

Filed subject to approval

REGION 9 BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING

May 18, 2021 - 7:30 p.m.

Held Remotely Pursuant to Executive Order No. 7B

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/97177199372?pwd=UVd1ZGF5eVMwRm5tMmZsQWxKQUxhZz09>

Minutes

ATTENDANCE

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

Administration: Harrison, Pierson Ugol, Pin, Zachery

Others: 24 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 7:36 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: move to approve the minutes from the April 27, 2021 Region 9 Board of Education regular meeting as submitted. (O'Brien, Berry). Approved. Unanimous.

STUDENT COMMENT

Barlow Student Government Representative, Max Monson, read from *Noteworthy News* about the debate team and a Barlow graduate earning her Ph.D.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Dana Bensen, Pond Road, Easton said that he had sent the group a six-page letter about his dissatisfaction with the DEI statement and survey, and that the letter had 16 signatures. He said that his letter included asking for several questions to be revised or omitted and for the inclusion statement not be included.

Maureen Hanley, Andrews Road, Easton said that this is not an education, it's an indoctrination. She explained her upbringing and said let's not weaken our children, let's empower them.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

M. Williams said that in light of the recently circulated flyer, she was voicing her support for our Superintendent. She said she believes Dr. Harrison has behaved with grace and humility in an unprecedented time in our District and our nation. M. Williams said that he has stewarded our District through COVID-19 and is a beacon of honesty and kindness for our students and faculty alike.

M. D'Agostino said that over the past two weeks he has received 45 emails; 42 of the 45 expressed support for Dr. Harrison and condemned the bias undertones and text of a mailer he received on April 30.

He said that as an individual Board member, he fully supports Dr. Harrison and the work he has done guiding this District through the most challenging year.

C. Graziano said that she echoes the comments of the previous Board members and that she wanted to thank the Redding and Easton residents for taking the time for sending emails and sending thoughts of support for the good work Dr. Harrison and our teams have been doing for Joel Barlow High School.

M. Pampel said that as an individual Board member she just wanted to reaffirm her support for Dr. Harrison and all of the fantastic work he is doing for our school and our community.

K. O'Brien said that she would like to restate her support of Dr. Harrison in light of the post to Redding residents. She said that she hopes we could all move on from this unfortunate divisiveness and support Dr. Harrison and the schools as we navigate better days ahead for our towns, our staff and our students.

G. Denny said that as an individual Board member, she would like to express her continued support for Dr. Harrison and the work he's done for us.

J. Johnston said that this would be Dr. Pin's last BOE meeting and that he appreciates all that she has done for JBHS from July 2008 to June 2021. He said that on behalf of the BOE members they had a gift for Dr. Pin; a shared photo showed the gift to be an Adirondack chair. Dr. Pin said thank you and said that she appreciated all the time the BOE members put in as volunteers.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Rydell Harrison, said a special thank you to Board members and the public for their support. He said congratulations to Dr. Pin on her retirement and that he is proud to call her a colleague. Dr. Harrison reported on the federal grants received so far for COVID relief: a first grant in the amount of \$102,879 for reimbursement of eligible expenses during April - December 2020; the ESSER I grant was used to purchase 77 chromebooks to close the gap of 1:1 student devices; the ESSER II grant in the amount of \$85,632 was used within the area of State Priority 1. He said that an ESSER III grant in the amount of \$192,317 will be submitted by August 16 and will include a community involvement piece to it.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Pierson Ugol, reported on the consultant work with the Connecticut Center for School Change, saying that there have been three phases to the work: 1) reviewing assets and problems; 2) reviewing an action plan; and, 3) development of a plan. She said that recently focus groups were held, and included students, staff and community members, to gain an understanding about feelings of DEI. Dr. Pierson Ugol said that now the consultants will come together with the internal teams and talk about recommendations to make sure every student has an equitable experience; demographic data on class, sports and activities enrollment will be used; next year the shift will be for the DEI Advisory Committee to do the work themselves internally. Questions were asked about the number and need for surveys and audits, and the difference between the surveys. Dr. Pierson Ugol responded that there has been professional development occurring during the school year that allows the experts to learn more about our staff and environment, and also that not all of the District information is coordinated. Dr. Harrison replied that any DEI approach needs to be connected to the strengths of the District and that this is now happening. Dr. Pierson Ugol said that the survey and audit are in different formats.

