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REGION 9 BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING

Joel Barlow High School - Library Learning Commons

On YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpOKinELAtzbYQcJ5NA3-hg>

December 20, 2022 – 7:30 p.m..

Minutes

ATTENDANCE

Board members: D'Agostino, Johnston, O'Brien, Graziano, Denny, Lehberger, Pampel, Thompson (7:59 pm)

Administration: McKinnon, Pierson Ugol, Almeida, Scrofani

Others: 7 members of the staff and public, the recording secretary and the videographer

CALL TO ORDER

M. D'Agostino called the Region 9 Board of Education Regular meeting to order at 7:42 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education approve the minutes of the November 15, 2022 meeting, with a correction on page 1; it should read "Owen Fellows." (Denny, Lehberger)

Approved. Unanimous.

Joel Barlow High School Student Representative, Owen Fellows, read from "Noteworthy News."

Highlights included: 42 Barlow students were inducted into the National Honor Society; the Barlow Debate Team hosted a tournament on December 10 which was very well attended. 188 Debaters from around the state participated in the first tournament at Barlow since 2018; the Community Carol Sing will take place on December 21; Sikorsky STEM Challenge Team members participated in a STEM challenge on November 18; the Girls Volleyball team won the State Championship in Class L, the SWCs and the SWC Sportsmanship Award; the Football Team won their first State Championship in Class SS; the Girls Swim Team had a great showing at the SWCs; Audrey Gil won the Class M Championship in the 50 and 100 freestyle; the Field Hockey Team raised \$383 for the National Cancer Foundation's Play4TheCure program.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Shirley Melnyk, Cricklewood Road, Redding, asked why the BOE is seeking to intensify the field usage on Turney Road with the NEST project, and not the front of the school. She said she has serious concerns about the number of parking spaces that are being planned and the lighting intensification. She said that already there are problems with noise, drag racing, trash and parking and property damage on her street. Additionally, Mrs. Melnyk asked why the promised tree buffer has yet to be installed. She will be seeking an intervener status if the building project goes through.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

C. Graziano put forth the following Motion.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education add Agenda Item Capital Plan to be the new Agenda Item VII. F. and move down all other Agenda Items. (Graziano, O'Brien) Approved. Unanimous.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Jason McKinnon, extended holiday wishes and a Happy New Year to everyone and said brief reports will follow.

Joel Barlow Head of School and Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Mario Almeida, reported that a math interventionist had been hired and had been working for a couple of weeks. He said that her name is Nicole Travis and that she is working well with the Math Department and is holding drop-in sessions for students.

Director of Finance, Operations & Technology, Sara Scrofani, reported that she has asked for a slow-down in spending of the facilities budget line. She noted that some new hires required salaries which exceeded budgeted salary lines.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Stephanie Pierson Ugol, reported there will be a focus on mathematics in the upcoming operating budget proposal, along with a new K-8 math textbook.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: APPROVAL FOR SUPERINTENDENT TO ATTEND THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS CONFERENCE

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education approve the Superintendent attend the American Association of School Administrators Conference in San Antonio, Texas. (O'Brien, Lehberger) Approved. Unanimous.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: GRANTS AND DONATIONS

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education accept with great appreciation a grant in the amount of \$2,000 from the Connecticut Association of Schools for JBHS Unified Sports program. (Thompson, Lehberger) Approved. Unanimous.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education accept with great appreciation a grant in the amount of \$2,000 from the Weller Foundation for four graphing calculators and educational foreign language/translation books to assist with non-English speaking students.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education accept with great appreciation a grant in the amount of \$2,000 from the Gupta Family and a grant of \$6,000 from the Redding Runners Club to support the JBHS Robotics Team. (Thompson, Lehberger) Approved. Unanimous.

K. Thompson said congratulations to the Robotics Team for their success and for their ability to self-fund through grants and fundraisers.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: CONSIDERATION FOR APPROVAL OF INVOICES - 1. WATER COOLING TOWER 2. UPPER GYM INVOICE

M. D'Agostino explained that there are two outstanding invoices for the renovation work at JBHS.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education approve progress payment invoice 1188-1 from Millennium Builders in the amount of \$70,310.50 for the JBHS upper gym demolition and sports equipment. (Pampel, Denny) Approved. Unanimous.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education approve payment of invoice 1175-2 from Millennium Builders in the amount of \$83,303.23 for the water cooler project. (Pampel, Lehberger). Approved. Unanimous.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: FOOD SERVICES - END OF USDA GRANT AND APPROVAL OF UPDATED FOOD PRICE LIST

M. D'Agostino explained that the free lunch program funded through the USDA, which took place as a COVID relief initiative, will cease at the end of the year. He said that the three Boards were asked to fund the program through January 20, 2023; students will resume paying for lunch on January 23, 2023. M. D'Agostino also said that a slight increase in the food prices had been recommended by the Joint BOE Food Services Committee.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education utilize funds in the joint food services account to cover the cost of lunches when SMART funding is exhausted through January 20, 2023, and recommend that students resume paying for school lunches effective January 23, 2023 according to prices reflected in Table 1 of the memo. (O'Brien, Graziano). Approved. Unanimous.

