

BERLIN BOARD OF EDUCATION
February 8, 2021
MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING

Attendance: Julia Dennis
Steven Jenkins
Jaymee Miller – Absent
Timothy Oakes
Mark Pruzin
Adam Salina
Kari Sassu, Ph.D.
Tracy Sisti
Stephen Weber
Student Representatives: Ryan McGowan – Absent
Lindsey Leary – Absent

Also in attendance: Superintendent of Schools Brian J. Benigni; Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Erin McGurk; Director of Business Operations Jeffrey Cugno; Finance Director Ashley Dorsey; Director of Pupil Personnel Services Linda Holian; Director of Human Resources Denise Parsons; Principal of Berlin High School Eileen Eustis; Principal of McGee Middle School Salvatore Urso; Principal of Hubbard School Alfred Souza; and Principal of Willard School Megan Sirois.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Dennis called the meeting to order at 5:54 p.m. in the Dr. Robert P. Long auditorium at Berlin High School, 139 Patterson Way, Berlin, Connecticut. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

II. 2021-2022 BUDGET OVERVIEW TO THE PUBLIC

The Board held an informational meeting for the public so community members could provide input on the budget prior to approval. Ms. Dennis provided a slideshow of the Proposed Operating Budget for 2021-2022. Ms. Dennis stated Superintendent Benigni's goals for the 2021-2022 budget are to continue to provide quality education to all students at the standard that Berlin parents expect; maintain favorable class sizes and adequate course offerings; provide all students with an education that prepares them with multiple options and opportunities upon graduation; ensure that appropriate courses, structures and staff are available for new graduation requirements; provide adequate safety measures (COVID requirements), equipment and systems that allow all students and staff a safe learning environment; and expand the Berlin Transition Academy in partnership with Cromwell Public Schools. Ms. Dennis stated the Board of Education's goals for the 2021-2022 budget are to effectively communicate the level of funding necessary to continue to provide a quality education that the students, parents and community expect; transparency and fiscal responsibility.

The slideshow presentation consisted of a summary of the account groups within the budget executive summary; five year FTE comparisons teachers/certified staff; 2021-2022 new staff requests; Elementary & Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) and the Corona Relief Fund (CRF); Capital Improvement and Equipment Requests; Hartford Open Choice Enrollment; Hartford Open Choice Budget; Hartford Open Choice Budget Potential Alternatives; Budget Funding History; five year average increase for Berlin's adopted budgets; Berlin and State per pupil expenditure; Board of Education percentage of Town Budget compared to surrounding districts; share of revenue sources; and Board of Education operational funding sources.

Salvatore Bordonaro, liaison to the Board of Education as well as a member of the Board of Finance for the Town of Berlin, 81 Gianna Lane, Berlin, Connecticut, questioned if the proposed budget considers COVID expenses. Superintendent Benigni stated the proposed budget does not provide for any personal protective equipment, any additional devices or staffing. The proposed budget does provide for the Zoom system.

Mr. Bordonaro questioned, as the projected student population for next year will drop 124 students, approximately 5%, are there any adjustments to accommodate for this drop. Superintendent Benigni stated the Prowda report is a projection of where the district could be. Typically, a position is held at the elementary level because of the unknown kindergarten enrollment. The only new positions in the proposed budget are the three paraprofessionals.

Superintendent Benigni stated the Board of Education will submit its Budget to the Town on February 23, 2021; on March 3, 2021, the Board of Education and Board of Finance will meet to review the budget; and from the Board of Finance, the budget will move to the Town Council. The Budget Forum will be held on March 30, 2021 at 1:30 p.m. at the Senior Center, and the annual Town budget public hearing will be at 7:00 p.m. in the Berlin High School Auditorium.

III. ADJOURNMENT

At 6:57 p.m., a motion was made by Mr. Salina, seconded by Dr. Sassu, to adjourn.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 8:0; including President Dennis

Respectfully submitted,

Tracy Sisti, Secretary, Berlin Board of Education