

BERLIN BOARD OF EDUCATION

May 27, 2008

MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING

Attendance: Gary Brochu
Julie Erickson
Michelle Hartel
Gary Lukens
William Lutz

Kathleen O'Donnell-Moss
Christopher Puzio
Anthony Recck
John Richards

Absent

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; Director of Human Resources Joseph Costa; Supervisor of Special Education Linda Holian; District-wide K-12 Literacy Coordinator Debra Thibault; Principal of Griswold School Laurie Gjerpen; Principal of McGee Middle School Brian Benigni; Principal of Willard School Robert J. Sullivan II; Principal of Hubbard School Alfred Souza; Assistant Principal of Willard School Jen Derick; and Assistant Principal of McGee Middle School, effective July 1, 2008, Salvatore Urso.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Brochu called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m. in the Board of Education ("the Board") meeting room at 238 Kensington Road, Berlin, CT. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by student, Haley Hauptfeld. A Moment of Silence was observed.

II. BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Hartel reported on her attendance at the Memorial Day Parade, indicating she was impressed with all the students both watching and marching.

Mr. Richards reported on his attendance at CREC's annual meeting. Mr. Richards reported on his attendance at the Public Building Commission's meeting last week, which will be addressed later in the agenda.

Ms. Erickson congratulated the high school girl's softball team for their Northwest Conference championship win, noting that this was the first championship achieved in 15 years.

Ms. O'Donnell-Moss reported on her participation in the Memorial Day Parade, where she marched as a Board representative. Ms. O'Donnell-Moss was very proud of the performance of the high school band and chorus and the middle school band at the ceremony following the parade. Ms. O'Donnell-Moss reported on the recent Berlin Education Council meeting wherein Mr. Synnott briefly presented the high school NEASC accreditation report to those in attendance. The presentation will be repeated in its entirety in the fall to the entire Education Council. Ms. O'Donnell-Moss reported the realtor cards and survey that the Communications and Alignment Committee intends to use to determine if the educational system in Berlin plays a part in people's willingness to move to the community were presented to the Education Council.

Mr. Costa provided a review of key Human Resources processes in anticipation of purchasing the Human Resources software package.

Mr. Czuchta reported on his attendance at the May 20, 2008 Town Council meeting at which time the Council (1) approved the funding for the reconstruction of the McGee entrance way; (2) approved funding for the upgrade of communication systems at the elementary schools; (3) passed to Town meeting \$237,000 in appropriations for the keyless entry system; and (4) approved and awarded a contract for the resurfacing of the track at the high school.

Ms. Klebart reported on the Curriculum Council's meeting this date and the proposals for textbook adoption. The Board's revised policy for textbook selection now includes the consideration of required summer reading books as "textbooks" that will require adoption by the Board of Education.

Mr. Brochu reported CAFE will be hosting a workshop on June 3, 2008 regarding Collective Bargaining—Health Issues and Legal Issues and the Connecticut Association of Municipal Attorneys will be hosting a seminar on June 6, 2008 regarding Public Construction—The Nuts and Bolts of Municipal Construction Projects. Mr. Brochu reported on his attendance on May 13, 2008 at one of the three evening work sessions that CAFE, along with the Connecticut State Department of Education, put together as a result of the work completed by an individual consultant who reviewed twelve at-risk schools in the state. Mr. Brochu reminded the Board of the UpBeat picnic this Thursday evening at the high school. Mr. Brochu thanked and recognized all the students who came out and participated in the Relay for Life two weekends before.

III. STUDENT PRESENTATION – WILLARD SCHOOL

The Willard School third grade team has had the opportunity to participate in a wide variety of professional development activities during the 2007-2008 school year. The team has used these opportunities to focus their efforts on improving their skills in teaching reading. This presentation provided a view into the new learning that teachers have experienced and how they have used this new information to transform their classroom instruction. Teachers presented examples of the strategies they are using in their instruction, and students offered samples of how these strategies have positively impacted their reading comprehension. Assistant Principal Jen Derick and classroom teachers Michelle Wendehack, Suzanne Heinkel, Chris Sliney, Jane Ponkos and Michael Kulak were joined by students Sumara Ali, Kara Boninsegna, Julia DelVecchio, Haley Hauptfeld, Matthew Luddy and Kamryn Sokolowski.

Dr. Cicchetti acknowledged the high-quality work of the third grade team and thanked Reading Consultant Betty Stephenson, who could not be at tonight's presentation, for her outstanding work with the third grade team.

