

REGION 9 BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING

September 21, 2021 - 7:30 p.m.

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Meeting ID: 817 7376 1132

Passcode: 719239

Minutes

ATTENDANCE

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

Administration: McKinnon, Pierson Ugol

Others: 15 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 7:31 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education approve the minutes of the August 17, 2021, Region 9 Board of Education Regular Meeting, and September 1, 2021, Region 9 Board of Education Special meeting as submitted. (Graziano, Lehberger). Approved. Unanimous.

STUDENT COMMENT

Ben Cerbin, Joel Barlow High School Class of 2022 President, said welcome to Dr. McKinnon and Dr. Almeida and reported that the transition into school has been easier this year. B. Cerbin said that there has been recording attendance at the home and away football games and that Barlow students are excited and inspired for the new year. He reported that Nina Riley had been presented with the Peter Burton Memorial Award and that a new Captain's Council will focus on leadership activities.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

M. Pampel said that we now have a great team in place and that she thinks we will have a much better year. She also thanked everybody for all of their efforts.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Jason McKinnon, said that he shares the optimism about the new school year and that he commended J. McTague and J. Desmarais for all of their work over the summer. He said that he had a call with the Department of Public Health that day during which he learned that the rate of positive COVID cases is plateauing. Dr. McKinnon said that his plan is to be visible in the schools and that he will soon be sending out a short survey to staff about where they want him to focus.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Pierson Ugol, reported on the Summer Academy, curriculum access and the Safe Climate Committee. She said that the Summer Academy was very successful and included 102 students and was conducted from June 21 to August 19. Dr. Pierson Ugol said that they had received excellent feedback from the parents of the participants and that ESSER II grant money was used to underwrite the program. She said that the website will undergo a longer-term redesign and will provide improved navigation to digital curriculum resources; the traditional "Program of Studies" will remain, but will be more

high-tech. Dr. Pierson Ugol said that the District-level Safe Climate Committee will distribute the annual survey and review its findings and that this committee will meet 12 times per year. She said that the District-level committee will decide what we want as a district and then decide what that will look like at the school level.

Director of Finance & Operations: with the new person not starting in this position until October, Dr. McKinnon reported that the District has brought back Scott Reiss to help with some immediate financial accounting needs.

Director of Technology and Digital Learning, Sara Scrofani, gave a presentation entitled "Understanding Needs & Opportunities," which focused on the current strengths and needs, the immediate needs and the future needs for the District in terms of technology. She said that the District's ABC's and DEI statements were taken into consideration in forming her report which was separated into the categories of: 1) Communication; 2) Curriculum; and, 3) Data. In the immediate, S. Scrofani said she sees as priorities 1) the District's website; 2) Google classroom; and, 3) understanding student assessment data. In the future, she sees 1) a three-year plan; 2) plan for the use of network infrastructure; and, 3) identifying a shared tool as necessary actions. A short discussion followed on the District's technology model and different platforms.

Head of School: Joel Barlow High School Assistant Principal, Julie McTague, gave the report as new Head of School, Dr. Mario Almeida, has not yet started his tenure. J. McTague reported that: there are six new certified and three new classified staff members at JBHS; there are 815 students currently enrolled, with 10 new/returning students; and, that there had been an in-person new student orientation and a virtual new parent orientation. Assistant Principal Jennifer Desmarais reported that the school had been notified that JBHS has two National Merit Scholar semi-finalists and six Commended Scholars.

Director of Special Services, Michael DiStefano, reported that the ESY program was able to get back into the community and that with a grant his department received, his staff was able to complete student evaluations over the summer. BOE members had questions about the social worker position within the Bridges Program and DDT training. M. DiStefano replied that having a dedicated social worker within the Bridges program allows other staff members to focus on the rest of the student body and that SpEd staff, guidance staff, and administrators have undergone DDT training.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

T. Johnston said that this agenda item was tabled. He reported that K. O'Brien has joined the Pension Committee and S. Lehberger has joined the Facilities & Fields Committee, and he is currently updating the committee assignments and lists.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: JBHS CAFETERIA/GYMNASIUM HVAC AND SAFETY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT UPDATE

M. D'Agostino reported that new backboards, safety pads, and bleachers have been installed in the gymnasium and that the temperature will be 72°F year-round. He reported that the HVAC system improvement is now complete and that the cafeteria now has fresh air intake.

