

Filed subject to approval

REGION 9 BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING

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

Held Remotely Pursuant to Executive Order No. 7B

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/93439784627?pwd=aTQ5TFRsaTEzU1J1K3BObEpUSW5HQT09>

Minutes

ATTENDANCE

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

Administration: Harrison, Pierson Ugol, Pin, Zachery

Others: 27 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 7:37 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

T. Johnston tabled approval of the Minutes from the Region 9 March 11, 2021 Special Meeting and the Region 9 March 11, 2021 Regular Meeting until the next BOE meeting to allow for ample time for BOE members to read the minutes.

STUDENT COMMENT

Joel Barlow High School Student Government Representative, Max Monson, read from the Noteworthy News report which highlights the JBHS community's recent accomplishments.

PUBLIC COMMENT

David Monson, Newtown Turnpike, Redding, said that parents are here to help with the extra-curricular activities.

Anne Manusky, Morning Glory Drive, Easton, read aloud a letter that she had submitted to the Patch that day about her feeling that JBHS was now an outplacement mental health facility.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

None.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Rydell Harrison, said a huge thank you to teachers, students and the community for their flexibility during the recent contact tracing and remote learning period. He said that we can see the light at the end of the tunnel, but reminded people to be diligent about mitigation strategies and said that the recent cases and quarantines were related to out-of-school activities.

Dr. Harrison said that all staff members who want to be vaccinated have been vaccinated, and that he wanted to publicly thank Vicki Cram for her work within this effort. BOE members asked questions about how to handle staff members who did not receive the COVID vaccination and about whether or not students' COVID vaccinations would now be included on their school health forms. Dr. Harrison replied that the staff issue will be challenging as this is protected information, and that there has been no guidance yet as to the student health records.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Stephanie Pierson Ugol, said that she was reporting back on a past question from Board member M. D'Agostino about the curriculum writing budget line. She said that she went back through the budget, and that that budget line was spent on just curriculum writing.

Director of Finance & Operations, Clarence Zachery, reported that the health insurance numbers for January and February are skewed because of a system change within Anthem. He said that the March report will have the delayed information contained within it. C. Zachery said that the Budget Object Summary report had been done by hand as the vendor's reporting system still needs to be squared away. M. D'Agostino said that when he receives reports five hours before the BOE meeting, it's too challenging to review materials. C. Graziano asked clarifying questions about the professional services, SRO and transportation lines.

Head of School, Dr. Gina Pin, shared a photograph of the new tractor for JBHS. Head of Facilities & Grounds, Walter Czudak, explained that the tractor has a backhoe, fork, four-way plow and bucket loader; he said the tractor will be delivered on Thursday.

Director of Special Services, Michael DiStefano, thanked staff, students and families for their continued hard work. He said that he will be working on ESY and transition meetings this month with Jennifer Del Conte to make the process more seamless. M. DiStefano said that the information that was requested by the BOE will be included in his report next month.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

Facilities & Fields: M. D'Agostino reported that the Committee had just met prior to the BOE meeting and that the HVAC, Safety and Health project will hopefully happen this year. He said that they are doing their best to move this project forward.

Policy: M. Williams reported that they have had several meetings regarding privacy policies, and that BOE members will be receiving an invitation to attend an evening Policy Committee meeting to discuss Tri-Board governance.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: PROPOSED 2021-2022 OPERATING BUDGET

Dr. Pin referred BOE members to a most current budget report which included the 2021-2022 proposed budget amount, pertinent highlights and changes made to the budget since the last budget workshop. Dr. Pin led BOE members through a detailed explanation of these points. BOE members had questions about: world language FTEs, replacement salary for retiring staff members and the excess cost adjustment.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education approve the Region 9 2021-2022 budget of \$24,595,255, which reflects a 1% increase. (Denny, D'Agostino). Approved. Unanimous.