At this time, item V. Personnel was moved up in the agenda. Hearing no objection, the item was addressed.

V. PERSONNEL

Appointment – Dean of Students, Catherine M. McGee Middle School

Dr. Cicchetti recommended Kelly Maio as the candidate for the Dean of Students position at Catherine M. McGee Middle School.

Moved by Ms. O'Donnell-Moss, seconded by Ms. Erickson, that the Board of Education appoint Kelly Mayo to the position of Dean of Students at Catherine M. McGee Middle School, effective July 1, 2008.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 8:0; including President Gary Brochu

From 7:53 p.m. to 8:05 p.m. a short recess was held for refreshments and to informally congratulate faculty and students and to meet with their family and friends.

IV. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Nothing to report.

VI. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Minutes - Regular Meeting of May 12, 2008
- B. Budget Transfers

Roman Czuchta, Director of Business Operations, provided a sheet of budget transfers that represented year end adjustments to accounts.

- C. Resignation

Catherine Plona, teacher of Language Arts at Catherine M. McGee Middle School, has submitted her letter of resignation to be effective June 30, 2008.

- D. Action Regarding Non-renewal Notice

Due to a resignation, the District is able to extend Amy Stevenson's employment as a teacher in the Berlin Public Schools. It is, therefore, recommended to rescind the non-renewal notice issued to Amy Stevenson and offer her a contract for the 2008-2009 academic year.

Moved by Ms. O'Donnell-Moss, seconded by Mr. Puzio, to approve the consent agenda as presented.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 7:0

VII. INFORMATION AND REPORTS

A. Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) – McGee and Elementary Schools

In response to a request by Board members related to previous discussions regarding AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress), the director of pupil personnel, the assistant superintendent, and the elementary and middle school principals presented information about district-wide and school-based initiatives to address the learning needs of at-risk students in both special education and general education. The presentation also included information about Response to Intervention (RtI).

Ms. Butler remarked that the presentation can actually be thought of as “Improvement of Student Performance” since the focus is no longer only on special education students and the Connecticut Mastery Test but rather the overall performance of any struggling learners in the district.

The presentation consisted of two components. Ms. Butler and Ms. Klebart provided information about District initiatives to support programs for at-risk students and their plans to provide Response to Intervention initiatives to the district, including professional development opportunities, scheduling to allow collaboration between special education and general education, and allocation of resources. They provided the Board with a handout regarding their presentation. Following that, each of the principals reviewed with the Board the work they have done with their support staff to identify at-risk students and to closely align programs and resources with student needs and the communications that will take place with parents regarding this collaboration with special education and general education.

Ms. Butler, Ms. Klebart and the principals responded to questions from the Board regarding the presentation.

From 9:19 p.m. to 9:28 p.m. a short recess was held.

B. Language Arts Update

Debra Thibault, district-wide K-12 Literacy Coordinator, provided an update for the Board on the progress that has been made this year in Language Arts instruction. Specifically, Ms. Thibault addressed development of the Language Arts curriculum; assessment practices; professional development initiatives that were provided this year; and plans and priorities for the 2008-09 school year at the elementary, middle school and high school level. Ms. Thibault discussed the abilities of an independent strategic reader and also provided the Board with the latest, most current State framework for the Language Arts curriculum. A copy of this framework will be made available to teachers before they leave for the summer recess. Ms. Thibault provided the Board with a handout of her presentation and responded to questions from the Board regarding same. Following the presentation, Board members commented on all that Mrs. Thibault had accomplished this year and thanked her for the improvements in the literacy program.

C. Educational Specifications for New High School – Status Report

Resources and Capacity-building Committee Chairperson John Richards reported the Public Building Commission met last Thursday and continues to work on the RFQ (Requests for Qualifications) and RFP (Requests for Proposals) for architectural services. Mr. Richards noted positive progress is being made. Mr. Brochu highlighted the legislative changes concerning the process by which local schools

must award contracts for architectural services on school construction projects receiving state school construction grants, which, if signed, would become effective July 1, 2008.

D. Technology Bond – Status Report

Director of Business Operations Roman Czuchta reported the Town Manger was given authority to sign the contract on behalf of the Town with Fiber Tech. The contract is now being reviewed by the Town Attorney. Mr. Czuchta reported an advertisement for a RFP for work to upgrade the Willard land, which is also part of this project, went out on Sunday and looks forward to having it back, reviewed and on the Town Council's agenda for action on June 17, 2008.

