

Filed subject to approval

REGION 9 BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING

February 16, 2021 - 7:30 p.m.

Held Remotely Pursuant to Executive Order No. 7B

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/97989654009?pwd=dTg5d2doWWFpenhYby93aURISWJpQT09>

Minutes

ATTENDANCE

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

Administration: Harrison, Pierson Ugol, Pin, Zachery

Others: 48 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 January 19, 2021 Region 9 Board of Education Regular meeting, the January 26, 2021 ER9 Joint Boards of Education Regular meeting, the February 4, 2021 Region 9 Board of Education Special meeting, and the February 8, 2021 ER9 Joint Boards of Education Special meeting as submitted. (D'Agostino, Williams). Deemed approved by unanimous consent.

STUDENT COMMENT

None.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Dana Bensen, no address given, Easton, said that he is concerned about the manifesto and that the manifesto is extremely concerning, and that there is one party being presented in the classroom.

Sherry Harris, Ridgeway Road, Easton, said she encourages the Board to get back to public meetings and encourages the Board not to approve the academic complexity course. She also said that the JBHS curriculum is not on-line.

June Logie, Rockhouse Road, Easton, said that critical race theory rests with the parents and not the school.

Ken Oliver, Lilac Lane, Easton, said that he wanted to address systemic racism and that you are making the assumption that it exists at JBHS.

Maureen Hanley, Andrews Road, no town given, read a prepared statement saying that critical thinking should happen at home.

Kathy Kuhn, Mills Lane, Easton, said that she agreed with everything that had been said.

Ralph Kuhn, Mills Lane, Easton, talked about growing up in the Bronx and was then excused from Public Comment by the BOE Chairperson when he used profanity in his statement.

Stephen Lando, Blackrock Turnpike, Easton, said he echoed the other comments.

Anne Manusky, no address given, Easton, said that the education system is in a downward spiral.

Gerald Valenti, Lonetown Road, Redding said that he applauds everyone who has spoken out tonight.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

C. Graziano thanked the people who commented and reminded the public that Curriculum Committee meetings are advertised and are open to the public, as are the minutes from the meetings. She said the Curriculum Committee works in a slow, derivative process, and that the proposal that some people mentioned came from an alumni group.

M. D'Agostino said that it's important to understand that we support all viewpoints and perspectives. He said that the BOE considers everything and that our process is very transparent.

M. Williams said that she echoes what C. Graziano and M. D'Agostino said, and that the Board does not work in a vacuum.

K. O'Brien asked what the manifesto is, that people had just spoken about, and asked that someone send it to her.

T. Johnston said that what people were referencing was not an official BOE or school document.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Rydell Harrison, said that since he was presenting the budget later in the meeting and since the agenda was quite lengthy, he would not make a report at this point in the meeting.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Pierson Ugol, reported on the work being done by the DEI Committee and the consulting group, CCSC. Her report included deliverables with a status update, and a chart with the activity, the participants in the activity and a status update. Dr. Pierson Ugol said that the process for this work is lengthy.

Director of Finance & Operations, Clarence Zachery, reported that the Region 9 District is outperforming the other two Districts in terms of their health insurance claims. He said that E-Finance is still not accurately creating the Budget Object Summary report, so there was not one tonight. T. Johnston asked about a transfer on the Transfer Report that deals with disposal services; C. Zachery said he would get the details to him.

Head of School, Dr. Gina Pin, gave a summary of how the All-In learning model was going so far -- very well, she reported. She said students are wearing masks and are generally being compliant, and that there are face shields and desk guards available for student use. Dr. Pin said that there are now 120 students in Cohort C and that the attendance policy will generally be the same; students cannot stay home and learn from home unless they have a sincere illness. She said that all student cars fit in the upper parking lot and urged parents to wait until 2:15 p.m. to pick-up their students from school. Dr. Pin expressed an interest in contracting with CBT -- consultants who train faculty in dealing with SEL -- and have them conduct professional learning workshops for the faculty and staff at JBHS. She said that there is a serious need as they have seen an increase in depression and anxiety in the students. Some BOE members asked from where the funding for this initiative would come. Dr. Pin and C. Zachery said that there were some unused transportation funds from ESY 2020 that could possibly be used. It was decided that more information was needed about this initiative and discussion was tabled until more information could be provided; it was also decided to schedule a special meeting on this topic.

Director of Special Services, Michael DiStefano, went through his four-page report to the BOE. He said that the numbers in his department have remained stable. C. Graziano asked about the numbers of referrals versus last year's number. M. DiStefano explained that those were referrals and not every student who is referred ends up receiving services. He also said he will highlight a different staff member in his department every month to call out great work; this month's staff member is: SpEd teacher, Sheila Salko-Peddle.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

Policy Committee: M. Williams reported that the Policy Committee is now looking at policies regarding security issues, social media and Tri-Board governance.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: UNASSIGNED BALANCE FUND FOR AUDIT YEAR ENDING JUNE 2020

C. Zachery reported that the Audit Committee had moved to consider action on the \$92,531 that was unassigned in the general fund for the period ending June 30, 2020. He said that the BOE needed to decide to either give it back to the towns or put it into another account. A short discussion took place and it was decided to put the issue on the agenda for the next BOE meeting.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: PROPOSED NEW COURSES

