

BERLIN BOARD OF EDUCATION
April 26, 2021
MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING

Attendance: Julia Dennis
Steven Jenkins
Jaymee Miller – departed at 7:26 p.m.
Timothy Oakes
Mark Pruzin
Adam Salina
Kari Sassu, Ph.D.
Tracy Sisti
Stephen Weber
Student Representatives: Ryan McGowan
Lindsey Leary

Also in attendance: 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; Principal of Willard School Megan Sirois; and Principal of Griswold School David Kitzman.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Dennis called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. in the auditorium at Catherine M. McGee Middle School, 899 Norton Road, Berlin, CT. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

II. STUDENT PRESENTATION – BERLIN HIGH SCHOOL

Choral students Tori Cascone, Abby Ferland, and Alex Tzetzto performed three songs from the upcoming production of "Mamma Mia!"

III. COMMITTEE REPORTS/CORRESPONDENCE TO THE BOARD

A. Report of Student Representatives

Miss Leary reported Berlin High School lacrosse, track, tennis, softball and baseball teams are all having a success spring season, and the Berlin High School chapter of the National Honor Society induction ceremony will be held on May 6, 2021.

Mr. McGowan reported AP testing will begin on Monday, May 3, 2021, and occur throughout the month, and the high school spring musical "Mamma Mia!" will be performed this Thursday and Friday evening with two performances on Saturday and Sunday.

B. Committee Reports

Dr. Sassu reported the Curriculum Committee met prior to tonight's meeting and discussed the Mathematics Course Pathways for McGee Middle School and Berlin High School; Berlin High School textbooks; the summer program; and the vision of the graduate.

Mr. Oakes reported the Finance & Operations Committee has met a couple of times to discuss the ESSER II Grant; end-of-year funds; and the closing of the Berlin High School project.

Mr. Jenkins reported the Equity and Social Justice Advisory Committee has been meeting once a month for the last several months. Subcommittees have been formed to look at best ways to interact with students, teachers, parents and community members; provide a diverse curriculum; and to ensure that every individual has the best path to success.

C. CREC Report

There was no report this evening.

D. Correspondence to the Board

Dr. McGurk shared thank you notes from Laura Meneo and Willard school staff.

**IV. AWARDS & PRESENTATIONS IN CONJUNCTION WITH AMERICAN EDUCATION WEEK
(Postponed from November 2020)**

A. Superintendent's CAPSS (Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents) Student Awards

The administration and staff selected ten students to receive the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) Superintendent/Student Award Recognition Program, "Certificate of Excellence" award. Students are selected for this prestigious annual award based upon criteria such as demonstrated leadership to the school community, community service and service to others, and academic prowess relative to ability. Building Principals and Assistant Superintendent McGurk presented the CAPSS awards this year to fifth graders Grace Miller and Maxwell Davidson from Griswold School; Giuliana Luongo and Brody Andrade from Hubbard School; and Ava Reynolds and Makayo Wroblewski from Willard School. Also recognized were eighth graders Anousha Hashim and Maxwell Enes from McGee School; and seniors Gina Scalaro and Connor Therrien.

B. Introduction of the 2021 Building Teachers of the Year and the District Teacher of the Year

Assistant Superintendent McGurk recognized the following Building Teachers of the Year for 2021: Mary MacFarland from Griswold; Sara Suranna from Hubbard; Cassandra Frascadore from Willard; Stephanie Begen from McGee; and Daniel Thurston from Berlin High School. Mary MacFarland went on to become the Berlin School District's Teacher of the Year. They each received a certificate of recognition, a book store gift card and a copy of Parker J. Palmer's book, The Courage To Teach.

C. Introduction of the 2021 Paraprofessional of the Year

Assistant Superintendent McGurk recognized Kimberly Dunnigan, from Berlin High School, as the 2021 Paraprofessional of the Year. She was presented with a certificate of recognition and a book store gift card.

D. Support Staff Recognition Awards

Assistant Superintendent McGurk recognized support staff members for their outstanding performance and dedication to the students, staff, and parents of the Berlin Public Schools. This year's recipients were Pat Baillergeon, Griswold; Vesna Tokic, Hubbard; Rebecca Pipitone, Willard; Kelly Paterson, McGee; and Ash

Zaitoun for Berlin High. They each were presented with a certificate of appreciation and recognition along with a book store gift card.

E. “Friend of Berlin Schools” Awards

The “Friend of Berlin Schools” awards are presented annually to those volunteers nominated by each school’s administration, PTO or community, and selected by the Board of Education for their outstanding contributions as a volunteer who has devoted time and energy to helping the children and schools of the Berlin Public Schools. Assistant Superintendent McGurk recognized this year’s recipients: Jackie DeFrancesco, Griswold (absent); Susan Starr, Hubbard; Sharon Powell, Willard; Paul Griswold, McGee; and Stacie Damiana for Berlin High. They each were presented with a certificate of appreciation and recognition along with a book store gift card.

From 7:18 p.m. until 7:30 p.m., a short recess was held for refreshments and to informally meet the award recipients, their family and friends.

V. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Nothing to report.

VI. PERSONNEL

Retirements

1. Berlin High School – Teacher of Physical Education and Wellness

Sheila McCabe-King, teacher of physical education and wellness at Berlin High School, submitted her letter of intent to retire effective June 30, 2021.

