

BERLIN BOARD OF EDUCATION

April 25, 2022

MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING

Attendance: Julia Dennis
Melissa Gibbons
Jaymee Miller
Gina Nappi
Timothy Oakes
Adam Salina
Kari Sassu, Ph.D.
Tracy Sisti
Matthew Tencza
Student Representatives: Lindsey Leary
Samantha Negrao

Also in attendance: Superintendent of Schools Brian J. Benigni; Director of Business Operations Jeffrey Cugno; Finance Director Ashley Dorsey; Director of Human Resources Denise Parsons; Director of Pupil Personnel Services Linda Holian; Director of Literacy and Social Studies Laurie Gjerpen; Director of Mathematics and Science Kara Watson; Principal of McGee Middle School Salvatore Urso; Assistant Principal of McGee Middle School Tim Chiaverini; and Lead Teacher/Interventionist at McGee Middle School Karen Despres.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. Dennis called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. in the Board of Education (“the Board”) meeting room at 238 Kensington Road, Berlin, CT. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

II. STUDENT PRESENTATION – CATHERINE M. MCGEE SCHOOL

There is research to support that certain simple physical activities contribute to readiness for learning. This evening Board members engaged with students and staff to experience a few strategies that have been taught and implemented at McGee to support the well-being of school community members. Members of the school community who presented this evening were Physical Education, Health, and Wellness Teachers: Bryan Plona and Jan Zagorski; School Counselors: Ashley Barton, Jessica Stevenson, and Sarah Hughes; and students: Jack Cohen, McKayla DeJesus, Paulina Kasjanski, Ryan Lavender, Camden LaVoie, Elaina Markowski, Matteo Modifica, and Ashley White.

III. COMMITTEE REPORTS/CORRESPONDENCE TO THE BOARD

A. Report of Student Representatives

Miss Leary provided an update regarding the spring sports season. Miss Leary reported this Thursday the National Honor Society will induct sixty (60) new junior members, and this week is spirit week at Berlin High School with the spring pep rally on Friday.

Miss Negrao reported the spring band concert will be held on Tuesday, April 26, 2022; the district-wide art show opening reception will be held on April 27, 2022 at The New Britain Museum of American Art; and speaker Shaun Derik presented to the entire ninth and tenth grades and a small group of junior students on April 22, 2022. Ms. Negrao thanked Upbeat and the Berlin Social Services for supporting Mr. Derik’s visit.

B. Committee Reports

Dr. Sassu reported the Curriculum Committee met prior to tonight's meeting to review revisions to the current year's academic calendar, the proposed revised calendar for the 2022-2023 school year and Committee goals.

Ms. Sisti reported the Community Engagement Committee recently met to discuss Committee goals and to revisit Bylaw 9100 – Use of Social Media by Board Members, which appears later in the agenda. The Committee will meet on Wednesday, April 27, 2022, to discuss social media engagement.

Mr. Oakes reported the Ad-Hoc Committee for Policy Review/Revision met prior to tonight's meeting and discussed policy review/revision, which appears later in the agenda.

C. CREC Report

There was no report this evening.

D. Correspondence to the Board

Superintendent Benigni shared correspondences received from Maureen Mullins and Family and Jill Taradeina.

IV. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Mary Kathryn LaRose, 26 Woodruff Lane, Kensington, Connecticut, addressed the Board concerning the difficulty she has navigating the Board of Education website and the sound within the Board of Education meeting room this evening.

Kristen Zarabozo, 158 Ellwood Road, Berlin, Connecticut addressed the Board to thank student representative Lindsey Leary for her excellent article, appearing in the *New Britain Herald*, concerning social justice being taught in Berlin High School.

V. PERSONNEL

Resignation – Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction

Superintendent Benigni presented Dr. Erin McGurk's letter of resignation as Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, which became effective with the close of business on Friday, April 8, 2022. Dr. McGurk accepted a leadership position as the Director of Talent Development at EASTCONN.

Moved by Mr. Salina, seconded by Dr. Sassu, to accept the resignation of Erin McGurk, Ed.D., effective April 8, 2022, and to thank her for the four years of service she has provided to the district and to wish her well in her new position as the Director of Talent Development at EASTCONN.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 9:0; including President Dennis

VI. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Minutes
 - 1. Regular Meeting of March 14, 2022
 - 2. Special Meeting of March 13, 2022
- B. Monthly Budget Report – Period ending March 31, 2022
- C. Facilities Related Update
- D. Request for Leave of Absence – Mary E. Griswold School – Teacher of Grade 4

Alexandra Vieira, teacher of Grade 4 at Mary E. Griswold School, requested an unpaid leave of absence, for childrearing purposes, to begin immediately following her maternity leave through the end of the 2022-2023 school year.