Approval of Invoice: This agenda item was tabled.

M. D'Agostino reviewed the Proposal for Automated Controls to be funded through Eversource Energy Efficiency Grant:

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education accept the Eversource Energy Efficiency Grant in the amount of \$19,159.20 for the installation of automated controls at JBHS. (D'Agostino, O'Brien). Approved. Unanimous.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: ACCEPTANCE OF DONATION FROM JBHS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Dr. McMorran presented the generous \$20,000 donation from the JBHS Alumni Association to renovate a classroom adjoining the learning commons.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education accept, with great appreciation, the donation of \$20,000 from the Joel Barlow High School Alumni Association to be used for renovations to classroom A108. (D'Agostino, Williams). Approved. Unanimous.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: REPORT ON THE JBHS EQUITY AUDIT, PART II

Patrice Nelson and Kerry Lord from the Connecticut Center for School Change presented the report which focused on identifying issues, strengths, needs and concerns around diversity, equity and inclusion. They said this part of the audit included: administrative interviews; student, parent, and school staff focus groups; key school artifacts; JBHS 2019 Climate Survey; and, select Region 9 Board policies. They identified the ongoing pandemic as a challenge in conducting the focus groups, and as a result, had a low student, teacher and parent participation rate. P. Nelson and K. Lord reported that key findings include: some people feel that there is too much focus on DEI; some people feel that there are missed opportunities within DEI; multiple respondents have witnessed acts of discrimination; multiple respondents noted acceptance of differences; many participants noted a lack of diversity at JBHS; and, concerns about the balance between DEI and academics. They identified strengths as: the unified programs, efforts to grow diversity in course offerings and efforts to support diverse student groups and address current events. They identified concerns as: need for more and better communication on issues related to DEI, pressure on students to achieve at high levels, pressure on staff to assume more responsibilities, some DEI conversations are happening (race) while others are not (class, religion), conversations are staying at a surface level. P. Nelson and K. Lord provided the recommendations of: provide opportunities for staff to develop skills in making connections between course content and current events, make sure students are exposed to different perspectives, increase racial and ethnic diversity on staff, broaden course offerings to include diverse perspectives and experiences. A lengthy discussion followed that included the topics of: how students will and can feel represented in school and in the DEI process, the lack of an implementation plan based on the CCSC JBHS Equity Audit, the small number of participants in the focus group and use of the previously completed 2019 JBHS Climate Survey as the data sources for the conclusions in the Equity Audit.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: CHANGE IN AUTHORIZED SIGNER OF THE ED-099 AGREEMENT FOR THE CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAM

Mr. Johnston reported that Region 9 needed to change authorized signers of the ED-099 agreement from Dr. McMorran to Dr. McKinnon now that Dr. McKinnon had started employment with the District.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education change the authorized signer of the ED-099 agreement for child nutrition program to Dr. Jason McKinnon, Ed.D. Superintendent of Schools. (Williams, Lehberger). Approved. Unanimous.

M. D'Agostino said he wanted to remind everyone that hot lunches will again be free in the District this year and asked the BOE to promote this offer. He said that the more lunches we give out, the more subsidies the District will receive.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: ELECTION OF BOARD SECRETARY

T. Johnston said that this agenda item was tabled.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Suzanne Krivits, Barlow Drive, Redding, asked the BOE to consider joining the Open Choice program.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

M. D'Agostino said that JBHS has participated in the Open Choice program for many years and that there are usually about 12-17 students in the program.

C. Graziano said that she would like to explore opening up Danbury and Norwalk to our Open Choice program.

S. Lehberger said she is excited for Dr. McKinnon and Dr. Almeida to be joining us, and thanked Dr. McMorran for stepping in during the last couple of months.

K. O'Brien said that she sends her condolences to Kathy Olschan's family; that she was a teacher in Easton for many years.

T. Johnston thanked Dr. McMorran for helping the District over the summer and thanked J. McTague and J. Desmarais for all of their hard work. He said that he is excited for the new school year and to work with everyone here tonight.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting was adjourned at 10:34 p.m.

Submitted by Todd Johnston
Chairman, Region 9 Board of Education

Recorded by Sarah Ota