

**BERLIN BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**March 9, 2009**

**MINUTES**

**REGULAR MEETING**

Attendance: Gary Brochu  
Michael Baczewski  
Julie Erickson  
Michelle Hartel  
Irene Matulis  
Kathleen O'Donnell-Moss  
Richard Price  
Christopher Puzio  
Anthony Recck

Arrived at 7:08 p.m.

Also in attendance: Superintendent of Schools Dr. Michael Cicchetti; Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Rena Klebart; Director of Business Operations Roman Czuchta; Director of Human Resources Joseph Costa; Principal of McGee Middle School Brian Benigni; and District Literacy Coordinator Debra Thibault.

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Brochu called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. in the Board of Education ("the Board") meeting room at 238 Kensington Road, Berlin, CT. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. A Moment of Silence was observed.

**II. BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS**

Ms. Erickson reported on her attendance at the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education's *A Day on the Hill* on March 4, 2009 where she had an opportunity to speak with legislators regarding issues concerning education. Ms. Erickson reported on her attendance at the annual College Planning Evening and College Panel for junior parents and students sponsored by the Berlin High School Counseling Department on Thursday, March 5, 2009. Ms. Erickson reported on her attendance at the town-wide spelling bee, sponsored by the Junior Woman's Club of Berlin, commending Ms. Matulis for her tremendous work.

Ms. Matulis reported on her attendance at the town-wide spelling bee, sponsored by the Junior Woman's Club of Berlin.

Ms. O'Donnell-Moss reported on her attendance at the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education's *A Day on the Hill* on March 4, 2009. Ms. O'Donnell-Moss thanked Ms. Erickson for attending the town-wide spelling bee in her absence as she attended the Northeast Wrestling Tournament. Ms. O'Donnell-Moss provided Board members with tickets received from the Berlin Band Parents Association for its annual Pasta with Pizzazz dinner on Thursday, March 19, 2009, in appreciation of the work the Board does.

Mr. Puzio reported on his attendance at the Hubbard School dance on Friday, March 6, 2009, commending the large number of staff members who attended.

Mr. Costa provided Board members with an update regarding the ongoing recruitment efforts and advertising this spring for anticipated 2008-09 teaching vacancies.

Mr. Czuchta reported the Town Council approved the transfer of \$39,005 to the Board of Education for monies received from the State for fuel assistance. Mr. Czuchta reported on the contract the Town Council awarded for diesel/fuel oil, which will have a positive impact on the transportation budget.

Ms. Klebart reported on the status of the District's Technology Plan. Ms. Klebart reported on the meeting she, along with Debra Thibault, had with Dr. William Farr, professor at the University of Connecticut. Dr. Farr reviewed the District's literacy program K-5 and will make a recommendation to the District on how to strengthen the literacy program.

Dr. Cicchetti reported, as a follow up to the State Department of Education's audit concerning the District's compliance with the PJ case, the District received notification that all requirements have been met. Dr. Cicchetti will provide in Friday's Update a copy of McGee Middle School Science Teacher Shawn Pelletier's article *Teacher's Toolkit: Cracking the Method*, which appears in the March 2009 *Science Scope*. Dr. Cicchetti recognized Board of Education Member Appreciation Month, speaking for all administrators and staff members, for appreciation of all the work the Board does on behalf of staff and students.

Mr. Brochu reported on his attendance at the town-wide spelling bee, sponsored by the Junior Woman's Club of Berlin, the Mid-State Collaborative meeting held last week and the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education's *A Day on the Hill* on March 4, 2009. Mr. Brochu reminded Board members of the Realtor's breakfast on Friday, March 13, 2009, and indicated if enrollment is low, the breakfast will be rescheduled. Mr. Brochu reported the Board of Education and Town Council Budget Committee will meet Monday evening regarding the budget. Mr. Brochu reported the Committee on Education held hearings at the Connecticut General Assembly concerning Raised Bill Number 1015 to authorize towns to provide for nonpartisan boards of education. Mr. Brochu reported the Berlin High School girl's basketball team is in the State quarterfinals and will be playing against Haddam-Killingworth Wednesday, March 11, 2009 in Middletown.

### **III. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS**

Ms. Jan Zagorski, 63 Grandview Avenue, Berlin, Connecticut, addressed the Board concerning the Berlin FIRST robotics team, which traveled to Boston, Massachusetts, on March 4-7, 2009, to participate in the FIRST Robotics Regional Competition.

### **IV. CONSENT AGENDA**

- A. Approval of Minutes - Regular Meeting of February 23, 2009
- B. Payment of Bills – Period ending February 28, 2009
- C. Overnight Field Trip Request – McGee School – FIRST Robotics Team, Atlanta, GA, April 15-20, 2009

McGee School Principal Brian Benigni requested permission for the FIRST Robotics Team to travel to Atlanta, Georgia to attend the FIRST Robotics Championship Competition being held April 15-20, 2009. The team will compete against teams from all over the world with the robot they built during the six-week build time. This trip will allow students to compete and interact with other robotics teams. The

event promotes teamwork and professionalism. Students will also have an opportunity to network with engineers and become familiar with careers related to math, science, and technology.

D. Resignations

Catherine Ryan, math instructional support teacher at Emma Hart Willard School, has submitted her resignation effective June 30, 2009.

