

# BERLIN BOARD OF EDUCATION

June 14, 2021

## MINUTES

### REGULAR MEETING

Attendance: Julia Dennis  
Steven Jenkins – Arrived at 7:06 p.m.  
Jaymee Miller  
Timothy Oakes  
Mark Pruzin  
Adam Salina - Absent  
Kari Sassu, Ph.D.  
Tracy Sisti  
Stephen Weber  
Student Representatives: Ryan McGowan  
Lindsey Leary

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; Supervisor of Special Education – Elementary Michelle Zeuschner; Director of Human Resources Denise Parsons; Director of Mathematics and Science Kara Watson; Principal of Berlin High School Eileen Eustis; Assistant Vice Principal of Berlin High School Katie Amenta; Principal of McGee Middle School Salvatore Urso; Assistant Principal of McGee Middle School Tim Chiaverini; Lead Teacher Interventionist of McGee Middle School Karen Despres; Principal of Griswold School David Kitzman; Principal of Hubbard School Alfred Souza; and Principal of Willard School Megan Sirois.

#### I. CALL TO ORDER

##### A. Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. Dennis called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. in the Berlin High School Auditorium at 139 Patterson Way, Berlin, Connecticut. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

##### B. SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

###### 1. Announcement – Teacher of the Year 2022

Superintendent Benigni announced Berlin School District's 2022 Teacher and Paraprofessional of the Year, Patricia Pires and Christy Ketley, respectively.

###### 2. Celebration of the Arts 2021

McGee Art Teacher David Holland, Superintendent Benigni, Assistant Superintendent McGurk and Building Principals recognized the following students:

Superintendent's Choice Award – Jasmine Metcalf  
Assistant Superintendent's Choice Award – Gabriella Foster  
BHS Principal's Choice Award – Emma Labickas  
McGee Principal's Choice Award – Jatnna Vega and Juniya Lighty  
Griswold Principal's Choice Award – Amelia Markowski  
Hubbard Principal's Choice Award – Chloe Murphy  
Willard Principal's Choice Award – Mila Romero Cobo

###### 3. Berlin High School Recognition

Principal Eustis recognized the following Berlin High School students, and Principal Urso recognized the McGee students:

Valedictorian – Makayla Gorski and Salutatorian – Michael Bryant  
CAS Scholar Athletes – Jenna Zup and Jacob Lindsay  
CAS Arts Awards – Kathryn Markey and Clemens Henning  
All-State Chorus – Meredith Gendreau  
All-State Band – Alexandra Tzetzso, Clemens Henning, and Brendan Malcarne  
CABE Student Leadership Awards – Erica Lavoie and Peter Cohen – BHS  
Katherine Zibell and Ryan Lavender –  
McGee  
NESDEC Awards for Academic Growth and Student Leadership in Learning –  
Skye Smith and Matthew Tierney  
Class of 2021 Officers:  
President – John McGeever  
Vice Presidents – Briana Dastoli and Peter Cohen  
Secretary – Gina Scalaro  
Treasurer – Victoria Pietrucha  
Social Chair – Abigail Ferland  
Student Government Officers 2021:  
President – Makayla Gorski  
Vice President – Gina Scalaro  
Secretary – Emily Kobus  
Treasurer – Gabrielle Foster  
National Honor Society Officers 2021:  
President – Gabrielle Foster  
Vice President – Makayla Gorski  
Secretary – Gina Scalaro  
Treasurer – Ashley Wenzel

#### 4. Thank You to BOE Student Representatives

The Board recognized and thanked Lindsey Leary and Ryan McGowan for their enthusiasm, insightful reports and intuitiveness provided to the Board of Education this school year. Lindsey Leary will return for the 2021-22 school year.

## **II. COMMITTEE REPORTS/CORRESPONDENCE TO THE BOARD**

### A. Report of Student Representatives

Miss Leary reported on the 2021 Spring State Championships for baseball; softball; boys tennis and golf; and girls golf and track. Miss Leary reported the Junior Prom is Monday, June 21, 2021, at Quassey Amusement & Waterpark.

Mr. McGowan reported on the graduation ceremony held Friday, June 11, 2021, at Sage Park; the Berlin High School music department Jazz with Pizzazz held Friday, June 4, 2021, the Senior outing held

Friday, May 28, 2021; the Senior breakfast/Yearbook Assembly held Friday, June 11, 2021; and the all-night graduation party held at Sonny's Place in Somers.

B. Committee Reports

Mr. Oakes reported the Finance & Operations Committee met last week and discussed the year-end surplus. Mr. Oakes reported the Ad-Hoc Committee for Policy Review/Revision also met last week to discuss the two policies that appear later in the agenda for a first reading.

C. CREC Report

There was no report this evening.

D. Correspondence to the Board

Superintendent Benigni shared thank you notes received from Angela Michalek and Mary Bavaro.

Superintendent Benigni reported he received correspondences from Benjamin Roe and several other Berlin High School students regarding a civic research project.

Ms. Dennis reported she received a letter from Olivia Marolda regarding the civic research project.

**III. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS**

Nothing to report.

**IV. PERSONNEL**

Retirement – Teacher of World Language – Berlin High School

Superintendent Benigni presented Teresa George's letter of intent to retire as teacher of World Language at Berlin High School, effective June 30, 2021.

