

REGION 9 BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING  
WITH BUDGET WORKSHOP

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

March 2, 2023 – 7:00 p.m.

Minutes

INSTR # M2023000291  
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DEBORAH SZEDEDI TOWN CLERK EASTON CT

ATTENDANCE

Board members: D'Agostino, Johnston, Graziano, Denny, Thompson

Remote: O'Brien (7:10), Pampel (at 7:24 pm)

Administration: McKinnon, Pierson Ugol, Almeida, Scrofani, Schemm, Kellogg, Hussey, Panos

Others: 1 members of the public, the recording secretary and the videographer

CALL TO ORDER

M. D'Agostino called the Region 9 Board of Education Special Meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

None.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY

Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Jason McKinnon, explained that Joel Barlow High School had been randomly selected by the Connecticut Department of Education to complete a health survey of students. He said that the purpose of the survey is to monitor and gain a better understanding of youth and risk. Dr. McKinnon further said that: the school is now required to complete the survey; parents are required to be notified 21 days before the survey is administered; parents have received an initial notification; the survey takes approximately 25 minutes to complete; the survey is completely anonymous; four classes have been randomly selected to complete the survey; survey questions deal with health, nutrition, mental health, and tobacco, drug and alcohol use. BOE members received sample questions of the survey, and Dr. McKinnon suggested a google form be sent to parents of the students in the four class periods to give them the opportunity to opt-out of the survey. A discussion took place that included: Region 9 Board policy concerning opt-in or opt-out on students surveys; and, an opinion that the questions are personal in nature. Joel Barlow Head of School, Dr. Mario Almeida, pointed out that parents can view the survey in its entirety on the school website and that the survey is exactly the same as it has been for many years. Dr. McKinnon said that if the Board decides to make the survey opt-in, then a follow-up email will need to be sent to the parents of the four classes explaining that it is now an opt-in survey.

**Motion: Move that the Region 9 Board of Education authorize the school administration to administer the CT School Health Survey on an opt-in basis in accordance with CT Public Act 22-87. (Denny, Thompson). Approved 6-0-1. (Graziano abstained)**

#### DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: PROPOSED 2023-2024 BUDGET WORKSHOP

Dr. McKinnon thanked the Board for their engagement so far in the budget process, saying that he had received about 90 questions from Board members in the google document. He said that most questions pointed to two areas: the 18-22 transition program and the Facilities Manager position, and that they would start the budget workshop with additional information regarding the 18-22 transition program.

Director of Special Education Services, Tracy Hussey, presented more details of the proposed 18-22 Transition Program at Quinnipiac University,(Q.U) including: the Transition Coordinator position will now be a SpEd teacher; the program is comprehensive and it addresses many transition issues under one roof; most transition programs focus on one issue only, they do this well, but these programs generally don't address many of the complex issues of an 18-22 year old special education student; Q.U. has had this program for approximately 30 years; students engage with typical peers; the Q.U. program is one of the best programs of this type in the State; there are very few student needs that cannot be met with this program; the age of special Ed student responsibility for the District has been 22 for two years now; additionally, we have the option of adding students (who would be charged tuition) from other districts for a tuition opportunity for our District; it was noted that other districts that seem to have low outplacement numbers is probably because they have in-house transition programs and don't need to outplace many of their students; currently our District has 13 students outplaced; the Board has received a memo detailing the students' proposed day-to-day schedule in the new program; proposed costs do include a teacher because Q.U. requires a supervising on-site teacher; there would be 10 available student spots; District already has the possibility of filling five of the spots with three Barlow students and two Milford High School students; and, the other five spots could generate upwards of \$150K in tuition fees for the District. She also said the process for getting this program initiated is as follows: T. Hussey to send a proposal from the District to the dean at Q.U.; the dean will then forward the proposal on to the provost; the provost will then send the proposal to the legal department at Q.U.; and, only then can contracts be drawn up for Region 9 and Q.U. to form the program.

A lengthy questioning period from Board members followed, with questions concerning: how certain are the Milford High School students that might attend; will students be required to leave their current programs in favor of this new program; more explanation about the possible revenue; what happens if the program doesn't fill up; could our students attend the same Q.U. program through Cheshire High School; who sets the tuition rate, could it be higher; are Mildford High School students bringing their own teacher; how long has the program been running; how many students are taking college classes; how much money is the teaching assistant position; for how long is the site contract; are the costs for the current transitional programs in the proposed budget; and, what are the overall costs of our current outplacement programs. T. Hussey replied: the two students from Milford High School are anticipated, but their PPTs still need to take place; current programs will not be upset at us, as everyone wants the best for students; \$30K can be charged for non-credit class tuition and \$35K for credit class tuition; if the program does not fill-up, then we will not hire the teacher as we do not need to act on hiring until June and open spots will not be hard to fill; the Cheshire High School program is filled for the next several years; T. Hussey set the tuition and it could possibly be higher; Milford is not bringing their own teacher, but their tuition fees will offset the teacher's salary that we are hiring; the Q.U. program has been running for 15 years at the North Haven campus and eight years at the Mt. Carmel campus; there are four students taking college courses; salaries will be covered by tuition fees; contract is on a yearly basis; students in

transition programs are included in the current proposed budget as is the teacher position; and, current costs for our outplaced students is \$215,321 for tuition and \$164,348 for transportation.