Dawn Pooler, teacher of special education at Catherine M. McGee School, has submitted her resignation effective April 30, 2009.

Add item concerning Resignation

**Moved by Ms. O'Donnell-Moss, seconded by Mr. Recck, to add an item to the consent agenda for the acceptance of a resignation.**

**FAVOR: ALL  
MOTION CARRIED: 7:0**

Troy Sheffield, teacher of integrated language arts at Catherine M. McGee School, has submitted his resignation effective June 30, 2009.

**Moved by Ms. O'Donnell-Moss, seconded by Mr. Recck, to approve the consent agenda as presented.**

**FAVOR: ALL  
MOTION CARRIED: 7:0**

**V. INFORMATION AND REPORTS**

- A. Activity Fund Reports
1. Berlin High School Enterprise Fund – Period ending January 31, 2009
  2. Berlin Public Schools Activity Fund – Period ending January 31, 2009
  3. Cafeteria Fund – Period ending January 31, 2009

These reports were noted with interest.

B. Word Generation – McGee School

This past fall, McGee Middle School implemented the Word Generation program. Word Generation is a word study program that focuses on teaching *academic vocabulary* across the disciplines at the middle school level. It was designed by the Boston Public Schools and the Strategic Education Research Partnership Institute. Five new words and a specific topic are introduced to students each week in language arts. Throughout the week, students engage in a variety of activities in the content areas that support the understanding of these words in various contexts. Word Generation is designed to provide students and teachers with a common language for discussing literacy and comprehension strategies across the curriculum. McGee School Principal Brian Benigni provided an overview of the Word Generation program, assessments and highlighted the goals of the program. District Literacy

Coordinator Debra Thibault provided the Board with an example of a week's lesson and discussed the use of the program at the high school. Mr. Benigni and Ms. Thibault responded to questions from Board members.

C. Educational Specifications for Griswold School Relocatable Classrooms – Status Report

Director of Business Operations Roman Czuchta reported the engineering firm will present to the Public Building Commission this Thursday a preliminary draft for the relocatable classrooms. If approved by the Public Building Commission, the preliminary draft will be presented to Board of Education at its March 23, 2009 meeting. Once approved by the Board, the preliminary draft will move forward to the Town Council for funding.

D. Technology Bond – Status Report

Director of Business Operations Roman Czuchta reported on the meeting held last week with the Town and Board of Education staff members to review the wide area network and assess the next steps. A list is being compiled of servers and software that need to be updated or replaced.

E. McGee School Indoor Air Quality Study – Final Report

For the past six months, a study committee has been looking into indoor air quality issues at Catherine M. McGee School. Michael Williams, a representative from Fuss & O'Neill, met with representatives from the Town and schools, including Gary Brochu and Adam Salina, on Thursday, February 26th, to review the findings and recommendations of the McGee School Indoor Air Quality Study. Mr. Williams discussed the key aspects of the report which included the existing conditions; ventilation; infiltration and building pressurization; moisture and humidity issues; recommendations for moisture and standing water, ventilation and space heating and cooling; construction phasing: re-configure unit ventilators (heat and cool only); and opinion of costs. Mr. Williams responded to questions from Board members. A copy of his report, which the Town Council discussed at their March 3 meeting, was provided to the Board.

**VI. RECOMMENDED ACTION**

**State Healthy Food Certification**

Section 10-215f of the Connecticut General Statutes requires that all Connecticut public school districts that are eligible to participate in the healthy food certification take action to certify whether all food items sold to students will or will not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published pursuant to section 10-215e of the Connecticut General Statutes for the period of July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010.

Over the course of the past three years, the Board and administration – as well as representatives from parent organizations and booster clubs - have had several discussions regarding the district's participation in the grant program that is part of Public Act 06-63. It is the consensus of the Resources and Capacity-building Committee and administration that the district decline participation in this grant program for the 2009-10 school year. Director of Business Operations Roman Czuchta and Director of Food Services Timothy Prosinski project that any funding received from the grant would be offset by losses in sales and fundraising efforts due to the restrictions that the grant imposes on districts. Separate

and apart from Berlin's participation in the grant program, changes made over the past three school years with respect to food services offerings have provided students with more healthy food choices during lunches.

**Moved by Ms. Erickson, seconded by Mr. Recck, that the Berlin Board of Education will not participate in the optional Healthy Foods Certification program under Section 10-215f of the Connecticut General Statutes for the 2009-10 school year.**

**FAVOR: ALL  
MOTION CARRIED: 7:0**

It is recommended that the Board approve the sale of soda during after school events, which are defined by Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes as "an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity." As during the 2008-09 school year, these sales will occur outside of the school day.

**Moved by Ms. O'Donnell-Moss, seconded by Mr. Recck, that the Berlin Board of Education allow the sale of beverages (to students) that are not listed in Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes for the 2009-10 school year.**

**FAVOR: ALL  
MOTION CARRIED: 7:0**

**VII. ADJOURNMENT to Committee Meetings**

**Moved by Ms. O'Donnell-Moss, seconded by Mr. Recck, to adjourn the meeting to committee meetings at 8:43 p.m.**

**FAVOR: ALL  
MOTION CARRIED: 7:0**

Respectfully submitted,