VIII. RECOMMENDED ACTION

A. Healthy Food Certification 2008-2009

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 10-215e of the Connecticut General Statutes for the period of July 1, 2008 through June 30, 2009.

Over the course of the past two years, the Board and administration – as well as representatives from parent organizations and booster clubs - have had several discussions regarding the District's participation in the grant program that is part of Public Act 06-63. It is the consensus of the Resources and Capacity-building Committee and administration that the District decline participation in this grant program for the 2008-09 school year.

Director of Business Operations Roman Czuchta and Director of Food Services Timothy Prosinski project that any funding received from the grant would be offset by losses in sales and fundraising efforts due to the restrictions that the grant imposes on districts. Separate and apart from Berlin's participation in the grant program, changes made over the past two school years with respect to food services offerings have provided students with more healthy food choices during lunches.

Moved by Mr. Richards, seconded by Mr. Lukens, that the Berlin Board of Education will not participate in the optional Healthy Foods Certification program under Section 10-215f of the Connecticut General Statutes for the 2008-09 school year.

FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED: 7:0

It is recommended that the Board approve the sale of soda during after school events, which are defined by Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes as “an occurrence that involves more than just a

regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity.” As during the 2007-08 school year, these sales will occur outside of the school day.

Moved by Mr. Richards, seconded by Ms. Erickson, that the Berlin Board of Education allow the sale of beverages (to students) that are not listed in Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes for the 2008-09 school year.

**FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED: 7:0**

B. Personnel Not Covered by Collective Bargaining

Dr. Cicchetti presented the Board with a proposal for the continuation of employment for 2008-09 for personnel not covered by collective bargaining. The Board’s Resources and Capacity-building Committee reviewed and discussed the proposal at its meeting of May 12.

Moved by Ms. Erickson, seconded by Ms. O’Donnell-Moss, to approve the proposed salaries for personnel not covered by collective bargaining and issue them contracts for the 2008-2009 school year.

**FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED: 7:0**

C. Adult Education Grant

Dr. Cicchetti reported the Berlin Adult Education program has submitted a Program Improvement Project grant. This is an annual grant that is offered through the State Department of Education Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education. The grant is funded by the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act. The major purpose of the grant is to increase the capacity of the adult education programs to provide the needed educational and support services.

Moved by Mr. Richards, seconded by Mr. Lukens, to approve the Program Improvement Project grant for Adult Education as proposed.

**FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED: 7:0**

IX. EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 10:31 p.m., a motion was made by Ms. Erickson, seconded by Ms. O’Donnell-Moss, to go into Executive Session to discuss materials relative to the transportation contract; materials relative to negotiations – cafeteria employees; unaffiliated administrator contracts for Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Director of Business Operations and Director of Human Resources; and timelines for evaluation of the Superintendent of Schools and Board of Education.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 7:0

In attendance for Executive Session were Board members Brochu, Erickson, Hartel, Lukens, Lutz, O'Donnell-Moss, Puzio and Richards. In addition, Dr. Cicchetti was present for the full executive sessions. Mr. Czuchta and Mr. Costa were present for the discussions regarding transportation contract and negotiations.

At 11:34 p.m., a motion was made by Mr. Lutz, seconded by Ms. Erickson, to return to regular session with recommended action.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 7:0

X. RECOMMENDED ACTION

A. Transportation Contract

It was anticipated that a recommendation would be made by the Resources and Capacity-building Committee regarding the District's transportation contract.

Moved by Ms. O'Donnell-Moss, seconded by Mr. Lukens to extend the contract with the New Britain Transportation Company through June 30, 2012 as negotiated.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 7:0

- B. Unaffiliated Administrator Contracts
 - 1. Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction
 - 2. Director of Business Operations
 - 3. Director of Human Resources

The Board was presented with a proposal for the continuation of employment for 2008-2009 for administrative personnel (listed above) not covered by collective bargaining.

Moved by Ms. Erickson, seconded by Ms. O'Donnell-Moss to approve the proposed salaries for administrative personnel (Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Director of Business Operations, and Director of Human Resources) not covered by collective bargaining and issue them contracts for the 2008-2009 school year.

FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED: 7:0

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Mr. Lukens, seconded by Ms. Erickson, to adjourn the meeting at 11:39 p.m.

FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED: 7:0

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Hartel, Secretary, Berlin Board of Education