M. Williams asked Dr. Harrison about the writing and reporting for the federal grants. Dr. Harrison replied that there is grant writing and statement of goals that need to be completed for the federal grants. He said that there is also a great deal of specific reporting and updating that needs to be submitted.

Director of Finance & Operations, Clarence Zachery, reported on the Budget Object Summary that most of the anticipated expenses are in salaries, and that the current unexpended amount is \$247,913. He said that the Transfer Report had been adjusted to now show descriptions of which accounts funds had been transferred from and into. C. Zachery said that the Health Insurance Report is trending very well, with YTD slightly above last year but below the three-year average.

Joel Barlow High School Head of School, Dr. Gina Pin, reported that there are 303 spring athletes and that many teams are now entering into the tournament part of the spring season. She said that she is impressed with the fundraising and community services projects initiated by the sports teams, and announced that football coach Rob Tynan had won Outstanding Coach for 2021 from the South West Connecticut Conference. Dr. Pin also said that the AP has allowed for flexibility in the AP exam this year.

Director of Special Services, Michael DiStefano, spoke about Jonathan Drody as the Staff Member of the Month, saying that at Barlow he is a case manager, co-teacher of geometry and a sports coach. He reported that: there had been two more parent presentations and that materials and one video on these presentations had been posted to the school website; SpEd staff had participated in trainings in DDT and anxiety, ESY is set for July 6-30, from 8:00am to 12:00pm; that the increase in referrals at Barlow is in step with other area high schools; and that he had received a \$20,000 grant to use for staff to conduct student assessments at an earlier date.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

Building Committee Update: M. D'Agostino reported that they continue to have plans drawn up, apply for permits and receive equipment. He said that there will be no issue with completing the project on time. T. Johnston said that Suzanne Krivit had been appointed to the Committee as a community representative.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education add Agenda Item Facilities & Fields Committee report to the meeting. (O'Brien, Graziano). Approved. Unanimous.

Facilities and Fields Committee:

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education approve the movement of the item air purifier from the 2020-2021 year to the 2021-2022 year, and accept the Capital Plan as revised. (D'Agostino, O'Brien). Approved. Unanimous.

ER9 DEI Task Force: C. Graziano said that the DEI Task Force is made up of representatives from all three BOEs, faculty and administration, and that all of the minutes and recording of their meetings are available on the ER9 website. She shared a timeline and recap of the DEI Task Force's work since July 2020 and the equity and inclusion statement, which had already been shared with BOE members and is

publicly available. C. Graziano shared questions she had received about the statement, such as: why have a statement? Can we just conduct surveys? Are there different statements for R9 and K-8 districts?

She and Dr. Harrison answered that: a statement is important as an aspirational goal and guiding principle; a statement provides accountability that is aligned with the charge of the Task Force; and, provides support to the students. Dr. Harrison said that there will be a DEI website and that there will be one statement for ER9. C. Graziano said the survey protects students' and responders' privacy; provides ability to opt-out and/or skip questions; for grades 6-12; and while it's not a check the box and be done, the survey should take about 10 minutes to complete. M. D'Agostino asked about the sources for the survey questions. C. Graziano shared a slide that listed eight different sources. T. Johnston asked about who is receiving the raw data from the completed surveys. Dr. Harrison replied that only Central Office administration will have access to the raw data; they will report back to the BOE with the results.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education add Agenda Item of Possible Textbook Replacement as the new VIII. A. (Williams, O'Brien). Approved. Unanimous.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education add Agenda Item Course Offerings as VIII. G. (D'Agostino, O'Brien). Approved. Unanimous.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: C. Graziano reported that the textbook is titled, Introductory Chemistry: Sixth Edition. She said that the Curriculum Committee had already approved the textbook and that at the June 2021 meeting, the Board will vote on it.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: END OF YEAR UPDATES - GRADUATION, PARKING FEES, FINAL DAY

Dr. Pin reported that for graduation: guests are still set at two per graduate; June 16 at 6:00pm is still the date; June 17 at 6:00pm is still the rain date; June 18, inside and two-ceremonies is the second rain date; ceremony will be live-streamed; a turf field protector has been purchased; the bagpipers will be there; and, LifeTouch will be the official photographer. She said they will sell 30-day parking passes for \$35 to accommodate the final exam and AP exam schedules. Dr. Pin said the final day of school is June 16, 2021 and the final day for staff is June 17, 2021.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: PRACTICES RELATED TO RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS FOR CURRENTLY ENROLLED STUDENTS AND TUITION PAYMENT SCHEDULES

C. Zachery explained that with the strong uptick in real estate sales in Redding and Easton, some families have found themselves priced out of the communities because their own homes have sold so quickly and they cannot afford another home, or, their rental home has sold and they cannot afford to purchase in the community/there are no rentals available anymore. A discussion took place as to whether the Motion infringes upon the existing residency policy. C. Zachery said that there are currently eight families across ER9 that find themselves in this situation.

