

THE BERLIN BOARD OF EDUCATION

THE BULLETIN BOARD

A SUMMARY OF THE JANUARY 8, 2018 BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

The Berlin Public Schools □ 238 Kensington Road □ Berlin, CT 06037 □ 860-828-6581

Berlin Bravos □ Berlin Bravos is a program where the BOE recognizes students, staff, parents, and volunteers who have had a significant achievement, gone well above and beyond, or have overcome a significant challenge or obstacle. The Board of Education acknowledged the following individuals: Eleanor Henry, grade two student at Griswold School, for being a caring and compassionate student who demonstrates kindness each and every day to her classmates and teacher; Livia Kowalczyk, grade three student at Griswold School, for her ability to manage impulsivity, her general kindness to others, and her ability to persevere in challenging tasks; Lily Wojas, grade one student at Hubbard School, for being a positive role model in her classroom; Isabella Fushino, grade four student at Hubbard School, for displaying outstanding citizenship both inside and outside of the classroom; Cameron Zup, grade one student at Willard School, for being a model student who arrives at school every day ready to learn; Avery Wethje, grade two student at Willard School, for being an outstanding student and individual; and Mya Lamoureux, grade four student at Willard School, for being an outstanding member of both the Willard community and her fourth grade classroom.

Committee Reports/Correspondence to the Board □ Student Representatives: Ms. Nappi reported that the annual Mt. Snow field trip is in the planning stages and mid-terms will begin two days later due to snow days, with the Berlin-Peck Memorial Library staying open until 10 p.m. during mid-terms. Communications Committee: Mr. Tencza reported that the committee met and had a very lengthy conversation regarding the best ways the Board can communicate with parents and within the schools, additional methods for written communications and how the Board will respond. Ad-Hoc Committee for Policy Review/Revision: Mr. Oakes reported that the committee met to review the policies on the BOE agenda for a first reading. The committee recommended that the Transportation Policy be removed from the first reading for further review and editing with our attorney. Student Achievement Committee: Dr. Sassu reported that the committee met and reviewed proposed changes to the Berlin High School Program of Studies for 2018-2019 as well as proposed changes to the graduation requirements. Educational Resources Committee: Mr. Oakes reported that the committee was to meet with Jeff Mauri, athletic director; Mark Sweitzer, president of the BHS Athletic Booster Association; and Superintendent Benigni on January 4 but, due to inclement weather, the meeting was cancelled and is currently in the process of being rescheduled. Correspondence to the Board: Superintendent Benigni shared thank-you notes received from Kathleen Guild, James Dlugokinski, Donna Rymarzick, Lisa Murphy and Bill Borriello.

Audience of Citizens □ Mr. John Richards congratulated Superintendent Benigni and stated that he looks forward to his leadership for the district. As a member of the Board of Finance, Mr. Richards was encouraged by the chairman to attend the meeting to obtain copies of the budget prior to the Board of Finance's meeting on Tuesday evening. Mr. Richards noted that the Town looks to the superintendent and members of the Board of Education to determine what will best serve Berlin's youth. He acknowledged that there are many challenges but looks forward to the opportunity to work with the Board in maintaining quality education in Berlin.

Facilities Related Updates □ Director of Facilities Doug Solek reported that a couple of classrooms are under repair at Griswold School due to a power line break resulting in a loss of power and freezing. Mr. Solek reported that the punch list items continue to be completed at Berlin High School. With regard to the security vestibules, he reported that he heard from the architect and anticipates having an answer from the state by late February/early March and, if everything is approved, construction will begin in the summer of 2018. Concerning the leak in the high school duct system, he is working with the Public Building Commission and the architect to rebid the work which will be done during the summer of 2018. There is an enhancement that can be performed to jacket the ductwork in its entirety to protect from further leaks through the years. Director of Business Operations Eva Gallupe reported that the major

punch list items at Berlin High School are jacketing of the ductwork, making sure the heating and cooling system is balanced and working properly, and redoing the venting of the cooking hoods in the Family & Consumer Science area. Mr. Solek reported that the second round of water balancing was completed over the winter break and notations were made regarding what will need to be addressed in the spring. As for the storage of athletic equipment, Ms. Gallupe reported that, in the original specifications, there was an equipment room that was provided to the Athletic Department that she believes is being used by the freshman football team. At its last meeting, the Public Building Commission's position was that the equipment room was provided and they do not want to add more storage cages as they feel they have met the scope so she has placed this item into the capital equipment budget. Mr. Tencza recommended that the Educational Resources Committee work with Superintendent Benigni, his staff and Mr. Solek to outline the steps needed to bring the project to resolution as there are too many items outstanding to consider closing the project.

Policy Review/Revision – First Reading □ Shipman & Goodwin LLP suggested revisions be made to policies as a result of laws from the 2016 and 2017 legislative sessions, as well as changes based on legal trends or best practices. The revisions were reviewed by the Ad-Hoc Committee for Policy Review/Revision at their meeting on January 8, 2018. Since this was a first reading, no action was required; the second reading/adoption will take place at the January 22, 2018 meeting. Upon recommendation of the Ad-Hoc Committee for Policy Review/Revision, the Transportation Policy was removed from the first reading for further review and editing by Shipman & Goodwin LLP.

Reduction to the 2017-2018 Budget Discussion □ Board President Matthew Tencza reported that the Town Council voted to direct a \$400,000 reduction to the current Board of Education budget. Mr. Tencza reported it appears that the Board will be able to reach the \$400,000 reduction without any job cuts or impact to students. He indicated that there are six months' worth of savings as the assistant superintendent position will not be filled until the next budget year; with the retirement of the technology director in October, the position has been frozen; and eleven (11) positions were eliminated for this budget year with \$125,000 budgeted for unemployment compensation; however, all employees in positions that were eliminated received job offers and are working. Mr. Tencza emphasized that the reductions that he outlined are for this year only and, other than the salary differentials for the superintendent and assistant superintendent, these do not continue into next year.

2018-2019 Superintendent's Proposed Budget Presentation □ Superintendent Brian Benigni presented his proposed 2018-2019 budget to the Board. The proposed budget has an overall increase of \$2,199,399 or 5.11%. Several budget lines are impacting the overall budget increase, the largest being employee benefits (2.9%). The consolidation of non-certified/certified/administration salaries shows an overall increase of 1% despite decreases in staff. Transportation and utilities impact the request by 0.9%. The increase in contracted services has an overall impact of 0.57%, which is driven mostly by the cost of the ESS program. All other accounts have been reduced from the budgeted 2017-2018 amounts. Mr. Benigni is proposing that two teaching positions at Berlin High School and one at Willard School be eliminated due to declining enrollment and the assistant principal position at each elementary school be eliminated. In lieu of an assistant principal, there is a new request for a certified teacher leader at Griswold and Willard that will provide some of the work of an assistant principal and act as an interventionist in some capacity. The building-level budgets remain at the same level as the current year – no increases, just maintenance. The Board will meet again on Tuesday, January 9, 2018, and will have individual presentations from the elementary, middle school and high school principals. Site and Building and Capital requests will also be presented.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Education will be held on Monday, January 22, 2018, at the Berlin Board of Education, beginning at 7:00 P.M., in the Board Meeting Room, 238 Kensington Road. The agenda will be available online at www.berlinschools.org.

The Bulletin Board provides a summary of Board of Education meetings. Official minutes from Board meetings are available at the Board of Education Office, the Town Clerk's Office, the Berlin-Peck Memorial Library, or on the district's website at www.berlinschools.org.