**Moved by Dr. Sassu, seconded by Mr. Pruzin, to accept the retirement of Teresa George, teacher of World Language at Berlin High School, effective June 30, 2021. Also to thank her for the 19 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**

**V. CONSENT AGENDA**

- A. Approval of Minutes
  - 1. Regular Meeting of May 10, 2021
  - 2. Special Meeting of May 13, 2021
- B. Monthly Budget Report – Period ending May 31, 2021

C. Request for Leave of Absence – Mary E. Griswold School – Teacher of Grade 1

Alexandra Stackhouse, teacher of Grade 1 at Griswold School, requested an unpaid leave of absence, for childrearing purposes, from August 23, 2021 through January 2, 2022.

**Moved by Mr. Jenkins, seconded by Dr. Sassu, to accept the consent agenda as presented.**

**FAVOR: ALL**

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

**VI. NEW BUSINESS**

A. Facilities Related Updates

Director of Operations Jeffrey Cugno reported the following projects will occur over the summer: lighting upgrades in the McGee Middle School Library/Media Center; paving of the sidewalks, stairs, loading dock and playground area at Willard School; classroom storage units at Hubbard School; the demolition and restoration of the patio in the front of McGee Middle School; duct work at Berlin High School; a new band room at Griswold School; improvements for the YMCA day care facilities at McGee Middle School and Hubbard School; the renovation of the Transition Academy at 362 Main Street; renovations to the Board of Education Board meeting room and foyer; and new building signs will be installed at each facility.

B. Berlin Visiting Nurse Association Service Agreement with the Board of Education for July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022

Board members were provided with the annual agreement between the Berlin Board of Education and the Berlin Visiting Nurse Association.

**Moved by Dr. Sassu, seconded by Mr. Pruzin, to approve the agreement between the Berlin Board of Education and the Berlin Visiting Nurse Association for the 2020-2021 school year.**

Mr. Oakes stated the motion presented states for the 2020-2021 school year, and the motion should be for the 2021-2022 school year.

**Moved by Dr. Sassu, seconded by Mr. Pruzin, to approve the agreement between the Berlin Board of Education and the Berlin Visiting Nurse Association for the 2021-2022 school year.**

**FAVOR: ALL**

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

C. Setting of the 2021-2022 Budget

The Town Council approved the level of funding for the Board of Education's 2021-2022 Operating Budget in the amount of \$47,885,632, which passed at referendum on April 27, 2021.

Superintendent Benigni stated having a budget that is at or above three percent for the past three years has allowed the schools to maintain the appropriate staffing, programming and class sizes the town has become accustomed to and which, he believes, the community expects. Superintendent Benigni noted his appreciation for the work done on the budget and for those that came out and voted for the budget.

**Moved by Mr. Pruzin, seconded by Mr. Weber, that the Board of Education adopt an Operating Budget for 2021-2022 year, in the amount of \$47,885,632, as set by the Town Council and passed at referendum on April 27, 2021.**

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

D. Policy Review/Revision

1. Policy 5145.5 – Prohibition of Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment (Students) – First Reading
2. Policy 4118.112 – Prohibition of Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment in the Workplace (Personnel) – First Reading

Shipman & Goodwin LLP, provided updates to the Board's policies regarding sex discrimination and sexual harassment. The revisions have been reviewed by the Ad-Hoc Committee for Policy Review/Revision at its meeting on June 10, 2021. Since this is a first reading, no action is required; the second reading/adoption will take place at the July 12 Board meeting.

E. Request for Naming of Basketball Courts at Berlin High School

The Board discussed the request of Robyn Cop that the basketball courts at Berlin High School be dedicated and named after her son, Tyler, who passed away unexpectedly at the age of 15. Superintendent Benigni stated the T. Cop Foundation requested this item appear on the July agenda for further discussion and that the Board not take action tonight. Board members were provided with a copy of the correspondence Robyn Cop sent to the Parks and Recreation Commission. Superintendent Benigni provided Board members with current Shipman & Goodwin policies for the naming of facilities as well as the Board's prior policy, which was removed when the Board's policy book was updated. The Board will move forward with adopting a policy for the naming of facilities, and a first reading will take place at the July Board meeting.

F. YMCA Lease Update

Director of Business Operations Jeff Cugno stated the YMCA is proposing, and the Town appears to be accepting, leases at McGee Middle School, Hubbard School and 362 Main Street. The daycare center would be placed at McGee Middle School and Hubbard School, and the Transition Academy would be placed at 362 Main Street. The leases are currently with the YMCA administration for their final

review, which Mr. Cugno anticipates to be completed in the following month. Mr. Cugno anticipates the improvements to these facilities to start in July and be completed by August/September.

Superintendent Benigni stated, as his brother is the CEO of the Meriden/New Britain/Berlin YMCA, he has not and will not be part of the discussions.

- G. Unaffiliated Administrators' Contracts
  1. Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction
  2. Director of Operations
  3. Director of Finance
  4. Director of Human Resources
  5. Director of Pupil Personnel Services
  
- H. Personnel Not Covered by Collective Bargaining

**At 8:24 p.m., a motion was made by Mr. Oakes, seconded by Mr. Pruzin, to enter into Executive Session to discuss unaffiliated administrators' contracts and personnel not covered by collective bargaining, inviting the Superintendent with us.**

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

At 9:47 p.m., the Board returned to Open Session.

## **VII. ADJOURNMENT**

**At 9:47 p.m., a motion was made by Mr. Oakes, seconded by Mr. Pruzin, to adjourn.**

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

Respectfully submitted,

Tracy Sisti, Secretary, Berlin Board of Education