

Monday, June 12, 2023

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held June 12, 2023, at Bridgeport Regional Aquaculture Science & Technology Education Center, 60 Saint Stephens Road, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m.

Present were Chair Bobbi Brown, Secretary Albert Benejan, David Gelin**, Michael Maccarone*, Robert Traber, Akisha Cassermere**, and Joseph Sokolovic. Vice Chair Christine Baptiste-Perez** participated remotely and arrived in person subsequently as noted.

(*remote participation) **(began the meeting remote, arrived in person subsequently as noted)

Interim Supt. Alyshia N. Perrin was present.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Zachary Braca, a rising junior at Sacred Heart University, said he created a youth leadership program for high school students in Bridgeport for the Connecticut Roundtable on Climate and Jobs. He described the leadership program, which included biweekly meetings and a cleanup of trash.

Mr. Gelin joined the meeting in person.

David Roebuck said he was speaking on behalf of students at Tisdale School. He said the city considers the East End an armpit. He said the students have dangerous conditions in their playground from broken bottles and the school says

the sole custodian can't keep up with the job. He said Ms. Tisdale was his former science teacher and he has two grandchildren attending the school.

Gladys Walker-Jones said she was also a product of Jettie S. Tisdale. She said the focus of the board and the superintendent should be to work together for educational excellence. She described the need for real equitable community engagement. She urged the best decision be made for the superintendent of the Bridgeport Public Schools.

APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES:

Mr. Benejan moved approval of the minutes of the Regular Meeting of May 8, 2023. The motion was seconded by Ms. Allen and unanimously approved.

Mr. Benejan moved approval of the minutes of the Regular Meeting of May 22, 2003. The motion was seconded by Mr. Traber and unanimously approved.

CHAIR REPORT:

Ms. Brown congratulated all the students who graduated today. She said board members shook the hands of over a thousand students. There was a round of applause for the graduates. She said it was great to see the students excel.

COMMITTEE REPORTS/REFERRALS:

Mr. Sokolovic said the Diversity Equity & Inclusion Committee will meet in the third week of August or early September.

Mr. Sokolovic said the Finance Committee will meet this Wednesday.

Mr. Sokolovic said the Governance Committee will meet at the beginning of the next school year.

Ms. Brown said the Personnel & Contracts Committee met in late May and brought forth items to be covered tonight and at a special meeting on Thursday.

Mr. Benejan said the Students & Families Committee met on May 25. PAC/PTSO was discussed, along with a parent handbook, and LGBT. He said the next meeting will be September 21st.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

Supt. Perrin said Dr. Baldwin will be meeting with the Bassick-BMA stakeholder group on June 14th to continue the conversation.

The superintendent said on May 30th members of the facilities department, Mr. Sokolovic, Mr. Traber, and Mr. Benejan, all met at a possible new site for the adult learning center.

Supt. Perrin said Harding High and Columbus School were accepted into the Commissioner's Network. Cross, Dunbar, BMA, Barnum, Bassick, Harding, and Marin will receive funding from the Low-Performing Schools Bond Grants as well.

The superintendent said the district administered 51,635 assessments out of the 52,328 assigned.

Supt. Perrin said over a thousand students graduated today at the Amphitheater. The *R/V Kaye Williams*, the research vessel at the Aquaculture School, will be christened on June 14th.

The superintendent said the Math Meet was held on June 1st at Sacred Heart University; twenty schools and 120 students from Grades 7 and 8 participated. John Winthrop School won first place, with second place going to Blackham. The most improved school was Geraldine Claytor School.

Ms. Cassermere arrived at the meeting.

OLD BUSINESS:

The next agenda item was review and discussion of scoresheets for the superintendent evaluation of Ms. Perrin.

Ms. Brown said Ms. Perrin was evaluated in three areas: relations with the board, community relations, and personal management and relationships. She said Ms. Allen, Mr. Traber, Mr. Gelin, and Mr. Maccarone did not participate in the evaluation, some because they were new to the board.

Ms. Brown said Supt. Perrin received a final average score of 4.33, which is considered a good evaluation.

Mr. Sokolovic said this was his sixth evaluation of a superintendent or interim superintendent, and this is the best evaluation he has given. He said Ms. Perrin has been doing a fine job, especially given hot issues dropped in her lap from previous administrations.

Ms. Baptiste-Perez* joined the meeting. She said Ms. Perrin had a good record maintaining stability in the district. She said she did not have a copy of her evaluation in front of her.

Mr. Benejan said he had great communication with Supt. Perrin for the short period she has been with us. He said she took action right away on concerns that he brought to her. He said former superintendents gave excuses or never did it.

Ms. Brown said Supt. Perrin did a really good job of managing in all three areas in a short amount of time and did a fine job of moving the district forward.

Ms. Brown said in the spirit of transparency she would read off each board member's score and they would be placed on the district's website. Mr. Sokolovic's overall score was 4.5. Ms. Cassermere's overall score was 3.67. Mr. Benejan's overall score was 4.73. Ms. Brown's overall score was 4.72.

Ms. Brown said some board members did not score in the category of personal management and relationship because they were not able to know the interworking of her and her team.

Mr. Sokolovic said each score in the three categories is based on seven or eight different criteria.

Supt. Perrin said the evaluation process was interesting, and the feedback she received was valuable and gave insight into being able to move forward.

NEW BUSINESS:

The next agenda item was a facilities and operation action plan to utilize the remaining \$7.6 million of ESSER funds.

