

# **BERLIN BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**January 8, 2007**

## **MINUTES**

### **REGULAR MEETING**

Attendance: Gary Brochu  
Julie Erickson  
Michelle Hartel  
Diane Mancini Arrived at 7:10 p.m.  
Kathleen O'Donnell-Moss  
Christopher Puzio  
Anthony Recck  
John Richards  
Rachel Rochette

Also in attendance: Superintendent of Schools Dr. Michael Cicchetti; Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Rena Klebart; Director of Business Operations Roman Czuchta; Director of Pupil Personnel Services Margaret Butler; Principal of Griswold School Laurie Gjerpen; Principal of McGee Middle School Brian Benigni; Principal of Willard School Robert J. Sullivan II; and Principal of Berlin High School George Synnott.

#### **I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Brochu called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. in the Board of Education ("the Board") meeting room at 238 Kensington Road, Berlin, CT. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. A Moment of Silence was observed.

#### **II. BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS**

Ms. Rochette reported on her attendance at Griswold's Family Gathering the Friday before the holiday break and commended the teachers and students on how well behaved the students were. Ms. Rochette also reported on her attendance at the Madrigal Feaste and commented on a phenomenal job done by the students.

Mr. Recck reported on his attendance at the national competition for cheerleading in Florida and indicated the B squad cheerleaders came in first place. Mr. Recck also remarked that a majority of Berlin's students at the cheerleading competition were also on the high honor roll at McGee Middle School.

Ms. O'Donnell-Moss reported on her attendance at both the high school and middle school wrestling tournaments held this past Saturday. Ms. O'Donnell-Moss provided the Board with an article concerning rigor.

Mr. Richards updated the Board on the meeting he recently attended at the Capitol Regional Education Council (CREC) where representatives from CABA, CAPSS and CREC came together. Mr. Richards will share the goals from this meeting as soon as the list is finalized. He also praised the BHS students who performed at the Madrigal Feaste.

Ms. Butler reported that enrollment for preschool screening has begun and approximately 85 youngsters are enrolled so far.

Mr. Czuchta reported he will be attending an all-day conference on Friday, January 12, 2007, sponsored by the Connecticut Association of School Business Officials dealing with school safety issues.

Dr. Cicchetti reported on a flyer distributed to the Board concerning the UpBeat adult training weekend. Dr. Cicchetti reported on an article Eric Carbone, Assistant Principal at Griswold School, provided concerning a program wherein students from Jefferson Elementary School in New Britain come to Griswold School. Dr. Cicchetti reported on a complimentary email received from Alison Schultz, Willard's liaison to the Berlin Education Council, regarding the recent meeting of the Berlin-Newington-Rocky Hill-Wethersfield consortium on youth violence and vandalism. Dr. Cicchetti also echoed the compliments to the students and staff who worked to present the high school's Madrigal Feaste this past Sunday.

Mr. Brochu reported on his attendance at the CAFE Area Legislative breakfast at the Legislative Office Building. Mr. Brochu indicated the legislature is seriously going to look at how they bond school projects, and it seems very clear that they are going to be stricter on priorities.

### **III. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS**

Nothing to report.

### **IV. CONSENT AGENDA**

- A. Approval of Minutes
  - 1. Regular Meeting of December 11, 2006

**MOTION FOR CONSIDERATION: MOVE to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of December 11, 2006 as presented.**

- B. Payment of Bills – Period ending December 31, 2006

**MOTION FOR CONSIDERATION: MOVE that the bills for the period ending December 31, 2006, including payroll, totaling \$2,828,473.70, of which Town is \$2,765,549.88, Federal is \$55,035.92, Building Use is \$1,348.09, and Afternoon Adventures is \$6,539.81, listed for payment or already paid for in accordance with standard fiscal procedure be approved for payment.**

**Moved by Mr. Richards, seconded by Mr. Recck, to approve the consent agenda as presented.**

**FAVOR: ALL  
MOTION CARRIED: 8:0**

### **V. INFORMATION AND REPORTS**

- A. Activity Fund Reports
  - 1. Berlin High School Enterprise Fund – Period ending Nov. 30, 2006
  - 2. Berlin Public Schools Activity Fund – Period ending Nov. 30, 2006
  - 3. Cafeteria Fund – Period ending Nov. 30, 2006

No motion is necessary for these reports. These were noted with interest.

B. Update on School Safety

Berlin Police Chief Paul Fitzgerald was in attendance and, along with Dr. Cicchetti, updated Board members on school safety topics including police presence in the schools; the D.A.R.E. Program; the recent meeting of the Berlin-Newington-Rocky Hill-Wethersfield consortium on youth violence and vandalism; a recent school safety conference attended by both police and school personnel; and a proposal to institute a School Resource Officer for the current school year. Chief Fitzgerald indicated it is his intention to continue to work with the administration, establish a School Resource Officer program and aggressively pursue for the money to fund it. Chief Fitzgerald indicated that he has been working with the mayor to see if there are any existing grants; however, there appear to be none. Chief Fitzgerald intends to speak with the Town Council, at its next meeting, and inform them of his desire to have a School Resource Officer in the school district as soon as possible.

