

BERLIN BOARD OF EDUCATION
January 14, 2019
MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING

Attendance: Richard Aroian
Julia Dennis
Jake Fisher Absent
Jaymee Miller
Timothy Oakes
Adam Salina
Kari Sassu, Ph.D.
Tracy Sisti
Matthew Tencza Absent
Student Representatives: Alexander Halkias Arrived at 7:26 p.m.
Jenna Smalley

Also in attendance: Superintendent of Schools Brian J. Benigni; Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Erin McGurk; Director of Business Operations Jeffrey Cugno; Director of Human Resources Denise Parsons; Director of Pupil Personnel Services Linda Holian; Supervisor of Special Education – Elementary Michelle Zeuschner; Supervisor of Special Education – Secondary Cindy Martin; Principal of Berlin High School Eileen Eustis; Assistant Principal of Berlin High School Kelly Maio; Assistant Principal of McGee Middle School Heather Gish; Principal of Griswold School David Kitzman; Principal of Hubbard School Alfred Souza; Principal of Willard School Matthew Correia; Director of Literacy and Social Studies Laurie Gjerpen; Director of Mathematics and Science Kara Watson; and Director of Athletics Jeff Mauri.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Pledge of Allegiance

Dr. Sassu called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m. in the Board of Education (“the Board”) meeting room at 238 Kensington Road, Berlin, CT. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

II. COMMITTEE REPORTS/CORRESPONDENCE TO THE BOARD

A. Report of Student Representatives

Miss Smalley reported AP English Literature students participated in the presidential debate on December 20, 2018, and senior speeches, related to those English classes, will occur soon; seniors presented their Capstone Projects on December 18, 2018; Attorney General George Jepsen met with the Political Club and Introduction to Law students on January 4, 2019; the winter band concert is tomorrow evening in the Berlin High School auditorium; mid-term exams begin January 22, 2019; and the spotlight games of the week are boys basketball versus Middletown on January 18, 2019 and girls basketball versus New Britain on January 24, 2019.

B. Committee Reports

1. Student Achievement Committee

Mr. Aroian reported, prior to tonight’s meeting, the Student Achievement Committee met with Berlin High School Principal Eileen Eustis and Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Erin McGurk and discussed the impact of the new state law on graduation requirements.

2. Communications Committee

Ms. Dennis reported the Communications Committee recently met with Superintendent Benigni and Board President Tencza and discussed ways of informing the community. The Communications Committee collectively put together a slide presentation, which was shared with the Board at the Board's retreat. Ms. Dennis shared that presentation this evening.

C. Correspondence to the Board

Superintendent Benigni shared correspondences received from Lindsay Marshall; Nicole Arsenault; and Dave and Jen Bosso.

Mr. Oakes reported the Ad-Hoc Committee, which was formed at the December 10, 2018 meeting, for reviewing and revising the Board's policy manual, will also consist of Berlin High School Principal Eileen Eustis, McGee Middle School Principal Salvatore Urso, Hubbard Principal Alfred Souza and Director of Pupil Personnel Services Linda Holian to represent each of the school levels and the Pupil Personnel Services Department.

III. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

John Richards, 239 Hawthorne Drive, Berlin, Connecticut, addressed the Board as both a citizen of the Town and as a member of the Board of Finance. Mr. Richards thanked Ms. Dennis for the information she presented and indicated it is his notion that the Board communicates as many positive stories about the district to the town to show what is happening in the world of Berlin education. Mr. Richards reported one of the lessons the Board of Finance learned, during the time of the budget, was it made the mistake of not holding hearings. The Board of Finance is looking forward to working with the Board of Education and other town departments to communicate as much information to the public of what is being accomplished. Mr. Richards believes the budget the Board presents should be an embodiment of positive goals it wishes to accomplish. Mr. Richards will provide the Board with any questions or information he receives, and he looks forward to the budget process.

IV. PERSONNEL

Retirements

1. Berlin High School – Teacher of Technology Education

Dr. Sassu presented Chris Wolfe's letter of intent to retire as teacher of technology education at Berlin High School, effective the end of the 2018-2019 school year.

Moved by Mr. Aroian, seconded by Ms. Dennis, to accept the retirement of Chris Wolfe, teacher of technology education at Berlin High School, effective June 30, 2019. Also to thank him for the thirty-four years of service he has provided to the youth of Berlin and to wish him good health and happiness in his retirement years.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 7:0; including Dr. Sassu

2. Emma Hart Willard School – Math Specialist

Dr. Sassu presented Karen Schroder’s letter of intent to retire as math specialist at Emma Hart Willard School, effective the end of the 2018-2019 school year.

Moved by Mr. Oakes, seconded by Mr. Salina, to accept the retirement of Karen Schroder, math specialist at Emma Hart Willard School, effective June 30, 2019. Also to thank her for the twenty-five years of service she has provided to the youth of Berlin and to wish her good health and happiness in her retirement years.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 7:0; including Dr. Sassu

V. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Minutes – Regular Meeting of December 10, 2018
- B. Monthly Budget Report – Period ending December 31, 2018
- C. Request for Leave of Absence – Emma Hart Willard School – Paraprofessional

Samarelis Ayala, paraprofessional at Emma Hart Willard School, requested an unpaid leave of absence for one year, beginning on January 11, 2019, to care for her newborn daughter who is experiencing health complications that require her care and attention.

