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REGION 9 BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING
WITH BUDGET PRESENTATION

****IN-PERSON****

Joel Barlow High School - Library Learning Commons
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpOKinELAtzbYQcJ5NA3-hg>

March 3, 2022 – 7:30 p.m.

Minutes

ATTENDANCE

Board members: D'Agostino, Johnston, Graziano, Lehberger, Pampel, Thompson
Administration: McKinnon, Pierson Ugol, Almeida, Petruzzelli, Scrofani
Others: 4 members of the staff and public and the videographer.

CALL TO ORDER

M. D'Agostino called the Region 9 Board of Education Regular Budget Workshop to order at 7:32 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

S. Lehberger read a letter from Maureen Williams, Easton, stating that she had become aware the BOE is considering outsourcing district policy writing to the firm of Shipman & Goodwin. She approves of the work this firm has done for the District on a limited basis, however, she is not in favor of adopting all of their policies. M. Williams believes the BOE was elected to do this work.

C. Graziano requested that an Agenda Item be added to discuss the ability for Board members to dial-in remotely for the BOE meetings. She brought up the fact that BOE members did dial-in for recent Tri-Board meetings, but that BOE members were not provided a link for Region 9 meetings.

AGENDA CHANGE

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education add an Agenda Item for Discussion and Possible Action: Consideration of Board Members' Remote Participation in Board Meetings. Item IV. D. (Graziano, Pampel). Approved. 3-3. (D'Agostino, Johnston, Thompson opposed).

M. D'Agostino accepted the motion as the new Item IV. D.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: PRELIMINARY STUDENT ACADEMIC PROGRESS REPORT

M. D'Agostino reminded BOE members that they had requested preliminary data on student performance and progress, and Dr. Almeida would deliver a brief presentation of this data tonight. He said tonight's meeting is a Budget Workshop, and the Board will delve more deeply into this data at its March or April meeting. M. D'Agostino noted that the Board felt it was necessary to hear this preliminary data in order to budget for necessary resources in the new budget.

Assistant Superintendent & Head of School, Dr. Mario Almeida, thanked his team – Paula Panos, Angela Staron and J.T. Schemm – for being instrumental in putting together the data. Dr. Almeida stated he used student data from the past four years to detail: the number of students submitting college applications, Ivy League acceptances, SAT scores, PSAT scores, AP courses, and data related to IEP and 504 numbers.

Dr. Almeida noted the proportion of student's college applications have dropped from 232 applicants out of a class of 236 students in 2018 to 177 applicants out of a class of 211 students. He explained that there were many contributing factors to this reduction: increase in gap years, economics, and on-line only college options. Dr. Almeida indicated Ivy League college acceptances had remained constant, with three students accepted so far this year.

Regarding PSAT scores, Dr. Almeida detailed that most current 11th graders met or exceeded benchmarks, and staff are projecting students will meet or exceed benchmarks when they take the CT SAT on March 3. The percentage of students meeting or exceeding SAT benchmarks decreased from 71.9% (math) and 86% (ERW) in 2018 to 58% (math) and 82% (ERW) in 2021. Dr. Almeida attributed much of this decline to challenges associated with the virtual learning model. AP test score data also indicated a downward trend with 58 students enrolled – with 90.9% scoring a 3 or above on the AP Exam in 2018. In 2021, 55 students were enrolled – with 79% scoring a 3 or above on the AP Exam.

Dr. Almeida detailed additional performance data specific to Barlow. He outlined the Junior Writing Portfolio, which is a JBHS graduation requirement. Currently, there are several seniors who have yet to fulfill this requirement, and the number of students requiring additional support has doubled over the past four years. Dr. Almeida noted that a remediation plan is in place to help these students. He also provided an update on the Math Center, which started in November 2020. There has been a significant increase in the number of students seeking additional help in math. This year nearly 10% of the student population utilize the Math Center.

Dr. Almeida reported that 32% of Barlow students currently have either an IEP or 504. This proportion represents an increase of 10% from four years ago. The breakdown is as follows: 18% of the students have been identified with a 504, and 14% of the student body have an IEP. Dr. Almeida noted that this statistic means teachers need to differentiate instruction for nearly one-third of the students in each of their classes. He said high performers continue to perform well, but many students will continue to require additional services. Dr. Almeida requested board members take this into consideration regarding his budget request for a slight increase in staffing.

