

Monday, April 7, 2025

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held April 7, 2025, at Bridgeport City Hall, 45 Lyon Terrace, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 6:40 p.m.

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

\*remote participation

Interim Supt. Dr. Royce Avery was present.

Ms. Perez said the agenda item was the board's third training session with CAFE, covering the board-superintendent relationship.

Nick Caruso and Jody Goeler of CAFE and David Erwin were present. Mr. Caruso said Mr. Erwin was part of the state technical assistance team. Mr. Erwin said he had been a superintendent in Connecticut in various districts for twenty-five years. He said he teaches at Sacred Heart University and has done coaching in the past with Supt. Testani and Joseph

Raiola. He said he served on the board of education in his community for four years.

Mr. Caruso said there seems to be issue in Bridgeport in terms of the board-superintendent relationship and who does what. He said a large part of that relationship is who does what. He said there seems to be a greater sense of distrust with the superintendency.

Mr. Medina\* joined the meeting.

There was a discussion of proceeding in small groups of board members to create comments. Mr. Caruso said he believed FOIA only applied to actions.

There were comments by board members on the ideal relationship between board members and a superintendent, and discussion of aspects of the relationship, including trust.

Mr. Caruso distributed a worksheet on tasks performed by the board and/or the superintendent. Among the topics were recommend personnel for employment; set goals for the school system; evaluate principals; set policies for the school system; hire the CFO; adopt salary schedules; data on student achievement; procedures for electing student body president; determine the length of lunch periods; approve field trips; establish evaluation process for staff; school redistricting; conduct termination

hearings; terminating a principal; policy on major student offenses; provide adequate resources for student success; recommend non-renewals for teachers; establish procedures to implement policies; create structures for systemwide improvement work; approve/remove books from school library; and approve the payment of bills.

The board members and Mr. Caruso and Dr. Goeler discussed which fell into the responsibilities of the board and which were under the superintendent.

There was a discussion about communication with the superintendent. Board members mentioned greater participation in meetings following the change in leadership. There was a discussion of the work of committees and the activities of board members on Facebook.

Mr. Caruso said he would like to see a discussion next time about district goals, along with a plan of action to make that happen. Ms. Perez said the commissioner's office would like to see this implemented.

Mr. Caruso discussed his draft of goals discussed previously by the board. He listed them as strategic planning, fiscal responsibility, updating policies, improving relationships between board and superintendent, creating culture, and review of board

subcommittees. There was a discussion of a possible timetable for implementing the items presented.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

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