Moved by Mr. Salina, seconded by Ms. Dennis, to approve the consent agenda as presented.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 7:0; including Dr. Sassu

VI. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Berlin High School Program of Studies for 2019-2020

Assistant Superintendent Erin McGurk and Berlin High School Principal Eileen Eustis presented to the Board of Education, for its consideration and approval, new course offerings and changes to the Berlin High School Program of Studies for 2019-2020. Principal Eustis highlighted each change and, along with Assistant Superintendent McGurk, responded to questions from Board members. Board members were provided with a document containing the significant changes, a sheet containing summary notes

and a draft copy of the Berlin High School Program of Studies for 2019-2020. The changes were reviewed and discussed by members of the Student Achievement Committee at their December 10, 2018 meeting.

Moved by Mr. Salina, seconded by Mr. Aroian, to approve the new course offerings and revisions to the Berlin High School Program of Studies for 2019-2020 as presented.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 7:0; including Dr. Sassu

B. Facilities Related Updates

Director of Business Operations Jeffrey Cugno reported that, at this time of the year, there is a lot of focus on facilities. The capital plan is being developed and continues to be worked on by the Town; the district has applied for and is waiting to hear on grant programs; and the Board's own budget is being developed, which includes site and building and capital equipment. There have been conversations relative to how the facilities should look and where support will come from. Mr. Cugno reported two weeks ago he met with Town Manager Jack Healy, Finance Director Kevin Delaney, Facilities Director Doug Solek and District Technology Coordinator Craig Szymanski to discuss, not only the grants coming forward, but what to do with those grants when received, and how those grants can be coupled with money the Town still has in its fund and willing to spend on the educational facilities. Mr. Cugno reported the Town Council approved installing the bollards in front of Berlin High School. There have been discussions regarding a new phone system for the elementary schools and security cameras for McGee. Mr. Cugno indicated he has seen a tremendous amount of support from the Town for the school facilities.

C. Policy Review/Revision – Policy 5141 – Wellness – Adoption

At the December 10, 2018 Board meeting, this item was tabled to allow Superintendent Benigni to obtain clarification of the meaning of the word “groups” that are prohibited from selling or distributing food or beverages on school premises 30 minutes prior to the start of and 30 minutes after the end of such state or federally subsidized food program; and interpretation of “no use of physical activity for punishment for inappropriate behavior” as it relates to participation on a sports team.

Moved by Mr. Oakes, seconded by Ms. Dennis, that the Board adopt revised Policy 5141 – Wellness, as presented.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 7:0; including Dr. Sassu

VII. 2019-2020 SUPERINTENDENT'S PROPOSED BUDGET PRESENTATION

Superintendent Benigni presented his proposed 2019-2020 budget to the Board. The presentation was guided by the budget priorities that were identified by the Board and Administrative Council.

Prior to Superintendent Benigni beginning his formal presentation of the proposed 2019-2020 budget, Board members were provided with a sheet containing all new staff requests made by the building principals and department leaders, which total \$2,149,600. The majority of the requests are not present in Superintendent Benigni's proposed budget. The proposed increases included in Superintendent Benigni's proposed 2019-2020 budget are \$133,881 (0.3% increase) for new staff requests. Superintendent Benigni indicated that if all new staff requests were included in the proposed 2019-2020 budget, there would be an additional 4.6% increase, for an overall budget increase of 10.56%. Outside from these new staff requests are the security positions, which are being proposed to be funded in Account 61, which is on the town side.

The proposed budget has an overall increase of \$2,596,842 or 5.96%.

In terms of Administrative Salaries, there is an increase of \$64,356 or 2.42%, which is driven by contractual obligations.

In terms of Certified Salaries, there is an increase of \$891,267 or 4.50%. These increases are based on a 2.65% salary increase and grant reductions, which necessitated teachers being placed back into the 2019-2020 operational budget. There is a new request for a 1.0 FTE school counselor at the high school.

In terms of Non-Certified Salaries, there is an increase of \$393,615 or 5.92%, which is based on contractual obligations, hiring staff for open positions and mandated staff additions.

In terms of Employee Benefits, there is an increase of \$231,223 or 3.55%.

In terms of Contracted Services, there is an increase of \$364,569 or 24.69%, which is directly related to the Effective School Solutions program at Berlin High School not being funded in the Operational Budget for the 2018-2019 school year.

In terms of Utilities, there is an increase of \$43,384 or 13.95%, which represents an increase due to rising costs/utilization.

In terms of Transportation, there is an increase of \$78,776 or 2.69%, which represents contractual costs with New Britain Transportation; mandates to transport; special education transportation; and homeless transportation.

In terms of Tuition, there is a increase of \$557,713 or 29.11%. Currently, there is \$400,000 for outplacement tuition. Superintendent Benigni is requesting an additional \$150,000 be set aside for next year should the district see additional outplacements.

In terms of Supplies, Textbooks and Materials, there is a decrease of \$21,398 or 1.84%. Chrome books are in use throughout the district and by June 2019, nine hundred and nine (909) will be in need of replacement.

In terms of Equipment, there is a decrease of \$3,760 or 5.46%.

In terms of Other Expenditures, there is a decrease \$2,903 or 4.36%, which represents a decrease in dues and fees and tournament fees.

It was noted that 2.3% of the proposed overall increase is solely attributable to contractual obligations and 0.75% is attributable to the ESS program.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

At 8:29 p.m., a motion was made by Ms. Miller, seconded by Ms. Sisti, to adjourn.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 7:0; including Dr. Sassu

Respectfully submitted,

Kari Sassu, Ph.D., Secretary, Berlin Board of Education