Moved by Ms. Gibbons, seconded by Mr. Oakes, to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED: 9:0; including President Dennis

VII. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Status of the Board of Education’s Adopted Budget for 2022-2023

Superintendent Benigni stated the Board of Education adopted an overall increase of 4.67% to the Operating Budget for the 2022-2023 fiscal year. The Operating Budget was cut \$1,040,000 of which roughly \$700,000 was to staffing positions. The annual town budget referendum will be held tomorrow, and the Board of Education’s share of the proposed budget is \$49,082,596, which represents a 2.5% increase to the Board’s Operating Budget.

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

Superintendent Benigni 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: Megan Boulais, Laura Foss-Mariol, Rosemary Ellefsen, Victoria Mainetti, Kristen Cavanagh, Erika Babjak, and Dana Davenport.

Moved by Mr. Salina, seconded by Dr. Sassu, that the contracts of employment for the following non-tenured teachers not be renewed for the 2022-2023 school year,

upon their expiration at the end of the current school year: **Megan Boulais, Laura Foss-Mariol, Rosemary Ellefsen, Victoria Mainetti, Kristen Cavanagh, Erika Babjak, and Dana Davenport.**

FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED: 9:0; including President Dennis

C. State Healthy Food Certification Statement for July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023

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, 2022 through June 30, 2023, and whether to allow food and beverage exemptions.

Moved by Mr. Salina, seconded by Dr. Sassu, that the Berlin Board of Education will participate in the optional Healthy Foods Certification Program, pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-215f, for the period of July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023, 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 will 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.

Mr. Tencza stated there needs to be two separate motions as the Board first needs to adopt the first section of the above motion and then a second motion to allow for the sale of food items after school hours.

Mr. Salina rescinded his motion.

Moved by Mr. Salina, seconded by Dr. Sassu, that the Berlin Board of Education will participate in the optional Healthy Foods Certification Program, pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-215f, for the period of July 1, 2022 through

June 30, 2023, 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.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 9:0; including President Dennis

Moved by Mr. Salina, seconded by Dr. Sassu, that 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.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 9:0; including President Dennis

Mr. Tencza stated there needs to be one more motion, relative to the beverage exemption, and if not adopted, the sale of soda or hot chocolate will not be allowed at events because of the sugar content.

Moved by Mr. Tencza, seconded by Dr. Sassu, that the Board of Education or Governing Authority will allow the sale to students of 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 beverages 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. The “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 and must be the same place as the beverage sales.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 9:0; including President Dennis

D. Revisions to the 2021-2022 School Calendar

Superintendent Benigni proposed that the current last day of school, Wednesday, June 15, 2022, be a professional development day, and that the number of student days be reduced from 181 to 180, making the last day of school for students Tuesday, June 14, 2022, which will be an early release day. Superintendent Benigni also proposed that Friday, June 10 and Monday, June 13 be early release days. The proposed revisions were reviewed by the Curriculum Committee at its meeting earlier today.

Moved by Ms. Gibbons, seconded by Dr. Sassu, to approve the revisions to the 2021-2022 School Calendar, as presented.

FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED: 9:0; including President Dennis

E. Revisions to the 2022-2023 School Calendar

Superintendent Benigni proposed that the 2022-2023 calendar mirror the recently adopted 2023-2024 calendar by adding an afternoon professional development day in December and adding Ramadan in the list of special observance days. The proposed revisions were reviewed by the Curriculum Committee at its meeting earlier today.

Moved by Dr. Sassu, seconded by Ms. Nappi, to approve the revisions to the 2022-2023 School Calendar, as presented.

FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED: 9:0; including President Dennis

F. Request to Name BHS Basketball Court in Honor of Mike Veneziano

Superintendent Benigni stated Mark Holmes submitted a letter requesting the Board of Education consider naming the Berlin High School basketball court in honor of Mike Veneziano and a petition, with the signatures of 100 registered voters, in accordance with Board Policy 1181, a copy which was provided to Board members, to initiate action by the Board of Education to select a subcommittee for the purpose of reviewing the proposal.