Dr. McKinnon then addressed the topic of the Learning Center, saying that the Center is not for remedial learning, rather it is for all students including those struggling in advanced classes and those seeking to raise a grade from “a B to an A.” He said that at the next budget workshop he will present a memo detailing the plan for the Learning Center. M. D’Agostino asked about a consultant to study how to staff the Learning Center; Dr. McKinnon replied that they are looking into it and are confident they can initiate consultant work on this topic in the current school year.

Dr. McKinnon then showed the Budget Calculator, also referred to as the “Sandbox” on screen and how it works; it is able to manipulate numbers in the budget in real time when a change is made to any budget line. He showed an example of some reductions already proposed, but not finalized, for the budget; when these reductions were input, the budget increase percentage was automatically decreased.

The budget workshop shifted to the Cost Centers, and began with Pupil Services. M. D’Agostino asked if the Board could receive information to help forecast numbers for the future. T. Hussey responded that there will be an increased need for reading intervention at JBHS as Redding has a high referral rate right now in this area. She also said that she will provide a graph to address this request for the next budget workshop. T. Hussey then went through several of the individual budget lines for the Pupil Services Cost Center, saying: there is a decrease because there are some students who have aged out; in the certified staff line there is a teacher, a structured reading teacher for needs, and contractual obligations; summer work is increased; in the non-certified line there are contractual obligations; she would like to see more student activity in extracurriculars, Unified Sports and Extended Day; however, these programs require more para supervisors; she took out transportation for medical homebound tutoring; outside evaluations are costly; these are no longer being funded from ESSER grants; and, there is an increase in assisted technology. Director of Counseling, Paula Panos, added that the entire student services department had completed DBT training and now the new school psychologist and Wellness teachers will be doing the training. M. D’Agostino said that he’d like to receive an update on this training soon.

Director of Finance, Operations & Technology, Sara Scrofani, reported on the Technology Cost Center, saying: the salary and stipends line is contractual; the software line is for athletics to update and streamline their system of forms; the security line will continue; the renewal line is for Google, copiers and Chromebooks.

S. Scrofani reported on the District Wide Cost Center, saying that the budget lines were straightforward with: life insurance; worker’s compensation; unemployment insurance; utilities; transportation; substitutes; legal & audit; Open Choice Program; and, RCA. Board members had questions about cost increases for bus runs to RCA/Abbott Tech and some legal services.

Dr. McKinnon reported on the Athletics Cost Center, saying: there is an addition of a coach for the outdoor Track & Field team because of the large number of athletes; the new wrestling mats will be partially funded by the Wrestling Booster Club; there’s a slight increase in transportation costs; as always, there are some off-sets from participation fees. Dr. McKinnon said that for the next budget

workshop he will provide information on participation fees and where these funds go within the budget system; they can also discuss possibly making adjustments to the current system, as well as ticket sales.

It was decided that there was no need to discuss the Central Office Cost Center since this budget had already been approved.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Stephanie Pierson Ugol, spoke about the Curriculum and Instruction Cost Center, saying: there is a large decrease because there are no requests for textbooks this year; they are developing a schedule for textbook replacement; they are in the process of updating the art and music curriculum and will have a consultant review our program and give feedback on best practice; and, there will be a Tri-State Consortium visit in May and they will look at our strategic planning work. K. O'Brien asked if funding had been considered to improve the information and transition experience for our incoming 9th graders? K. O'Brien also asked when the last comprehensive curriculum review was initiated? Dr. Ugol explained that curriculum review is generally done by department.

It was decided that at the next budget workshop on March 16 the following topics will be presented: the Academic Center; the NEST project; RCA increase; Maintenance Supervisor position; bus run increases; and participation/activity fees. M. D'Agostino asked S. Scrofani to consult with bond advisors/attorneys to develop a timeline for the NEST Building and Field Improvement Project Proposal.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

#### BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

D'Agostino thanked everyone for their participation.

C. Graziano asked for clarification of the target date for budget approval.

Dr. McKinnon and M. D'Agostino replied: the next budget workshop on March 16 or the next Regular Meeting on March 21 for the budget approval.

K. Thompson said thank you to all for all of your work.

#### ADJOURNMENT

**Motion: Move that the Region 9 Board of Education Special Meeting be adjourned. (Denny, Graziano).**

Absent any objections, M. D'Agostino adjourned the meeting at 9:57 p.m.

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

Recorded by,  
Sarah Ota