T. Johnston said he would be presenting the Region 9 2021-2022 budget to the Boards of Finance for Easton and Redding in the coming weeks.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: UNEXPENDED FUND BALANCE TRANSFERS FOR 2020-2021 OPERATING BUDGET

C. Zachery reported that at the present time there is an estimated \$250-270K in unexpended funds from the 2020-2021 budget. M. D'Agostino said that he is surprised at that number; that the number seems low. C. Zachery responded that this number is driven primarily by anticipated higher health claims and transportation costs. It was agreed to decide upon this issue at a later BOE meeting.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: FOOD SERVICES AND 2021-2022 CONTRACT SERVICES FOR CHARTWELLS

Chartwells representative, Dave Kennedy, shared charts on meal usage, profitability, and free meals given out. He explained the decrease in food purchases at JBHS over the past school year as: changing school learning models, school days missed, safety protocols that have slowed service, nervousness about purchasing food and loss of the 10-minute break in the daily schedule. D. Kennedy said that they will now start increasing the food offerings and will have many plant-based options. He said that the Seamless Summer program sponsored by the USDA will end on June 30, 2021 and that he has not received any information about this program continuing. D. Kennedy said that they are running a lean staff and he thanked the cafeteria workers for their commitment to the school and the students. C. Zachery explained that the USDA has waived the requirement, for one year, to send expired food service contracts out to bid. He said that ER9 has exercised this waiver and at a future Tri-Board meeting, the three BOEs will need to pass a motion agreeing to this action. Several BOE members voiced compliments to Chartwells and stated that Chartwells has been a great partner throughout the COVID crisis.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: SPRING EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES, ATHLETICS, GRADUATION, PROM AND AWARDS CEREMONY

Administrator for Athletics, Health and Physical Education, Mike Santangelli, reported that: over 300 students had signed-up for Spring sports, that the spring season will be just one week short of a regular season, all teams will make the play-offs, there will be State tournaments and there is a link on the JBHS website for specifics for all sports. M. Santangelli gave a shout-out to all winter athletes, coaches and the community for staying positive during an unusual and difficult season. Dr. Pin reported on extracurricular activities; highlights of her report included: student voice activities, student newspaper writers, the Advisory newsletter AD MIN IT, activity period might be reinstated outside, drama department activities, Senior Show, Coffee House, Music Department concerts, Spring Concert, Evening of the Arts, Palooza, a merged event of Senior Banquet and prom, and Awards Ceremony via a Zoom webinar. For the 2021 JBHS graduation, Dr. Pin said that the O'Neill Center is not hosting graduation ceremonies this year, so they are now calculating the cost of moving graduation back to the JBHS campus. She said that they will need to rent a stage, chairs and a special covering for the turf field. Dr. Pin said the date they have chosen is Wednesday, June 16, 2021 and that all plans are fluid.

PUBLIC COMMENT

David Monson, Newtown Road, Redding, said that if Dr. Pin needs money for the activities then we'll find the money. He also said that he wants people to start thinking about doing things live, with everybody there.

Dana Benson, Pond Road, Easton, said that the budget looked good to him but asked about the outplacement budget line, saying that it was high to him. M. DiStefano replied that everything varies and depends upon the student.

Anne Manusky, Morning Glory Drive, Easton, said that she wanted to reiterate that she wanted everyone to read her letter to the Patch.

Alexis Bennett, Gallows Hill Road, Redding, said thank you to Dr. Pin and Julie McTague for the return of the theatre activities, and said that she is available to help.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

K. O'Brien said that she was very disheartened and shocked to hear the accusations from a speaker, during the Public Comment section of the meeting, regarding Board support of DVT therapy for Barlow SpEd students and other students who need additional help in dealing with the stress of COVID and high school in general. She said that BOE members and the administration have worked tirelessly throughout a very difficult year and that it seems that these sweeping misstatements from the speaker are meant to upset and divide our community and are not at all informative or helpful.

M. Williams said that she echoes what K. O'Brien said. She said that everyone who sits on this Board does so with the best of intentions in terms of the students, the staff and the community at large.

C. Graziano thanked K. O'Brien for her statement and M. Williams for concurring. She said that the Board, the administration and the staff have been working very hard and have been agile and adapt to responding to the ever-changing pandemic. C. Graziano also asked that whoever is planning activities for the senior class, that they keep in mind the students who are still in Cohort C.

M. D'Agostino expressed his thanks to his fellow Board members for their thoughtfulness and caring and compassionate approach to our students. He also thanked the community for still being in attendance at the meeting in the late hour. M. D'Agostino said that he appreciates the work of the administration, and that it's important to recognize a 1% budget that is providing additional services that are needed and also retaining what we highly value as a Board and as communities.

ADJOURNMENT

**Motion: move that the Region 9 Regular meeting be adjourned. (D'Agostino, Pampel).
Approved. Unanimous.**

The Region 9 Board of Education Regular meeting was adjourned at 10:41 p.m.

Submitted by
Juliette Berry, Secretary, Region 9 Board of Education

Recorded by
Sarah Ota