Dr. Stephanie Pierson Ugol, reported on the status of recent grant funding from ESSER II, ARP ESSER and ARP IDEA. She reported that the original plan for the ESSER II grant was to hire several interns, however, the district had difficulty securing interns for these positions, so the grant has been re-opened and sent to the State of Connecticut for approval. Dr. Pierson Ugol reported this grant was used for Summer Academy and credit recovery work. The grant funds will continue to be used for additional credit recovery work this Spring in the form of after-school courses. She outlined the revised plan for the

ESSER II grants is to keep one intern and provide professional learning to enable the leadership team to continue participation in the state-level acceleration network. Dr. Pierson Ugol said the original plan for ARP ESSER funding included hiring several Para educators, but they were unsuccessful in hiring for these positions. The grant has been re-opened and sent to the State of Connecticut for approval; the revised plan includes three full-time Para educators – for academic and students with disabilities – and one full-time school counselor. She reported she had heard back from the State, and the revisions have been accepted. This is just the 1st level of approval, two additional approvals will be required.

Dr. Pierson Ugol stated that based on her conversations with the Barlow team and on the data just presented, she believes there is a tremendous need in the counseling department. She said students have struggled throughout the pandemic with isolation and now re-engagement. She indicated a crucial need exists, but she is hopeful it will be a short-term need. She said, “That is why these positions are appropriate for grant funding.”

Dr. Pierson Ugol reported the ARP IDEA grant addresses the SpEd side and that many tools are in place to support teachers and students, including: professional learning that focuses on co-teaching and the collaboration of SpEd and GenEd, part-time SpEd teachers, and the continuation of dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) consultation and work.

Dr. Pierson Ugol ended her report by saying that the most critical asset at Barlow is the teaching staff. The work teachers do with the students everyday addresses the needs they see in front of them. She said they are looking to increase academic, social, emotional, and mental health staff through grants and in the budget. She is confident students are getting back up to speed through the tremendous work of the teachers.

Board members had questions regarding: Barlow comparisons to other districts, more quantitative goals, targets and action plans, specifics of focus area and term-length of school counselor, source of data from ADHD, anxiety and depression chart, academic performance decline being related to the pandemic, and more data to ensure problem areas are being addressed. Dr. Pierson Ugol responded that the report at this meeting was brief, as it is primarily a budget meeting and more in-depth data will be provided to the BOE. The school counselor role will be better defined based on student needs when it is posted; it is for the duration of the grant only. State and Federal governments require quite a bit of reporting on all grants. Director of Counseling, Paula Panos, said the data for the chart came from students diagnosed with those conditions, and it does not include the numerous other students who are being seen by the counseling department on a regular basis. She believes the reason for the decline in student performance is very complicated, but it has definitely been exacerbated by the pandemic.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: 2022-2023 OPERATING BUDGET

Dr. McKinnon first reminded everyone about the District’s budget website, and that it includes the recent budget presentation and all of the materials for tonight’s Budget Workshop #1. He said since the last meeting some changes have been made to the budget: decreased SLP at \$67,747; increased .6 FTE for SpEd teacher (\$14,150 is funded by ESSR II); Wellness teacher increased from .67 to 1.0 FTE; security paraprofessional increased from .5 to 1.0 FTE. He said that there were also some technical edits: technology hardware; Central Office cost share for ER9; a miscoded literacy teacher’s time allocation; and reductions in SpEd tuition and transportation. Dr. McKinnon said that with these changes, the Region 9 2022-2023 Operating Budget now has an increase of \$223,817 – or .91%. He said another item for the Board to consider is a bus route consolidation that needs to be done in conjunction with Redding. Two

BOE members asked for the town apportionment numbers to be located on the same sheet with budget totals; Dr. McKinnon said they could do that for the next meeting.

M. D'Agostino said that the question period would be divided into staffing, SpEd and budget drivers. In regards to staffing, BOE members had questions about: classes being offered in the Program of Studies and then the class not running; an explanation of teacher FTEs; safety in the classrooms; AP offerings to 10th graders; and how many student schedules still need to be figured out. Dr. Almeida and JBHS staff (P. Panos, J. Schemm, A. Staron) shared in the responses, saying: that the course selection process is still going and that the process is super dynamic; all student schedules are reviewed before becoming final; for the purpose of the staffing chart, the teacher's time is broken up by their classes taught; some classes, such as chemistry, need to have a limit on the number of people who can be in the room in light of chemicals, burners, etc.; that there are few AP courses that are applicable for the academic skill set of a 10th grader and these AP courses are not currently offered at JBHS; and approximately 30-40 schedules are still being figured out across all grades.

Board members had further questions on the course offerings at Barlow: are there too many course offerings; should there be more hands-on offerings; are there ways for efficiencies; are there on-line or virtual classes; and are there relationships with local colleges. The JBHS team and Dr. McKinnon replied: there are not enough electives for the non-AP and hands-on type of students; at the Curriculum Committee level, there is a desire to look at more popular types of classes such as culinary, design and gaming development; students are allowed to do independent studies (student funded) and the APEX system (free from the State) for classes not offered; students are allowed to take classes at local community colleges, Southern Connecticut State University, Sacred Heart University and ISDLOE, but this is for the rare student and it is also difficult as the students are already so busy.