Jorge Garcia, director of building operations and facilities maintenance, presented. He said the process of looking at adding air-conditioning at Columbus and Cross Schools revealed the expense of the projects (\$13 million) would exceed the remaining ESSER funds.

Mr. Garcia said he would like to pivot to items such as replacing air-handling units at Curiale School; HVAC in the pool area at the JFK Campus; the replacement of ten boilers in the district; and a continuation of the HVAC control work we've been doing districtwide. He said asbestos abatement was also needed at Skane, exterior doors at Marin and JFK, and a renewal of the second chiller at Fairchild Wheeler.

Mr. Garcia said with the fiscal cliff approaching it is essential to get to a point where we have a stable foundation to build on. He said the district has not had consistent, stable funding for infrastructure. He said in the future the air-conditioning at Columbus and Cross could be approached via a grant application at the state level. He said the projects would have included relocating students, which was not feasible in the ESSER time frame.

Mr. Benejan said Mr. Garcia knows what he is doing, and he trusts him.

Ms. Baptiste-Perez joined the meeting in person.

She noted there were contingency plans for playgrounds if there is money left over. Mr. Garcia said there were also contingency plans for further asbestos work.

Ms. Allen moved “*to approve this item.*” The motion was seconded by Ms. Baptiste-Perez and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was awarding a vision RFP going from VSP to EyeMed for active staff members’ benefits.

Ulysses Rogers, director of payroll and benefits, said over a three-year span the switch would save \$77,000 between the city and the board, without suffering any utilization issues or coverage.

In response to a question, Mr. Rogers said three providers submitted bids and EyeMed had the most robust offer. He said the provider has the same quality utilization as VSP, along with an option to buy additional insurance at the employee’s cost.

In response to a question, Mr. Rogers said possibly less than two percent of employees will have to change providers due to the change.

In response to a question, Mr. Rogers said he was working on a process model for getting contracts to the board, which would be presented at the beginning of the school year.

Mr. Sokolovic moved to “*award vision RFP going from VSP to EyeMed for active staff member benefits.*” The motion was seconded by Ms. Baptiste-Perez and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on an RFP for dental care. Mr. Roger said he provided a copy of the RFP. He said grading and analysis is still taking place, with the results to be provided to the board at a later date.

In response to a question, Mr. Rogers said this is a joint RFP with the city. He said the analysis will take place with the outside consultant. Ms. Brown said a special meeting could take place during the summer to cover this matter.

In response to a question, Mr. Rogers said the RFP was issued some time ago with the goal of approving it before September 1st. Mr. Sokolovic said he could not in good conscience vote to retroactively approve something that's already been done.

Mr. Traber said he did not recall Mr. Rogers saying at the committee meeting that the RFP had been issued. Mr. Rogers said the request is for the board's permission to go over the analysis data from the RFP. He said he believed the board wanted to see the actual RFP before it went into Bid Sync.

Mr. Traber said this is why the process that Mr. Rogers is going to put in place is needed.

In response to a question, Mr. Rogers said an RFP for dental services has gone out and bids have come in, but no analysis has been done yet. Mr. Sokolovic said this was unacceptable because approval is being requested for something that is already being looked at.

Mr. Rogers said the dental RFP was in the same status as the vision RFP, and it was sent out to bid in April.

No board member offered a motion. Ms. Brown said further discussion was needed at the Contracts Committee.

In response to a question, Mr. Rogers said if the board took no action, it would be another situation as with the vision

RFP. He said if there was a delay in meeting the deadline, the dental coverage for board employees would remain at the current rates.

In response to a question, Mr. Rogers said he was totally clear on the procedures moving forward.

Mr. Sokolovic said this was not a new policy. He said this has happened to the board before on an issue regarding workers' comp. He said we have to send a clear message we're not going to rubberstamp everything without being a full and equal partner with the city. He suggested going out for a new RFP and getting new bids.

Mr. Traber said we clearly need to know about this ahead of time. He said there is nothing about us voting to approve analyzing bids; there are votes to issue an RFP and then a vote to approve the proposed acceptance of a proposal. He said Mr. Rogers works for us and he should be protecting and covering our interests. He said there had been a misrepresentation of reality here.

Mr. Maccarone said he was also surprised like Mr. Traber and Mr. Sokolovic.

The next agenda item was solicitation for the food service bid for the 2023-24 school year.

Keoma Steele, director of food and nutrition services, said he was seeking approval for annual food service bids. He said the menu cycle will cover all new breakfast, lunch, and after-school suppers at the elementary schools and high schools.

In response to a question, Mr. Steele said gluten-free options are always offered.

Mr. Traber moved “*to approve issue solicitation of annual food service bids for 2023-24.*” The motion was seconded by Ms. Allen.

In response to a question, Mr. Steele said the price changes in food won’t be known until we go out to bid.

The motion was unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on the possible nomination for the appointment of Bridgeport Public Schools Superintendent.

Mr. Sokolovic nominated Alyshia Perrin for superintendent. Mr. Gelin nominated Dr. Carmela Levy-David.

Dr. Carmela Levy-David was chosen by a 5-4 vote. Voting in favor of Dr. Levy-David were members Gelin, Cassermere, Benejan, Baptiste-Perez, and Maccarone. Voting in favor of Ms. Perrin were members Sokolovic, Traber, Brown, and Allen.

Ms. Brown congratulated Dr. Levy-David. She congratulated Ms. Perrin on a job well done for our district.

Mr. Benejan thanked Mr. Perrin for all her hard work and the time she was here. He said she did a great job in the short time, and it was an honor working with her. He said he would be here for anything she needs.

Ms. Baptiste-Perez moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Benejan and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