C. Graziano explained that the two new courses are a result of a new mandate from the State of Connecticut for graduation requirements starting with the Class of 2023. Dr. Pin reminded people that the minutes from the Curriculum Committee meeting and the course descriptions are both on the District and JBHS websites. She explained that the course, "World Language: Mythology and Etymology," is designed for students who have had no, or unsuccessful, previous world language instruction, and that the course will offer instruction in basic Latin and Greek etymology with the goal of enhancing students' understanding of English grammar and vocabulary. Board members had several questions regarding: the state mandate, how this course will continue to set-up students for college, the cross-discipline approach of the course, the effect on other WL courses, the instructor for the course, how many students will be enrolled in course, what other DRG A & B schools are doing, and the impact on staffing.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education advance the “World Language: Mythology and Etymology” course at JBHS for the purpose of communicating said course to students for the 2021-2022 school year. (Williams, Graziano). Approved. 7-1. (Johnston dissented).

Dr. Pin explained the New Mastery Based Credit Graduation Requirement as not a new course, but rather, new credit that the students will need starting with the Class of 2023. She said students will receive one (1) JBHS credit for each area: Academic, in terms of complexity/communication/critical thinking; and, Beyond Barlow, in terms of community. Dr. Pin said that students will need to demonstrate mastery in the academic areas of: writing, mathematics, reading and science in several different ways that relate to the individual academic discipline. She said that students will need to demonstrate mastery of community through: advocacy, science research, independent study, passages or internships/career pathways/work study.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education approve the mastery based curriculum that was outlined, for students to earn one (1) mastery credit, as required by the State of Connecticut as a graduation requirement, starting in the 2021-2022 school year. (Williams, Graziano). Approved. Unanimous.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: CAMPUS IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT FOR HVAC

M. D’Agostino said that the Fields & Facilities Committee had met earlier this evening and that the scope of work is on the health and safety improvement in the cafeteria and gymnasium. He said the Committee would like to move forward with pricing on the project and that work will occur over the summer of 2021.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education move forward with the JBHS cafeteria and gymnasium HVAC and safety & health improvement project, and obtain pricing for said project from an approved list of vendors provided by the State of Connecticut. (D’Agostino, Pampel). Approved. Unanimous.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: PERSONNEL SEARCH COMMITTEE FOR REGION 9 ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT AND HEAD OF SCHOOL

A brief discussion took place about the process to be followed for the search for a new Assistant Superintendent and Head of School.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education form a Personnel Search Committee for the purpose of hiring a new Assistant Superintendent of Schools and Head of School, with the Committee to include all members of the Region 9 Board of Education. (D’Agostino, O’Brien). Approved. Unanimous.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: PROPOSED 2021-2022 OPERATING BUDGET

Dr. Harrison first gave an overview of the budget process timeline, the District’s theory of action, the District’s Mission, Enduring Goals & Aspirations and the 2021-2022 priorities. Dr. Pin reviewed the JBHS Value and Belief Statements and Learning Expectations. The Region 9 2021-2022 budget was presented at \$24,786,159; a \$434,904, or, 1.79% increase. The presentation included the Easton - Redding apportionment, with Easton’s going up slightly and Redding’s going down slightly; and the major object codes for the budget lines within the new E-Finance system. Board members had clarifying questions about: what fell within some of the budget lines, health insurance reserve, class sizes, number of Latin students, and pension and capital reserve funding. C. Zachery said that a

google doc will be generated for Board members to submit further questions for Central Office staff and Dr. Pin. T. Johnston said the budget was thoughtful and a good starting point.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Sherry Harris, Ridgeway Road, Easton, thanked everyone for their service, and said the focus should be on process and going slow. She thanked Dr. Harrison for his presentation.

Julianne Licamele, no address given, Easton, said in regard to earlier comments made by the public that her document is not a manifesto, but rather, a document of concerns and suggestions. She said her document is not political, just something different from what the schools offered. J. Licamele said a petition accompanied the document with over 500 signatures from JBHS students and alumni.

Dana Bensen, no address given, Easton, addressed questions to J. Licamele, but it was explained that Public Comment is not a time of dialogue. D. Bensen asked how much racism exists at Barlow, and thanked Dr. Harrison and the staff for their service.

Anne Manusky, no address given, Easton, thanked Board members and staff, and said she will send a note about the goals.

Devon Wible, Woodlawn Drive, Easton, said that there is great deliberation, deep conversation and action that takes place at the DEI Task Force meetings. She said that she is an Easton BOE member of the Task Force and she encourages the public to attend the meetings.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

K. O'Brien said that, in reference to an earlier comment about Zoom meetings, there have never been so many members of the public at the BOE meetings. She said that Zoom meetings have allowed so many more people to participate and have been very helpful. K. O'Brien said students are the most important constituency and that she wishes more students would participate in the BOE meetings.

T. Johnston thanked Board members and the public for the meeting, and thanked teachers, administration and staff for getting the kids back in the school building. He said he appreciates everyone's efforts. T. Johnston also said that he looks forward to the budget workshops.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education Regular meeting be adjourned. (O'Brien, Graziano). Approved. Unanimous.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:07 p.m.

Submitted by Juliette Berry
Secretary, Region 9 Board of Education

Recorded by
Sarah Ota