moved to approve the minutes of the meeting of April 10, 2025. The motion was seconded by Ms. Perez and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on 2025-26 CABE membership.

Nestor Nkwo, chief financial officer, said the cost is \$25,905.

Mr. Sokolovic said there were several levels of CABE membership. Dr. Avery said he would provide information on that to the board before the Regular Meeting.

Mr. Medina moved “*to the full board CAGE membership for 2025 to be presented and moved for a vote for the full board for the contract of \$28,905.*” The motion was seconded by Ms. Perez and unanimously approved.

The next agenda was on a continuation agreement for SEL climate programming with Catalyst for Barnum School, BMA, and Dunbar School.

Nadira Clarke, grants director, said Catalyst was formerly known as RYASAP. At Barnum, the proposal is to continue a restorative practice facilitator for \$87,823 funded by the Commissioner’s Network. She said it is a standard subcontract.

In response to a question, Marc Donald of Catalyst, said the expenditure is for a social worker, including benefits.

In response to a question, Dr. Avery said the restorative practices used are the same concept as elsewhere in the district. He said there would be districtwide focus on restorative practice techniques next year. He noted the district facilitators were removed from the budget.

Margaret Hughes, executive director of school turnaround, said the presenters tonight were funded through the Commissioner’s Network or School Improvement Grants.

In response to a question, Dr. Avery said he would defer to legal on language in the contract.

In response to a question, Ms. Clarke said the services are already being provided, although there have been no payments made. Dr. Avery said the approval on the School Improvement Grants from the state were late.

Mr. Sokolovic thanked Catalyst for providing services on spec. Ms. Clarke said the state approved the grant into January. Mr. Sokolovic said it was strange to approve a contract with two months left. Ms. Clarke said the Alliance Grant was not approved until February-March, which led to awkward situations.

Mr. Medina moved *“to move to the full board a continuation agreement of SEL/climate programming with Catalyst CT at Barnum School.”* The motion was seconded by Ms. Perez and unanimously approved.

Mr. Medina moved *“to move to the full board a continuation agreement of SEL/climate programming with Catalyst Connecticut at Bridgeport Military Academy.”* The motion was seconded by Ms. Perez and unanimously approved.

Mr. Medina moved *“to move to the full board a continuation agreement with SEL/ climate programming with Catalyst Connecticut at Dunbar School.”* The motion was seconded by Ms. Perez and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on the updated district organizational chart.

Dr. Avery said he was distributing a sheet he described as a precursor. He said over the next few weeks he will be presenting a reorganization of the district's structure. He said the handout had samples of how other districts are organized and research documents on best practices on central officer staffing structures. He described it as food for thought today.

Dr. Avery said he is trying to make the reorganization as cost neutral as possible. He said he didn't think the district would get much more money from the state.

In response to a question, Dr. Avery said he would provide recommendations at a later time.

Mr. Sokolovic said he was the first one to say we need a leaner administration because of the budget constraints we have, but that's not saying these jobs aren't necessary. He said we have the leanest administration in the state on a per-pupil basis. He said the governor and the mayor are saying we're wasting money on administrators, which is throwing smoke on their failure to fully fund our budget.

Dr. Avery said he was trying to figure what to do to help the district and he doesn't deal with negativity very well.

Mr. Sokolovic said it was his responsibility to rage against the machine that results in underfunding our children. He said he supported Dr. Avery.

Mr. Benejan Grajales said he was disappointed in Bridgeport state reps that said they were going to take care of Bridgeport Public Schools. He said he wanted actions. He thanked Dr. Avery for never giving up,

Ms. Estremera Jimenez moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Perez and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod