

*Filed subject to approval*

REGION 9 BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING

December 15, 2020 - 7:30 p.m.

Minutes

**Virtually via Zoom**

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://zoom.us/j/99459353875?pwd=QXdvb2YvRnlqZUU2cjZtZWwhEUWlhZz09>

Meeting ID: 994 5935 3875 - Passcode: 866628

One tap mobile: +16465588656,,99459353875#,,,,,0#,,866628# US (New York)

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ATTENDANCE

Board members: Johnston, Graziano, Berry, D'Agostino, Denny, O'Brien, Pampel, Williams

Administration: Harrison, Pierson Ugol, Zachery

Others: 14 members of the staff and public, and the recording secretary

CALL TO ORDER

T. Johnston called the Region 9 Board of Education Regular Meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

**Motion:** move that the Region 9 Board of Education approve the minutes of the November 10, 2020 Easton, Redding, Region 9 Boards of Education Special Meeting, with the following revision: *"Graziano stated that she agrees with a written policy. Though the discussion among the boards reflected differing opinions, it also reflects members' passion for their volunteer work and collaboration among the group."* (Graziano, Pampel). Approved. Unanimous.

**Motion:** move that the Region 9 Board of Education approve the minutes of the November 17, 2020 Region 9 Board of Education Regular Meeting as submitted. (Graziano, O'Brien). Approved. Unanimous.

STUDENT COMMENT

Student Council Representative, Max Monson, said that the Student Council will be meeting the next day to discuss spirit ideas, and that the student-led petition about midterm grading currently has at least 700 student signatures. He said the petition calls for midterm grades to be used as 10% of an overall semester grade, instead of the current 20%. M. D'Agostino raised concerns about the grading and petition, saying that this is the first that he and the BOE had heard about this situation. He said that he wants to make sure that the best decision was made. Dr. Pin explained that discussions with the students had occurred concurrently with Barlow leadership discussions.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

## BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

G. Denny asked if there was anything we could be doing to help -- resource-wise -- the administration, staff and students.

## ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Rydell Harrison, reported that where we are with the health data, we are planning on coming back in a hybrid learning model on January 4. Dr. Harrison said that he's been asked many times about what it will take to get back into the school building; he said that it is not simple and that there is no magic number, but that the health directors want to see a decline in numbers. On the topic of snow days, Dr. Harrison said that the State of Connecticut has approved the use of snow days as distance learning days. He said the criteria for using snow days for distance learning is: students have devices, students have power and synchronous instruction takes place. Dr. Harrison said that using snow days for instruction will be beneficial to instruction, schedules and the continuity of school.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Stephanie Pierson Ugol, reported that the ER9 Professional Development and Evaluation Committee had met and had a very positive meeting that included sharing building updates regarding teacher observations. Dr. Pierson Ugol also reported that, because of the variations of school models and anticipated disruptions, the Connecticut Department of Education has allowed for curriculum leaders to adjust pacing; but she said that we will not need to do any dramatic re-pacing of courses. She also said that there is targeted intervention occurring that includes an academic and SEL focus.

Director of Finance & Operations, Clarence Zachery, reported on the Budget Object Summary, saying that 38% of the budget has been expended and 45% is encumbered. He said that the District is in a good and comfortable place. M. D'Agostino asked about the heating oil, salary and DEI textbook lines. C. Zachery said that heating oil is traditionally bought in the summer and that we budgeted slightly over in the salary line. Dr. Pin responded that she did not have the title of the \$12.12 DEI textbook, but that she would find out the title. T. Johnston asked about the \$510 consultant line. Dr. Pin responded that this is for the Junior Writing Portfolio consultant in order for more time to be spent with these students. C. Zachery made the BOE aware of a serious flooding situation that occurred in the school building and that the repair cost could be upwards of \$20,000. Building & Grounds Director, Walter Czudek, said that 70-80 feet of pipe had rotted and caused the flood and now needs to be replaced. C. Zachery said that he had received a health insurance analysis from Brown & Brown, and that currently, the health insurance reserve is at \$658K. He said that claims are still down, but an uptick is anticipated once people start going back to medical appointments -- possibly this spring. C. Graziano asked if Brown & Brown had discussed self-insuring vs. joining the state plan. C. Zachery said that both he and Brown & Brown feel it is more stable to self-insure.

Joel Barlow High School Head of School, Dr. Gina Pin, reported that they are concerned about students who are struggling and that there are more students with D/F averages than ever before. She said that they are reallocating certified and support staff to meet with students and to be available for students, and that a summer program will be able to address those students with a gap in learning.

Dr. Pin acknowledged the teaching staff and their tremendous efforts to make distance learning engaging. She shared a video of the Barlow Chamber Singers singing a Hanukkah song virtually, and noted the accomplishments of Barlow athletes and schools clubs that are in her written report to the BOE.

Dr. Pin reported that the DEI Committee has had two meetings with the Connecticut Center for School Change, that these were productive meetings and that the Committee will focus on inclusion. She added that: there are still Chromebooks available to lend, the PTSA will continue with their virtual Town Hall Meetings, and Barlow will follow a black/gold schedule for the rest of the week. M. D'Agostino said that he is greatly alarmed to hear of the increase in students with a D/F average and that he feels this is an unacceptable situation. He suggested staff members form a task force to figure out how to support these students. T. Johnston asked about an increase in counselor appointments and if Special Education students also need more help now. Dr. Pin replied that they are reaching out to students and their families and that they are not leaving any students behind.

**Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education accept with gratitude the grant of \$4,000 from the Weller Foundation, to be used for the Art and Math Departments. (D'Agostino, O'Brien). Approved. Unanimous.**

Joel Barlow High School Director of Special Services, Michael DiStefano, read an email aloud from one of his teachers offering extra help to students for an all-day timeframe, and then revealed that this email was sent to students on a Sunday; he said that this depicts the dedication of the staff to their students. He said that there is definitely an uptick in referrals for 504s, with 22 referrals so far this school year and 12 referrals for all of the 2019-2020 school year; he clarified that a referral does not necessarily mean an approval of services. M. DiStefano said that the Bridge Program has grown from eight students to 13 students, and that he and Paula Panos communicate with parents on a regular basis. He said that right now his department is doing ok, and that they are looking forward to getting back into the building.

#### BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

M. Williams reported that the Policy Committee is working on the 3,000 Series of policy, which includes lunches and security issues among many other issues. She said that the Committee continues to meet every Friday morning.

#### DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: REVIEW OF ANNUAL AUDIT

Joe Centofanti, a representative from the auditing firm PKF O'Connor Davies, said that the district's audit is 90% done, and that an extension for filing the audit has been filed and approved. He said that he is waiting for a few pieces of information from Central Office and then he will be able to complete the audit; he said his firm will be able to make recommendations on internal control and best practices. A discussion took place about approving the completed audit and when to present it at a BOE meeting.

#### DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: APPROVAL OF 2021 BOARD MEETING AND COMMITTEE MEETING SCHEDULE

**Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education accept the 2021 schedule of Board Meetings and Committee Meetings as presented. (D'Agostino, Williams). Approved. Unanimous.**

**DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: INITIAL DISCUSSION FOR CAPITAL PROJECTS FOR SUMMER 2021**

C. Zachery said that the HVAC system project definitely needs to be addressed. T. Johnston suggested that the planning and timeline for this project go back to the Facilities Committee, and that they then present their plan and timeline. M. D'Agostino agreed.

**DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: PRELIMINARY TIMELINE FOR REGION 9 BUDGET**  
T. Johnston presented a timeline for the 2021-2022 budget with the following important dates: January 19 BOE Meeting will include budget drivers; February 16 BOE Meeting will include presentation of budget; and March 11 BOE budget workshop will include staffing plan.

**DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: DEI CONSULTANT PROGRESS UPDATE**

It was concluded that Dr. Pin had covered this topic during her building report. BOE members asked for a more detailed report on the specific work that the consultants are doing. Dr. Harrison replied that there is a set of goals and an action plan to reach these goals, but that we are not yet at these goals. Dr. Pin replied that the consultants are not handing us a plan and actions, but rather, that they are giving us the tools to come up with our own plan and actions.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

**BOARD MEMBER COMMENT**

None.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education Regular Meeting be adjourned. (O'Brien, D'Agostino). Approved. Unanimous.**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:22 p.m.

Submitted by

Juliette Berry, Secretary, Region 9 Board of Education

Recorded by,

Sarah Ota