

Berlin Board of Education
Special Meeting
August 13, 2002
MINUTES

Present: Joseph Annunziata
James Baranowski
Gary Brochu
John McIntosh
Kevin Porter
John Richards

Absent: Patricia DeVivo
Kevin Murphy
Janice Zaccardo

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Brochu called the meeting to order at 6:53 p.m. in the Board of Education (the "Board") meeting room at 238 Kensington Road, Berlin, CT. This special meeting was convened immediately following a public hearing in the Town Council chambers where discussion and a vote on additional funding to be provided the Board of Education was held.

A. Pledge of Allegiance – Moment of Silence

B. Audience of Citizens

None.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE 2002-2003 BUDGET

The Superintendent provided a summary of the recommendation that was presented to the Board at the last meeting, held July 18, 2002. There was no change from prior versions, with the exception of a quantification of the additional funding proposed for the Board's budget, as approved by the Town meeting held just prior to this meeting. Specifically, the Town approved the transfer of \$136,431 from additional ECS and transportation funding, as received from the approved State budget, and additional \$45,422 was to be transferred from surplus accounts to the Board's budget.

Mr. Paskiewicz reiterated his recommendation as to how the funds should be allocated to best address the needs of the district. Considering the additional funding of \$181,853 mentioned, and consistent with the July 18th recommendation, the following changes to the Board's budget for 2002-2003 were proposed:

Superintendent's Proposal of Application of Additional Funds

Restore the co-curricular programs, specifically:	\$112,956
McGee co-curricular	\$97,531
Elementary co-curricular	10,525
BHS co-curricular	4,900
Hire a new teacher for Grade 4, Griswold School	\$45,422
Total funds to be applied:	\$158,378
Total funds referred to Educational Resources Committee	<u>23,475</u>
Total additional funds approved for Board of Education	\$181,853

Mr. Paskiewicz noted that the proposal did not place the above items in a priority order, but that these were the highest priority items from those discussed at the last meeting. He noted that the BHS co-curricular activities were still \$5,100 less than last year, where the planned increase in ticket prices will be used to offset this reduction from Board direct support. The co-curricular funding shown above restores all programs, sports, and number of scheduled athletic contests to a level commensurate with the previous year. The Grade 4 teacher at Griswold School will address the class sizes forecast to be 27-28 for 2002-2003. The additional section provided would reduce the class sizes to 22-23 for 2002-2003.

Moved by Mr. Richards, seconded by Mr. Annunziata to accept the Superintendent's recommended changes to the Board of Education's budget for 2002-2003, as presented.

Mr. Richards commented that while the budget situation had been improved with the action proposed, the Board had not been made whole. He noted that the handout the Superintendent provided showed that the shortfall to the Board's minimum need budget was \$252,000 (see top page 2 of handout). As the handout did not address the addition of a Grade 4 teacher until the "options" section at the bottom (below the gray band), and assuming that the funds from the surplus were directed to that additional item, the additional ECS grant funds of \$136,000 approved by the Town meeting reduces the shortfall to \$116,000. Said another way, considering the mandated Special Education staff increases and the Griswold class size issue, the district would still provide \$116,000 less than last year in its basic operational budget. This means that planned cuts in equipment of \$58,000 and supplies of \$20,000 still remain, as well as the loss of the gifted program at McGee for \$31,000, building use reductions of \$26,000, and \$5,000 for BHS co-curricular programs. While he noted that this is partially offset by the \$23,475 of funds referred to the Educational Resources committee, his conclusion was that the community should be cognizant that this additional funding still leaves the Board's budget to maintain the district less than last year. Further, with no capital

funding forthcoming, the Superintendent has implemented a freeze on non-salary accounts pending final enrollment and special needs analysis to be done once the 2002-2003 school year begins.

Mr. Brochu reminded the Board that this amended budget would include a total of two new teachers, one for BHS special education and the proposed additional Grade 4 teacher at Griswold. He commented that the number of staff to be added to the budget has been inflated by others and that it counts the four special education and 0.5 pre-school aides as certified teachers. While in part a semantics issue, he noted that the aides' salary is approximately one half that of a certified teacher. Thus, calling all new staff "teachers" may give the community a wrong sense of what has been added. He also noted that these decisions are driven by a larger special education population moving in to BHS and the aides are mandated by PPT conference decisions.

Doc McIntosh questioned the need for an additional Grade 4 teacher. He claimed that the Grade 3 at Griswold next year could be reduced from the planned 5 sections to 4 sections, resulting in an increase from 19 to 23-24 students per section. Mr. Brochu said that this recommendation has been before the Board since its last meeting on July 18 and that the need to finalize the situation is imperative with the start of school 2 1/2 weeks away. He said that the Superintendent's letter to Griswold parents was shared with the Board and that no objection prior to tonight had been voiced. Mr. Richards refuted Doc McIntosh's claim that there would be an additional section needed for Grade 5 the following year. He noted that the class size issue is reviewed annually and that were the numbers to remain the same, the additional section could move to the fourth grade. Mr. Brochu reminded the Board that the current section levels at Griswold were 5 each for Grades 1, 2, and 3 and 4 each for Grades 4 and 5. He noted that the general rule had been to keep 5 class sections at the lower, primary grades to keep the class sizes there at a minimum, as those younger students need more attention. This provides maximum instructional time per student and proper supervision for the younger students. The Superintendent added, and it was agreed by the Board, that it is too early to estimate what the 2003-2004 year enrollments would look like. He reiterated that his evaluation of the current 2002-2003 enrollments has resulted in his recommendation to hire an additional Grade 4 teacher.

On asking for any additional comments, Mr. Brochu acknowledged a parent comment from Mrs. Donna Salwocki. In response to her request for confirmation of the action planned in the motion, Mr. Brochu stated that the motion would reduce the planned reductions approved by the Board previously by \$113,000, reducing the remaining shortfall to approximately \$135,000. This would be subject to review by the Educational Resources committee, noting the approximately \$23,000 of the additional funding approved today that is not covered by the motion and that the Grade 4 teacher is an additional item added, and funded, today.

A vote was taken on the motion:

FAVOR: Annunziata, Baranowski, Brochu, Porter, Richards
OPPOSED: McIntosh
MOTION CARRIED: 5:1

The Superintendent made brief final comments, noting that the plans for an additional classroom at Griswold for the new Grade 4 section were moving forward. Also, the addition of athletic contests should be able to be accomplished prior to the start of school. Mr. Brochu quickly reminded the Board to submit their Board self-evaluation forms, as these would be summarized and presented at the next regular Board meeting in August.

**Moved by Mr. Baranowski, seconded by Mr. Porter to adjourn the meeting
at 7:10 p.m.**

FAVOR: All
MOTION CARRIED: 5:0

Submitted by,

John M. Richards, Secretary
Berlin Board of Education

JMR:jmr (Original 8/23/02)