Questions about co-teaching were raised dealing with transparency and the feeling that some families are not happy with the model, and also about students who choose to attend the magnet or private schools and their transportation costs. A lengthy explanation about co-teaching, and subsequent discussion, took place with Dr. McKinnon and staff saying that: all Districts engage in this model and all teachers involved are certified; there are legal limitations on being more transparent and no need to do so; and all students in a co-taught class have the opportunity to work on content and skills. Dr. McKinnon and JBHS staff said that: they had not yet received any data on incoming 9th graders going to the magnet or private schools; many students go to a different school for a year or two and then return to Barlow; there are creative ways to bring down transportation costs and this requires a strategic plan; and perhaps the excellent programs at Barlow need more advertising and promotion.

Board member questions about SpEd included: are the higher numbers because of more outplacements; is the Bridges program helping curtail outplacements; is the Board allowed to have more data on outplacements, including upcoming ones; and DBT training costs. Dr. McKinnon and staff explained: numbers are driven by tuition and transportation for approved schools; the District is responsible for students up to the age of 22 now; some data can be shared, but most is subject to confidentiality rules; J. Del Conte did a report for Easton and Redding showing how the Junior Bridges program has worked to avoid outplacement; and the funds for DBT training in the next year's budget are a result of last year's funds for the same training remaining unspent.

Final questions about the proposed budget were about the climate and homebound services budget lines. Dr. Pierson Ugol explained that while the emphasis last year was on the incredibly important DEI work,

this year the work will be much more focused on the area of climate. She noted that Central Office has become more involved with the District Climate Committee. The budget line is Barlow's portion of the work that will start with a new consulting group, Great Schools Partnership. Dr. McKinnon and Central Office staff explained that the homebound services line had been combined and re-coded and that the amount was the same as last year.

M. D'Agostino said that since there were no more budget questions, the Barlow and Central Office staff should consider recessing for the evening. He said the meeting would take a brief pause so that Dr. McKinnon could walk out the staff members.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: CONSIDERATION FOR A TRANSITION TO SHIPMAN & GOODWIN MODEL POLICIES

M. D'Agostino explained that at last week's Region 9 Policy Committee meeting there was a discussion about transitioning to Shipman & Goodwin's Model Policies; Easton and Redding's Policy Committees were also meeting, separately, but concurrently, and it seemed they were in favor of this shift too. The following three options are available to consider: Option 1 = \$10K for up to 25 hours of work; this is the most detailed approach. Option 2 = \$5K for up to 12 hours of work; less detailed approach with no review of each policy. Option 3 = No additional cost to the District; Dr. McKinnon would be responsible for developing a rubric that would help in this effort. He will work directly with the Region 9 Board to present a rubric of recommendations for current policies to repeal, revise or replace.

M. D'Agostino stated a proposed timeline for recommendations had been set for April 26 for 1st Readings and May 17 for 2nd Readings. Dr. McKinnon said that he had done this work in prior districts and that he has been a part of the ER9 Policy Committee since arriving at the District. He showed examples of how the policies would be shared with Board members and explained that this process will be an efficient way to become legally compliant. Board members asked whether Shipman & Goodwin policies would be used as a framework for Region 9 or if the policies were being outsourced. Dr. McKinnon said that the policies would be used as a framework for Region 9.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education direct the Superintendent of Schools to create a working draft rubric of policy recommendation for consideration of a transition to Shipman & Goodwin Model Policies (Johnston, Lehberger). Approved. 6-0.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: CONSIDERATION OF ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSIONS FOR BOARD MEETINGS

C. Graziano said that even before she was on the BOE, she recalled someone calling into a BOE meeting from their phone. She stated that the recent Joint ER9 BOE meetings provided access to Board members on Zoom. She questioned why this was not allowed for tonight's meeting. M. D'Agostino said that he would not comment on other BOE meetings, but that Section 149 of Public Acts, 21-2 states that for a regular meeting called solely or in part using electronic equipment, the agenda must be posted 48 hours in advance of the regular meeting detailing that electronic equipment will be used. He said that FOIA does allow for Board members to participate remotely, but that best practice regarding voting is to have it in the Board's bylaws. Some Board members were not in favor of allowing remote participation, while others said that it is a way to allow for more inclusiveness for potential BOE members. It was decided to table the conversation to a future BOE meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

C. Graziano thanked the staff for sticking with us.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education Regular meeting be adjourned. (Johnston, Pampel). Approved. 6-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:16 p.m.

Submitted by Mike D'Agostino
Chairperson, Region 9 Board of Education

Recorded by
Sarah Ota