Board members discussed the criteria for individuals to be considered, formation of the subcommittee and selection of the individuals who would serve on the subcommittee. At Ms. Gibbons' suggestion, discussion regarding individuals serving on the Committee will appear on the Community Engagement Committee meeting agenda for Wednesday, April 27, 2022. Ms. Dennis stated no action will be taken this evening. She will report back to the Board following the Community Engagement Committee meeting.

- G. Policy Review/Revision – Second Reading/Adoption
1. Policy 1011 – Non-Discrimination
 2. Policy 1212 – School Volunteers, Student Interns and Other Non-Employees
 3. Policy 1330 – Use of School Facilities
 4. Policy 1331 – Prohibition Against Smoking

5. Policy 4118.11 – Non Discrimination (Personnel)
6. Policy 4118.55 – Policy Regarding Retention of Electronic Records and Information
7. Policy 5113 – Student Attendance, Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism
8. Policy 5145.1 – Student Privacy
9. Policy 6172.61 – Credit for Online Courses

Shipman & Goodwin, LLP, has recommended revisions to the above policies as noted on the summary sheet provided to Board members. A second reading of the revised policies took place this evening. The Ad-Hoc Committee for Policy Review/Revision met on March 14, 2022 to review the recommended revisions. A first reading took place at the March 14, 2022 Board meeting.

Moved by Ms. Gibbons, seconded by Mr. Oakes, that the Board adopt the revised policies listed above, as presented.

With regard to Policy 1331, Mr. Salina commented, during spring break, he attended a tennis match, and the smell of marijuana coming from the basketball court area was pretty pungent. Mr. Salina suggested having school security or police monitor the basketball courts as they are part of school property.

Superintendent Benigni stated, this morning, he placed a call to the Police Chief requesting a meeting, along with Director of School Security, Safety and Residency John Schmaltz, as there needs to be some coordination with the police department and the school security department to ensure the area is safe and reflects positively for the Berlin Public Schools.

In response to Mr. Tencza's question are signs posted on school grounds prohibiting smoking, Superintendent Benigni stated there were at one point; however, he is unsure if they are still there.

FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED: 9:0; including President Dennis

- H. Policy Review/Revision – First Reading
 1. Policy 4112.51 – Employment and Student Teacher Checks
 2. Policy 4115.3 – Evaluation, Termination and Non-Renewal of Athletic Coaches
 3. Policy 4118.114 – Employees and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
 4. Policy 4118.5 – Employee Use of the District's Computer Systems and Electronic Communications
 5. Policy 5131.81 – Use of Private Technology Devices by Students
 6. Policy 5131.83 – Student Use of the District's Computer Systems and Internet Safety
 7. Policy 5141.4 – Child Sexual Abuse and Assault Response Policy and Reporting Procedure
 8. Policy 6146.22 – IDEA – Alternative Assessments for Students with Disabilities
 9. Policy 6153 – Field Trips
 10. Bylaw 9020 – Formulation, Adoption, Amendment or Deletion of Administrative Regulations
 11. Bylaw 9035 – Meeting Conduct
 12. **New** Bylaw 9100 – Use of Social Media by Board Members

Shipman & Goodwin, LLP, has recommended revisions to the above policies and bylaws as noted on the summary provided to Board members. Mr. Oakes called attention to Bylaw 9035 – Meeting Conduct, page 6, Public Address, A.(1) regarding the minutes allotted to each speaker and the maximum minutes to each subject matter.

A new bylaw, Bylaw 9100 – Use of Social Media by Board Members, developed through collaboration between the Community Engagement Committee and Shipman & Goodwin, was also presented for a first reading. The Ad-Hoc Committee for Policy Review/Revision met earlier today to review the recommended revisions and the new bylaw. Since this is a first reading, no action is required; the second reading/adoption will take place at the May 9, 2022 Board meeting.

I. Personnel Matter (Executive Session Anticipated)

At 7:47 p.m., a motion was made by Mr. Oakes, seconded by Mr. Tencza, to enter into Executive Session to discuss a personnel matter, inviting the Superintendent and Director of Human Resources.

**FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED: 9:0; including President Dennis**

In attendance for Executive Session were Board members Dennis, Gibbons, Miller, Nappi, Oakes, Salina, Sassu, Sisti and Tencza. In addition Superintendent Benigni and Ms. Parsons were present.

At 7:58 p.m., the Board returned to Open Session.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

At 7:58 p.m., a motion was made by Mr. Oakes, seconded by Mr. Tencza, to adjourn.

**FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED: 9:0; including President Dennis**

Respectfully submitted,

Tracy Sisti, Secretary, Berlin Board of Education