Moved by Dr. Sassu, seconded by Mr. Pruzin, to accept the retirement of Sheila McCabe-King, teacher of physical education and wellness at Berlin High School, effective June 30, 2021. Also to thank her for the 35½ years of service she has provided to the youth of Berlin and wish her good health and happiness in her retirement years.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 8:0; including President Dennis

2. Emma Hart Willard School – Teacher of Preschool

Jennifer Harris, teacher of preschool at Emma Hart Willard School, submitted her letter of intent to retire effective June 30, 2021.

Moved by Ms. Sisti, seconded by Dr. Sassu, to accept the retirement of Jennifer Harris, teacher of preschool at Emma Hart Willard School, effective June 30, 2021. Also to thank her for the 16 years of service she has provided to the youth of Berlin and wish her good health and happiness in her retirement years.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 8:0, including President Dennis

VII. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Minutes – Regular Meeting of March 8, 2021
- B. Monthly Budget Report – Period ending March 31, 2021

Moved by Mr. Salina, seconded by Mr. Jenkins, to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

**FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED: 8:0; including President Dennis**

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Status of the Board of Education’s Adopted Budget for 2021-2022

Assistant Superintendent Erin McGurk stated on February 8, 2021, the Board of Education adopted an Operating Budget for the 2021-2022 fiscal year in the amount of \$48,534,130. Following review from the Board of Finance, the Operating Budget was cut \$648,498. The annual town budget referendum will be held tomorrow, and the proposed budget, submitted by the Board of Finance and Town Council, for the town and schools is \$93,959,047. The Board of Education’s share is \$47,885,632, which represents a 3.17% increase.

Mr. Salina stated there is no tax increase being presented and all services are maintained.

- B. Non-renewal of Contracts for Non-tenured Staff

Assistant Superintendent Erin McGurk recommended the non-renewal of contracts of employment for the following non-tenured staff who were hired for a one-year assignment or as a long-term substitute: Brittany Coco, Shannon Gottsman, Jennifer Sullo and Sanja Trifone.

Moved by Dr. Sassu, seconded by Mr. Oakes, that the contracts of employment for the following non-tenured teachers not be renewed for the 2021-2022 school year, upon their expiration at the end of the current school year: Brittany Coco, Shannon Gottsman, Jennifer Sullo and Sanja Trifone.

**FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED: 8:0; including President Dennis**

- C. State Healthy Food Certification Statement for July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022

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 10-21e of the Connecticut General Statutes for the period of July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022, and whether to allow food and beverage exemptions.

Moved by Mr. Salina, seconded by Mr. Pruzin, that the Berlin Board of Education will participate in the optional Healthy Foods Certification Program, pursuant to C.G.S.

Section 10-215f, for the period of July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022, and certify that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction, and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, culinary programs, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or non-school organizations and groups. The Board will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards and beverages not listed in Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes, provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the food and beverage items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An “event” is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The “regular school day” is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. “Location” means where the event is being held.

In response to Mr. Jenkins’ question, is there any impact to fundraising, Ms. Dennis stated no.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 8:0; including President Dennis

D. Facilities Related Updates

Director of Operations Jeffrey Cugno stated the potential closeout of the Berlin High School project will be discussed later in the agenda. Mr. Cugno reported the final report concerning the commissioning and balancing study of the HVAC systems in the five schools has been provided to the Public Building Commission for review, and he anticipates their report shortly as to how they wish to proceed. Mr. Cugno stated the Public Building Commission has decided to commission engineering studies, not only for the HVAC system at Willard School, but also for Griswold School and Hubbard School.

E. Partial Funding Request for Ice Hockey Program

Director of Athletics, Health and Physical Education David Francalanga requested the Board consider allocating \$10,000 each year for costs associated with the Ice Hockey Program to help offset the cost to parents. There are seven BHS players on the co-op roster, and the current cost for each player is \$2,375. Board members were provided with a letter from Mr. Francalanga. The Finance & Operations Committee met on March 30 to discuss the request.

Moved by Mr. Pruzin, seconded by Mr. Weber, to allocate \$10,000 each year, beginning with the 2021-2022 school year, for costs associated with the Ice Hockey Program to help offset the cost to parents.

Mr. Oakes stated the Finance & Operations Committee did meet, about a month ago, and discussed this request. The Committee is in agreement to allocating \$10,000 each year for costs associated with the Ice Hockey Program to help offset the cost to parents and is hopeful, going forward, the Ice Hockey Program can obtain the level of funding other varsity programs receive.

Ms. Dennis stated she is happy this item appeared on tonight's agenda for the students and their families.

Mr. Pruzin noted his support for allocating funds for costs associated with the Ice Hockey Program as he is familiar with the expensive costs, including ice time.

FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED: 8:0; including President Dennis

F. BHS Building Project Closeout

Mr. Oakes stated the preliminary estimate for the insulation and jacketing of the duct work was approximately \$300,000; however, information received today puts the estimate at \$1 million. Mr. Oakes stated there needs to be further discussions between the Board of Education, Town Council and Public Building Commission as to why this amount is significantly different from the preliminary estimate. This item will appear on the May 10, 2021 agenda.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

At 7:49 p.m., a motion was made by Dr. Sassu, seconded by Mr. Pruzin, to adjourn.

FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED: 8:0; including President Dennis

Respectfully submitted,

Tracy Sisti, Secretary, Berlin Board of Education