

# **BERLIN BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**November 27, 2023**

## **MINUTES**

### **SPECIAL MEETING**

Attendance: Julia Dennis  
Melissa Gibbons – Arrived at 6:07 p.m.  
Brian DeLude  
Jennifer Jurgen  
Jaymee Miller – Arrived at 6:07 p.m.  
Gina Nappi  
Adam Salina  
Tracy Sisti  
Peter Zarabozo  
Student Representatives: Ian Saunders  
Anousha Hashim – Absent

Also in attendance: Superintendent of Schools Brian J. Benigni; Director of Business Operations Jeffrey Cugno; Finance Director Ashley Dorsey; Supervisor of Special Education – Elementary Michelle Zeuschner; Co-Directors of Curriculum Laurie Gjerpen and Kara Watson; Principal of Berlin High School Katie Amenta; Assistant Principals of Berlin High School Karen Despres and Brian Testroet; Principal of McGee Middle School Salvatore Urso; Assistant Principal of McGee Middle School Tim Chiaverini; Principal of Griswold School Jonathan Campbell; Principal of Willard School Megan Sirois; and Principal of Hubbard School Alfred Souza.

#### **I. CALL TO ORDER** Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. Dennis called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. in the in the Berlin High School Auditorium at 139 Patterson Way, Berlin, Connecticut. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

#### **II. STUDENT PRESENTATION – BERLIN HIGH SCHOOL**

Prelude music was provided by Pianist Liam Pham. Madrigals Caroline Benoit, Robin Crisler, Max Ding, Nathaniel Elmani, Glenn Fearn, Addison Guarino, Austin Lauria, Cameron Malcarne, Ryan Markey, Dana Metcalf, Thomas Morisse-Corsetti, Elyse Niemic, Meghan Snyder, and Ryan Tang performed the “National Anthem” and “America The Beautiful.” Pianist Liam Phan performed “The Cat and Mouse” by Aaron Copland.

#### **III. SPECIAL PRESENTATION – BERLIN LIONS CLUB DONATION**

At the Berlin Fair, the Berlin Lions Club put out tip jars at their locations that sell beverages. The tips were designated for the support of Berlin teachers and their classrooms. The positive feedback received was overwhelming. Customers loved the idea and contributed generously to the cause. The Berlin Lions and the community recognize the challenges teachers face in creating a classroom environment that is welcoming, inspiring and enriching. In an expression of appreciation and support, the Berlin Lions Club presented each elementary classroom with a gift card for the purchase of materials. Berlin Lions Club representatives Gary Bienkowski, Dan Daigle, Greg Dehm, and Fair President Steve Kulinski, were present this evening to make the donation.

**IV. AWARDS & PRESENTATIONS IN CONJUNCTION WITH AMERICAN EDUCATION WEEK**

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

The administration and staff have 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 Superintendent Brian Benigni presented the CAPSS awards this year to fifth graders Grace Davis and Daniel Bouchard from Griswold School; Callie Starr and Lucas Williams from Hubbard School; and Allison Bowman and Oakland Gaffney from Willard School. Also recognized were eighth graders Avery Wethje and Henry Cookson from McGee School; and seniors Hiba Jebli and Jacob Miller from Berlin High School.

**B. Introduction of the 2024 Building Teachers of the Year and the District Teacher of the Year**

Superintendent Brian Benigni recognized the following building Teachers of the Year for 2024: Kara McCourt from Griswold; Mary Raney from Hubbard; Alexandra Ivimey from Willard; Kristen Pandolfi from McGee; and Nicole Carrasquillo from Berlin High School. Alexandra Ivimey 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 2024 Paraprofessional of the Year**

Supervisor of Special Education – Elementary Michelle Zeuschner recognized Nicole Sapko, from Mary E. Griswold School, as the 2024 Paraprofessional of the Year. Nicole has been nominated for the 2024 Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year award. She was presented with a certificate of recognition and a book store gift card.

**D. Support Staff Recognition Awards**

Co-Directors of Curriculum Laurie Gjerpen and Kara Watson 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 Ashley Davis, Griswold; Erika Fuqua, Hubbard; Martha Sanchez, Willard; Tracey Lord, McGee; Laura Meneo, Berlin High; and Kim Pethigal (absent) for the Board of Education Central Office. 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 awarded 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. Superintendent Brian Benigni and Board President Julia Dennis recognized this year's recipients: Vanessa D'Anna, Griswold; Kathryn Sassu, Hubbard; Officer Brandon Lagueux, Willard; Jennifer Jurgen and Imelda Mongillo, McGee; and Officer Mark DePinto for Berlin High. They each were presented with a certificate of appreciation and recognition along with a book store gift card.

**V. ADJOURNMENT**

Ms. Dennis adjourned the meeting at 7:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tracy Sisti, Secretary, Berlin Board of Education