Motion: Move that the Region 9 Board of Education grant the administration discretion for the 2021-2022 School Year to determine compliance with Board Policy 5111 for students currently enrolled in the ER9 School District and for setting an incremental schedule for invoicing any tuition payments due to the district. Motion contingent on review and consent by board counsel. (D'Agostino, Williams). Approved. 7-1.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: HEAD OF SCHOOL SEARCH PROCESS UPDATE

Dr. Harrison reported that there will be parent forums and that there are a number of important items to be discussed. He said that an announcement of the Head of School position had been sent to all 0-92 certified in the State of Connecticut and also to websites that include administrative employment opportunities. T. Johnston said that the entire BOE serves on the Search Committee.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: REVIEW OF 2020-2021 OPERATING BUDGET LINE-ITEM CHANGES AND COVID GRANT FUNDING PROJECTIONS AND ACTUAL EXPENDITURES

C. Zachery reported that \$216,453.95 had been spent through May 14 on COVID related expenses. He said that \$102,879 had been received in reimbursements through May 14. Board members asked for follow-up reports to be presented at the June 2021 meeting.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: POLICIES FOR 2ND READING:

4118.1 - SEX DISCRIMINATION HARASSMENT IN WORKPLACE - TITLE IX;

5145.44 - SEX DISCRIMINATION HARASSMENT IN WORKPLACE - TITLE IX

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education accept Policy 4118.1 and Policy 5145.44. (Williams, D'Agostino). Approved. Unanimous.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: COURSE OFFERINGS

M. D'Agostino said that the Board does not get the staffing document until late but that we should do what we said we would do and articulate in the program of studies what classes will run, so that students could plan their studies. He said he received two phone calls from parents about AP Comparative Government not being run and he wants to know the rationale for this situation. Dr. Pin responded that the courses are staffed with the staff that they have, and often decisions are made in real time. She said that when a class needs to be canceled that the Director of Guidance notifies the students. T. Johnston asked M. D'Agostino if he wanted to know specifically about the AP Comparative Government class and he said yes. Dr. Pin said that since she did not know that this was to be an agenda item that she would have to get back to M. D'Agostino with that answer. M. D'Agostino said that we need to be true to what we say.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Anne Manusky, Morning Glory Lane, Easton, said God Bless to the Joel Barlowers as they go through the last 30 days. She said: in terms of the mask charade, parents should call their schools and nurses; in terms of DEI, it is psycho-sexual manipulation of children; in concern of SEL, social emotional learning is largely garbage; the Common Core is inappropriate; and, SRBI is a game of the system.

Dana Bensen, Pond Road, Easton, said that \$22,000 for carpet sounds like a lot of money. He reiterated his urging of Board members to read his letter with 16 signatures. D. Bensen spoke of his concern for question number 33 on the DEI survey and his dissatisfaction with the staff questions.

Phyllis Rhodes, Gallows Hill Road, Redding, said that she is weighing in with her support for Dr. Harrison, all of the DEI efforts being made and the survey. She said that she's been participating in the

meetings and she feels very strongly that the work being done by that committee is excellent work and much needed work.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

M. Williams said a public thank you to Dr. Pin and that she'll miss her deeply.

J. Berry said thank you to Dr. Pin. She said that she wanted to opt out her student from the survey, but had not received any information about how to do this.

K. O'Brien said that she wanted to add her personal thanks to Dr. Pin. She read aloud the plaque which will be on the Adirondack chair, "Presented to Gina Marie Pin in gratitude for your service to Joel Barlow High School 7-14-08 to 6-30-21. Working hard for something we don't love is called stress, working hard for something we love is called passion."

ADJOURNMENT

**Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education meeting be adjourned (Denny, Graziano).
Approved. Unanimous.**

The Region 9 Board of Education Regular meeting was adjourned at 11:11 p.m.

Submitted by Juliette Berry
Secretary, Region 9 Board of Education

Recorded by
Sarah Ota