The principals shared their observations of having police presence in the schools. Chief Fitzgerald responded to questions from the Board.

**VI. RECOMMENDED ACTION**

- A. Policy Revisions – Second Readings and Recommended Adoption
  - 1. Policy IICA – Instruction – Field Trips
  - 2. Policy EEA – Transportation – Extra-Curricular/Field Trips

At the December 11 meeting, Board members participated in a first reading of revisions to Board Policies on field trips. Accompanying the agenda were the proposed revised documents for Board Policy IICA-Instruction-Field Trips and Board Policy EEA-Transportation-Extra-Curricular/Field Trips for the Board's consideration and action.

**Moved by Ms. Rochette, seconded by Ms. O'Donnell-Moss, to approve the revisions to Board Policies IICA and EEA as presented.**

**FAVOR: ALL**  
**MOTION CARRIED: 8:0**

**VII. 2007-2008 PROPOSED BUDGET PRESENTATION**

- A. Superintendent's Budget Presentation

Superintendent Cicchetti presented his proposed 2007-08 budget to the Board, which was distributed to all present. Dr. Cicchetti noted that his cover letter in the budget document provides pertinent information for understanding the budget request. The presentation was guided by the budget priorities that were identified this fall by the Board and Administrative Council. This was the first overview of the budget and Dr. Cicchetti indicated he was pleased that it is his second year presenting the budget to the Board. He recognized and thanked the administration team and staff in each of the schools. Dr. Cicchetti also recognized significant support from Roman Czuchta, Margaret Butler and Rena Klebart.

Dr. Cicchetti reported that the proposed budget has an overall increase of \$1,701,220.00 or 5.19% from last year, which represents a 4.638% increase to maintain the current level of services and a 0.548% increase for new staff/programs. Dr. Cicchetti commented that the 5.19% request is approximately 2% lower than last year's request. The proposed budget reflects what he feels are priority needs for improving student achievement and success, which is the Board's overall goal focus area. Dr. Cicchetti outlined the components of the increase in the Operational Budget to maintain the current level of services. Mr. Czuchta reported that the reduction in equipment does not mean a need for less equipment, but rather, the principals have looked at what they have to work with and have made some priority choices, reallocating some of the money for textbooks, supplies, etc., items they have identified as needs. Dr. Cicchetti reported that the request for contractual obligations for certified and non-certified staff and benefit costs associated with collective bargaining agreements were the major budget drivers. Unlike last year's 1.40% increase in utilities, this year's increase of .28% is due largely to the Town's locking in of electrical generation rates last year. Mr. Richards commented that this is the portion of the overall budget increase, and is not the utility line item percentage increase.

Dr. Cicchetti reviewed the New Staff/Programs Requests – originally a 1.61% increase, but offset by approximately \$350,000 in funds through reassignment/reallocation of existing staff, grants, and anticipated retirements – which represents a net 0.548% increase to the budget as well as the New Staff/Programs Requests Considered but Not Included. Dr. Cicchetti cited national school improvement leader Michael Fullan's belief that districts need to focus on literacy, numeracy, and emotional intelligence.

Using the budget priorities as a framework, Dr. Cicchetti reviewed each of the new staff/program requests as they relate to the budget priorities. Enrollment projections were reviewed as they relate to staffing requests.

Dr. Cicchetti noted that the gap between Berlin's per pupil spending and the State average per pupil spending is \$1,482.00. In order for Berlin to meet the State "average" for per pupil spending, an additional \$4.75 million would need to be added to the budget. This would equate to an additional 14.5% increase above and beyond the 5.19% requested.

As the Board moves forward in their budget development process, they will have individual presentations from the elementary, middle school and high school principals, as well as Mrs. Butler on special education and Mr. Czuchta on some of the district programs. These presentations will allow more in-depth discussion and questions. Dr. Cicchetti, on behalf of the entire administrative team, conveyed his support of the Board in providing information that would help them finalize their 2007-08 budget for submission to the Town.

Mr. Richards directed several questions regarding the proposed budget. With regard to equipment valued less than \$5,000 in the operating budget, he requested a history of what has been asked for and what was settled for.

Ms. Hartel thanked Dr. Cicchetti for the overview and remarked the proposed budget is a testament of how closely the administrative team and Dr. Cicchetti worked together in preparing same.

Mr. Recck also directed several questions regarding the proposed budget. With regard to utilities, Mr. Recck requested how this year's budget will impact next year's in the event utilities come under budget this year. Mr. Recck also requested an expanded rationale for the Human Resources Director, as he would like to better understand how this would free up time currently being expended by central office staff.

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

**Moved by Mr. Recck, seconded by Ms. Rochette, to adjourn the meeting at 8:57 p.m.**

**FAVOR: ALL  
MOTION CARRIED: 8:0**

Respectfully submitted,

John M. Richards, Secretary, Berlin Board of Education

(JMR: bd original 1/9/07; JMR revised 1/18/07; MTC revised 1/18/07)