S. Lehberger reminded families that they can continue to apply to the free and reduced-price lunch program, and that the increase in prices is in line with other neighboring school districts.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: CAPITAL PROJECT PROPOSAL - NEST BUILDING AND FIELDS IMPROVEMENT

M. D'Agostino shared a slide presentation on the NEST and fields improvement project which includes a new building near the stadium with ADA bathrooms, two team rooms, safety-weather protection and ticket sales and kitchen/concession areas; and, a new turf field where a grass field currently exists. Statistics cited in the presentation included: 70% of Barlow students participate in a sport; 277 female students and 255 male students; 274 Barlow students participate in more than one sport; there are 80 coaches; so far in 2022 Barlow has won five State Championships in athletics; additionally several teams have been awarded the Michael's Cup for sportsmanship over the years. The presentation showed aerial views of the new building, parking spots and new and existing fields juxtaposed against the existing landscape. Slides on the funding of the project showed that it has an estimated cost of \$3.6M, with an ARPA grant of \$250K already secured and an anticipated \$250-300K expected in private fundraising. A discussion of the project followed and included benefits of the project would be: greater usage and safety of a second turf field; more usable fields will allow simultaneous team practices hopefully eliminating late night practices for students, dual turf fields will provide Title 9 equitable access for girls teams, expansion of the parking area may help to alleviate traffic congestion. The project would be an asset to the JBHS campus as well as to both communities, this project would not impact the overall operating budget. Decision needs to be made soon in order to move forward; the Facilities & Fields Committee recommend approval of the current plan for project; questions about community use of the new facilities; possibilities of separating out the new

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components of the project; separating out of components has issues, including a higher overall cost of project; does the community want to proceed; after hours when the school building is closed there is nowhere for visiting athletic teams or Barlow students to change or use the restroom or take cover during sudden inclement weather events; bonding possibilities; the Nest project is registered as a 501 (c)(3), with an internal Barlow account; send back to Facilities & Fields Committee to come up with timeline; consideration of neighbors; consideration of a sponsorship from a company or foundation.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: CAPITAL PLAN

M. D'Agostino said that at the Fields & Facilities Committee meeting they passed a motion to recommend four items to the Region 9 Capital Plan, and now full Board approval was needed. These items are: NEST Building and Fields Enhancement, Building IAQ Controls, Educational Enhancements and School Restrooms. Board member discussion included: questions as to why these items had never been included in the Capital Plan; concern about a piecemeal approach to repairs; concern about existing items being superseded by these new items; need for an updated list with updated cost numbers and priority rating. M. D'Agostino replied that the Prioritized Capital Plan document was implemented when he started on the BOE. The major staffing turnover over the past few years has impacted the ability of the Board to forecast building deficiencies and repair work has become more reactive than proactive. He suggested a google doc that could be dynamic in nature to accommodate changes in plan, costs and priorities, and that this document could also be available to be viewed on the website.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education add to the Capital Plan: the NEST Building and Field Improvement Project, the IAQ Building Automated Controls, Educational Enhancements, and School Restrooms. (Johnston, Denny). Approved. 7-0-1. (Thompson abstained).

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: DISTRICT PRIORITIES

Dr. McKinnon explained that last Spring he initiated discussion with the faculty about the vision of the school system and asked them two essential questions: "what should the ideal school look like," and "what skills should our graduates have to be successful?" He said the goal for tonight's meeting was to look at the District Priorities to start to think about them. Dr. McKinnon shared a lengthy chart of the six major priorities and action steps for these buckets; the priorities being: high-quality teaching & learning; developing a culture that promotes a nurturing and welcoming climate and deeper, engaged learners; improving school facilities to ensure student safety, long-term sustainability and enhance student learning; meet the needs of all learners; develop a K-12 Portrait of the Graduate that emphasizes real-world experiences and innovative learning; and promote effective operations and skillful staff. He said that a new column had been added to the chart, "Column D," which addresses the time commitment for the priorities and action steps. Dr. McKinnon read through some of the priorities and action steps and said that the chart is currently in draft form and that some of the action steps will be included in the proposed budget. He said that in mid-January the chart will be more complete and that it will be presented on the District's website. Some BOE members had questions about the order of the priorities listed in the chart. Dr. McKinnon replied that the priorities were not in categories listed in order of importance, but rather, it is a working document. Additionally, members asked questions related to accountability and how to measure success. Dr. McKinnon said that he is looking for feedback from BOE members in terms of: thoughts and inputs, feasibility of action steps, support and how to provide those supports to students and staff. K. O'Brien said that parents are appreciative of the increased communication from the teachers which is an initiative already in progress.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Linda Meyer Mitchell, Huckleberry Road, Redding, thanked the Board for beginning the conversations on the NEST project and said that there is an enormous amount of support from the community for the project. She also thanked the Board for the long hours they put into working on issues throughout the year.

Alexis Bennett, Gallows Hill Road, Redding, said on behalf of the NEST Committee, she thanks the Board for hearing about the project and that she looks forward to working with everyone as the project moves forward.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

M. D'Agostino wished everyone a Happy Holiday and said he appreciated everyone's efforts.

T. Johnston thanked the members of the public for attending the meeting.

S. Lehberger thanked the members of the public for attending the meeting and said that all opinions are valid.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Hearing no objections, M. D'Agostino deemed the meeting adjourned by unanimous consent.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:32 p.m.

Submitted by Karen O'Brien
Secretary, Region 9 Board of Education

Recorded by,
Sarah Ota