

BERLIN BOARD OF EDUCATION

February 11, 2019

MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING

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

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 Pupil Personnel Services Linda Holian; Principal of Berlin High School Eileen Eustis; Principal of McGee Middle School Salvatore Urso; Assistant Principal of McGee Middle School Heather Gish; Principal of Griswold School David Kitzman; Principal of Hubbard School Alfred Souza; and Principal of Willard School Matthew Correia.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Tencza called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. in the Berlin High School Auditorium at 139 Patterson Way, Berlin, Connecticut. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

II. COMMITTEE REPORTS/CORRESPONDENCE TO THE BOARD

A. Report of Student Representatives

On behalf of Mr. Halkias, Mr. Tencza reported, currently, six students on the boys basketball team have tested positive for the flu, and there are similar issues with the girls basketball team; the National Honor Society held a fundraiser at Moe's Southwest Grill on Wednesday, February 6, 2019; and everyone is hoping for a snow day tomorrow.

B. Committee Reports – Educational Resources Committee

Mr. Salina reported the Educational Resources Committee recently met to discuss the proposed 2019-2020 budget, and at that meeting John Richards provided the Committee with additional numbers from the Finance Committee.

C. Correspondence to the Board

There was no correspondence this evening.

III. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Mayor Mark Kaczynski addressed the Board concerning school security, including the hiring of a security director and armed security personnel at each of the schools. Mayor Kaczynski believes this is the safest way to protect staff, students and the town.

Mr. John Richards, 239 Hawthorne Drive, Berlin, Connecticut, thanked Superintendent Benigni for tonight's informational budget presentation and suggested his presentation include a pie chart, containing all the budget pieces. Mr. Richards also addressed the Board concerning the Capital Budget and Town of Berlin Ten Year Capital Improvement Plan.

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Minutes
 - 1. Regular Meeting of January 28, 2019
 - 2. Special Meeting of January 11 & 12, 2019
 - 3. Special Meeting of January 23, 2019
- B. Monthly Budget Report – Period ending January 31, 2019

Moved by Dr. Sassu, seconded by Ms. Dennis, to approve the consent agenda as presented.

**FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED: 9:0; including President Tencza**

V. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Facilities Related Updates

There were no facilities related updates.

- B. Policy Review/Revision – Policy 6146 – High School Graduation Requirements – Second Reading/Adoption

A second reading of revised Policy 6146 – High School Graduation Requirements took place. Revisions have been made to this policy in accordance with Public Act 17-42, which made revisions to the graduation requirements and provides districts with additional flexibility in determining how to award credits to students. This policy was reviewed by the Ad-Hoc Committee for Policy Review/Revision at their meeting on January 28, 2019, and a first reading took place at the January 28, 2019 Board meeting.

Moved by Mr. Aroian, seconded by Ms. Dennis, that the Board adopt revised Policy 6146 – High School Graduation Requirements, as presented.

**FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED: 9:0; including President Tencza**

C. Security Director and Security Guards

The Board of Education continued its discussion from the October 22 meeting regarding the hiring of a security/residency director and armed security personnel at all schools. Ongoing discussions have taken place with the Mayor, Town Manager, a Town Council member, Police Chief and Superintendent of Schools regarding these positions. The mayor has expressed his commitment to fund these positions with the stipulation that all security personnel would be armed, and the funding would be controlled by the town, but supervised by the Superintendent. Superintendent Benigni reported, in response to the survey sent to parents, 448 responses were received with over 70% in favor of armed guards. Superintendent Benigni reported the armed security guards would be former local or state police officers, they would have an annual psychiatric examination and recertification and the Police Chief is willing to assist with the recertification. The recommendation is to have a School Security Director for the district, two armed security guards at the high school, one at each of the elementary schools and one at the middle school. The School Security Director would also be responsible for residency checks. The Board had a lengthy discussion concerning the issue of armed security guards in the schools, which included the relationship they would have with students; job duties; rationale for having armed security guards versus school resource officers; cost factors; training; job description and qualifications for the School Security Director; and members of the hiring committee. Board members expressed their thoughts on having armed security guards in the schools.

Mr. Tencza indicated this item will appear on the next Board meeting agenda for a vote.

D. Review and Possible Adoption of the Proposed Board of Education Budget for 2019-2020

The Board of Education has reviewed and discussed the Superintendent's Proposed Budget for 2019-2020. The Board met on January 23 to review the budget details, including information from presentations by central office administration. Earlier this evening, the Board held an informational meeting for the public so community members could provide input on the budget prior to approval. The Board of Education and the Board of Finance will hold a joint meeting on February 20 to discuss the budget.

Moved by Dr. Sassu, seconded by Mr. Oakes, to adopt the Proposed Operating Budget for 2019-2020 in the amount of \$46,177,844.

Mr. Salina indicated he was amazed not only with the cost for tuition but also transportation, and although it is not an easy task to vote for a tax increase, and he is not looking forward to paying additional taxes, he does value the educational process and system and would have a difficult time making cuts to this budget.

Ms. Dennis indicated Berlin's per pupil expenditure is less per pupil as compared to the state average, and she is willing to pay a tax increase for education.

FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED: 9:0; including President Tencza

Moved by Dr. Sassu, seconded by Mr. Oakes, to adopt the Capital Budget for 2019-2020 in the amount of \$1,275,000, which includes \$963,800 for Information Technology.

Mr. Salina indicated he hopes the Capital Budget is not cut tremendously, as it has been over the years, as the district needs to be able to provide the tools to keep pace with the educational demands. Mr. Tencza noted the budget Superintendent Benigni has presented has the implementation of a one to one student/Chromebook ratio.

**FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED: 9:0; including President Tencza**

Moved by Dr. Sassu, seconded by Ms. Miller, to adopt the Site and Building Budget for 2019-2020 in the amount of \$1,078,800, which includes \$575,000 for Security.

Ms. Dennis indicated one of her fears with \$575,000 included for security is there may be cuts to educational opportunities, which she would not like to see.

**FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED: 9:0; including President Tencza**

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Ms. Dennis, seconded by Ms. Miller, to adjourn the meeting at 8:09 p.m.

**FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED: 9:0; including President Tencza**

Respectfully submitted,

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